



2011 SPPACE QUESTIONNAIRE

WARREN COOKSEY Charlotte City Council District #7 Candidate

1. What are the top three issues our community needs to address? How would you propose to tackle these issues?

For our community as well as others, the top three issues are fairly constant: safety, education, and growth. From the City perspective, we must support sufficient police and fire departments for safety, and we must focus on the transportation and utility infrastructure needed to support growth.

2. What do you believe the City should do to spur economic development and job growth?

We must make it easier to do business in Charlotte. For example, bottlenecks and other difficulties in the permitting and inspection processes have been a constant theme of the development industry since before I was first elected. I'm not sure the City Council has focused enough attention on the efforts to improve that process.

Most importantly, though, is that city government should not go overboard in thinking it can control the local economy enough to impact job growth dramatically. We've lost tens of thousands of jobs in this recession, and government's efforts have replaced a small fraction. No one should have to knock on the door of City Hall to be successful in business here. We should certainly be prepared for those who do knock, but ultimately success is more determined by what the private sector can do without relying on government for special assistance.

3. What do you consider to be the greatest challenges in maintaining Charlotte's continued quality of life?

The obvious answer in the short term is growing out of the recession. More within the City Council's control, however, are three concerns: public safety, transportation, and regulation.

We cannot maintain and improve our citizens' quality of life unless we maintain constant vigilance against crime. I continue to propose that Charlotte should measure its progress

against crime by using national comparison figures. Whether the rest of City Council will finally decide to go along with me on that, however, remains to be seen.

We cannot maintain and improve our citizens' quality of life unless we ensure people can get around this city by a variety of means. Although budgets are always challenged and projects usually fall behind schedule, the fact remains that we have a dedicated source of funding for our transit development but not for the continued development of our street network. Economic concerns rightly held up discussion of new ways to fund roads, but Council will have to return to the subject soon.

4. What do you believe are the top obstacles to housing affordability in Charlotte? How would you address these obstacles?

The top obstacle under the City's control is regulation. Regulation must balance quality of life with affordability. I have opposed and will continue to oppose regulations, such as the revised tree ordinance, that tip the balance against developing housing in Charlotte that people with lower income levels can afford.

5. Would you support a cost/benefit analysis for existing and proposed land use regulations to ensure that the potential benefits outweigh any negative impacts on economic development and housing affordability?

Yes.

6. How much of a role do you believe the City should play in dictating the appearance and design of residential and commercial properties? How would you balance this role against the increased cost it would pass on to homeowners and business tenants?

None; thus, there is nothing to balance.

7. What policies would you advocate to promote redevelopment and reinvestment in economically depressed and blighted areas of our community?

Before I get worked up about new policies, I'd like to give more time for the still-newly-merged Neighborhood and Business Services Department to perform. One of the reasons for that merger was to increase the effectiveness of the City's efforts at both neighborhood and economic development in our distressed business corridors. Let me see how that's working out; then we may figure out new policies.

8. What would you consider to be the most pressing infrastructure needs in our community? How would you propose to pay for them?

I continually return to the \$6 billion in road needs identified by the Committee of 21. As much as I would like to pay for them by cutting spending in other areas, experience teaches me that route is unlikely to garner much support. Thus, two methods currently available are the quarter-cent sales tax that the Board of County Commissioners can levy with voter approval and property tax. With regard to the latter, the General Statutes

give the City Council the option to go to voters for an increase in the property tax rate for a specific purpose. If the purpose is road construction—whether pay-as-you-go or to support bonds—it's worth taking the matter to the voters.

I do not support any general tax increase without direct voter approval.