

The St. George Area Chamber of Commerce distributed a questionnaire for comment from all St. George City Council candidates in an effort to raise voter awareness on critical issues affecting business in Southern Utah. This document contains the full and unedited statements from candidates who submitted responses by publication on Friday, August 1st.

### **What is your approach to addressing and managing public concern, specifically relating to infrastructure projects or large developments?**

#### **Gregg McArthur**

When it comes to addressing and managing infrastructure and large developments, I think it is imperative that we work to update and then keep our city's general plan up to date. The general plan is the document that guides how, where, and in what way our city should grow. This plan helps us effectively plan our community's infrastructure projects and also helps our developers know what and where they can develop new projects. It has been over a decade since the City of St George last updated our general plan so now is time to do so.

#### **Jimmie Hughes**

The best approach is actively seek out input from as many members of the public as possible. Public input is vital and can often result in solutions that were not previously thought of. Once input is received and decisions made, that information needs to be readily available to citizens. Be open and transparent is always the best way.

#### **Steve Kemp**

Infrastructure projects are usually city, county or state owned. These facilities are completed using impact fees, or other funds such as gas tax or federal grants. They should be completed as economically as possible and the costs associated with them should be directly related to the users, if at all possible. Large development of private land should adhere to the general plan whenever possible or should go through a review process set up by the municipality in which the land is located. Public input on these large projects should be taken earlier rather than later in the process.

#### **Dannielle Larkin**

Education about infrastructure and how it affects our city and our economic future is key. Infrastructure is both necessary and incredibly expensive. Understanding how to best utilize the infrastructure we already have, what the true costs are for both installation and maintenance, who is really footing the bill, are we saving to maintain in perpetuity, how do we keep our costs as low as possible while keeping our services dependable, safe, and future focused. These are the topics that must be discussed and debated publicly, understood at a local level, and addressed in a timely manner so that both residents and business owners feel confidence that the city will be able to address and keep up with their short and long term needs.

**Kimball Willard**

There is a rework of the cities website underway. I believe it would be adventitious to have a section on the website that lists current infrastructure projects, future projects (in order of priority), and a section for public comments for observations on potential future projects.

**Greg Aldred**

The public needs to know that we will take the proper actions to make sure their resources are safe. As a past Chamber of Commerce President I'm an advocate for private property rights. As these larger developments come to our city they need to participate and support our local service industry. I support our local business members first. Let's get rid of the red tape and empower small business.

**Wendi Bulkley**

I envision a situation where we can get back to the basics and get back to business. I will do this by listening, understanding, and researching what you as citizens would like St. George City to do for you and what you want St. George City to become. I will take this approach to each issue individually, and I commit to doing the work that is required to research, investigate, and educate myself on each issue. Due to my belief in long term success and responsible growth, infrastructure and large developments will have my undivided attention. I understand the need for sensible urban planning and will consider the needs of residents, the desire to protect natural resources, and encourage economic growth. I support mixed use development where appropriate, a walkable and vital downtown, and thriving single-family neighborhoods with a high quality of life.

**Brad Bennett**

First and foremost, I recognize that the concerns and input of the residents are invaluable. I am committed to actively listening to the community's opinions, questions, and suggestions. This means organizing town hall meetings and community forums where residents can voice their concerns and ask questions directly. By fostering an environment of open dialogue, we can ensure that the concerns of the public are heard and acknowledged.

Transparency is crucial in maintaining public trust. I will work to provide clear and accessible information about proposed infrastructure projects or developments. This includes offering detailed project descriptions, visual aids, and potential impacts, as well as outlining the benefits that these projects could bring to our city. Transparency helps build understanding and dispel misinformation, fostering a sense of cooperation between the city council and the community.

Additionally, I am a strong advocate for involving the public in the decision-making process. When feasible, I will explore avenues for gathering feedback through polls, surveys, and advisory committees. Engaging residents in this manner not only ensures that their perspectives are taken into account but also promotes a sense of ownership and collaboration in shaping the future of our city.

Recognizing that complex infrastructure projects can impact the local environment, traffic flow, and overall quality of life, I will advocate for conducting impact assessments as much as possible. These assessments will consider potential disruptions and propose mitigation strategies to minimize negative effects on the community. By sharing these assessments with the public, we can collectively address concerns and find solutions that strike a balance between growth and the well-being of our residents.

### **Steve Jennings**

It's always important to listen to the public. In particular, it is imperative to listen to stakeholders who are directly impacted by a proposed infrastructure project or other proposed development. I've been impacted directly as a business or land owner by proposed infrastructure projects here in St. George. These impacts can have detrimental effects both seen and unseen. My approach would be to involve stakeholders early on in the planning process and listen to their concerns and/or needs.

**What infrastructure improvements would you prioritize to enable mobility, support business expansion, and encourage commerce? How would you fund these projects?**

### **Gregg McArthur**

There are two projects that I feel are crucial to the economic development and business expansion of St George that we should be focused on. The first is the 1,600 acres of undeveloped land that we have surrounding the SGU Airport. This is an extraordinarily unique development opportunity in our community. There are very few rapidly expanding communities with a vibrant expanding airport that have large tracts of available land surrounding them. We need to seize on this unique opportunity by effectively planning these lands and then actively targeting and attracting the businesses to our community that can take advantage of this opportunity. The second infrastructure project that we should prioritize is Tech Ridge which is a master planned mixed-use office/housing development focused on recruiting and growing our Tech Industry in St George. The development is located on the elevated bluff just west of our downtown. The city should and is helping to support these projects by connecting transportation and utilities infrastructure to the sites with our capital improvements funds. By doing this it moves the projects from raw ground to connected development ready sites.

### **Jimmie Hughes**

Two of the most crucial infrastructure improvements for mobility are the 3000 East widening and the extension of 1450 South to I-15. Funding will be a combination of State, Federal and local funds.

Another priority for business expansion is the development of Tech Ridge to attract tech companies and higher wages. There is a lot of much needed infrastructure on that site and

funding for that is planned to come from a mix of sale or trade of the city owned property and tax deferment by partnering taxing agencies.

Water is an essential part of the equation. Top priority on that front is the Graveyard Wash Reservoir that will be used to store treated re-use water that can be used in our secondary water system. Paid for by money secured from a one time appropriation from the state legislature, local funds and partnering with the Washington County Water District.

I will continue to prioritize these projects.

### **Steve Kemp**

George Washington Boulevard completion from I-15 exit 5 to Southern Parkway Exit 7 should be completed ASAP. believe funding is already in place for this project. Other projects currently part of the Dixie MPO masterplan need to be addressed as needed.

### **Dannielle Larkin**

The city of St. George has a transportation plan, active transportation plan, and a complete streets plan that have all been created with in depth study and input from community partners and professionals in order to meet the transportation and infrastructure needs of our city. These plans are being evaluated and re-evaluated on a regular basis to flex and evolve with the changing needs of the economy, businesses and residents. I sit on the Dixie Metropolitan Planning Organization board as well as the Active Transportation board for the City of St. George, where we have monthly discussions about how to best meet the ever changing mobility needs of the community. This month we have been actively pursuing Federal grant funds to create an additional vehicle/pedestrian corridor under I-15 at 400 E and 900 S in order to best move traffic and people in an area that has been a dangerous route to schools as well as a traffic pinch point in the city. This, along hundreds of other areas of discussion, including public and professional discussions, are what make up our infrastructure improvement plans for the city. Funding is always multi-faceted. We have had great success over the past few years with grant applications for special projects that have vastly improved our systems without overburdening our local taxpayers.

### **Kimball Willard**

Traditionally, infrastructure in Washington County tends to lag behind land development. Currently, creating and expanding businesses in St. George is overly-regulated. I pool these together, because I would like to clean up much of the city code, following a lot of the example of Washington City, to encourage businesses to build and expand in St. George. This will increase the tax revenues to the city, that then can be leveraged to build infrastructure ahead of planned developments, keeping congestion to a minimum.

### **Greg Aldred**

As we look to the future now is the time to start mapping out our air-space. Passenger drones are a really and there coming sooner than your know. Let's be ahead of the curve and know that

mobility above is right around the corner. You license your passenger drone like you do any vehicle for transportation to pay for this service.

### **Wendi Bulkley**

The City of St. George must invest in transportation infrastructure that moves traffic, ensures safety, and allows for active transportation. I support initiatives that encourage biking, running, and walking. A well-connected and efficient transportation system is essential for our growing community. Our walkable downtown and trail system already reduces the number of cars on the road and improves air quality. I believe this system can continue to grow and be improved. I will attend the annual Dixie Regional Transportation Expo and I will collaborate with managers from the City of Saint George Transportation Department, the Utah Department of Transportation, and the Washington County Transportation/Roads Department. I will also leverage opportunities to partner with nearby cities to evaluate opportunities to partner on projects that make sense in easing traffic congestion, while sharing the cost of these projects. I will improve communication and partnerships with these organizations. I also support initiatives that educate motorists on wearing seatbelts, and helmets. I support education with drivers to avoid texting while driving, following too closely, and avoiding road rage. Many of these projects can be funded through the city budget; however, I will look for opportunities for grants, as well as funding from the State of Utah and the Federal Government.

### **Brad Bennett**

Prioritizing road and transportation improvements is of utmost importance. By enhancing road networks, optimizing traffic flow, and potentially increasing investments in public transit options, we can effectively address congestion and ensure efficient mobility for both residents and businesses. Additionally, the establishment of pedestrian and cyclist-friendly pathways can significantly contribute to creating an accessible and dynamic urban environment that promotes commerce.

To ensure the realization of these projects, a blend of strategies could be deployed. Alongside our existing infrastructure budget, collaboration with private entities offers a promising avenue to distribute the financial responsibility of substantial projects. Moreover, exploring state and federal grants earmarked for infrastructure development could potentially provide a substantial portion of the necessary funding.

### **Steve Jennings**

As a local business owner, I am passionate about supporting business (especially local business) here in St. George. It is important that we remember the proper role of city government as it relates to local commerce. The proper role is to foster an environment that will allow businesses in a free market to thrive. This is accomplished by focusing on proper planning and zoning practices, providing or allowing access and services that businesses need to thrive, and reducing regulation where possible to minimize unnecessary red tape that becomes difficult and costly for business owners to navigate.

It is also important that, through proper and responsible planning efforts, we stay ahead of the growth with our street and utility infrastructure. The infrastructure and other capital facilities should be paid for through traffic impact fees related to the growth itself. Well planned investments in our infrastructure will bolster mobility, stimulate business growth, and drive economic success.

### **Amid the current housing crisis, what will you as a local official do to encourage or enable affordable housing?**

#### **Gregg McArthur**

To promote affordable housing in St. George, we as local officials should establish clear zoning policies and regulations that encourage the development of affordable housing projects in the community. This should involve designating certain areas for affordable housing developments, streamlining the permitting processes, and offering density bonuses or incentives to developers who include affordable units in their projects.

#### **Jimmie Hughes**

High land prices make this a difficult task. Being open to new housing ideas and creative solution is a must. Balancing the impact fees to be sufficient to cover infrastructure costs but no more than needed to keep from over inflating the already high cost of housing. Continue to provide wider options for ADU's (Accessory Dwellings Units). There are some creative ideas on ways to fund these and keep payments low. Inventory is the biggest key when trying to affect the cost in a free market. Increasing housing variety and supply in a steady and balanced way will help bring pricing to a more affordable range. Following the recently renewed master plan will help ensure balance in this effort.

#### **Steve Kemp**

work to simplify the process to approve new projects or building permits.

#### **Dannielle Larkin**

There are dozens of tools that can be employed to solve our affordable housing crisis, we just need to be willing to make sure our policies and procedures don't make it impossible to make use of effective strategies. So policy review and alteration is number one. Answering the question: Are our zoning laws too restrictive in areas that make is challenging for developers to fill this need? Do our impact fees need to be restructured so that smaller units with less impact are not paying the same as larger homes with larger impact? Are we making effective use of our Community Development Block Grants? Are we getting in the way of developer's ability to use available federal and state grants that make it easier to build affordable units? One thing I am proud that we accomplished since I've been on the council is creating an ordinance that allows for ADU's (accessory dwelling units) in addition to any primary dwelling. This is an excellent way to add gently density to an already developed area without over taxing the infrastructure. I would



love for us to consider form-based code as an option for downtown and Tech Ridge. We should also be having discussions about educating our citizenry on housing affordability issues, addressing fears and concerns.

**Kimball Willard**

I will work with Zoning and Planning to find appropriate areas to create more high density zones. I will also work with the business development department to make it easier for developers find existing grants and tax breaks for building lower cost, high density housing. I will also work with Zoning and Planning to allow and create zones that are geared for smaller footprint, lower cost homes for first time home buyers.

**Greg Aldred**

I would make a recommendation that any residential developer would be required to put 10% of their building lots at cost and the city would waive the impact fees for our services industry. We are losing our workers because they can't afford to live here. I have a more detailed plan when elected. They developer needs to invest in our cities needs.

**Wendi Bulkley**

On occasion, zoning restrictions and impractical impact fees can contribute to a housing market that is leaving many of our residents behind. I will seek to streamline the building process with our city managers, and will look for opportunities to improve the time it takes to process requests at City Hall. Our school teachers, first responders, hospitality workers, and healthcare professionals need a place to live. Our zoning laws should make sense and allow for mixed use where appropriate. The private sector and government should work together to find sensible solutions to our housing problems. I will seek to strengthen our relationship with the Utah State Office of Homeless Services to accomplish their goal of making homelessness, “ brief and non-recurring by providing statewide support of project services, interventions and system performance measures and reporting.”

**Brad Bennett**

While direct housing construction isn't within the city government's scope, we can certainly help facilitate meaningful solutions. Streamlining the approval process and removing unnecessary barriers is key, as it encourages private-sector investment and innovation in affordable housing projects. I am in favor of exploring property tax incentives that motivate developers to contribute to impactful initiatives.

Moreover, I advocate for a graduated scale for impact fees. This would benefit affordable housing endeavors by reducing their burden and subsequently cutting construction expenses. These collective steps will establish an environment conducive to increased affordable home construction, expanding choices for our residents.

### **Steve Jennings**

The lack of affordable or attainable housing in St. George is a very complicated and multi-faceted issue. It's an issue that is very important to me as I have five children who, as it currently stands, likely won't be able to afford to stay in St. George long term as they venture out on their own. This isn't an issue that the city government can solve, but there are a few things that could be done to improve the issue by encouraging builders or developers to build affordable products. Zoning, densities, impact fees, permit fees, and tax incentives are all examples of areas that I will examine and/or utilize as solutions that will help improve the issue of affordable housing. As a builder, I understand the challenges that builders and developers face.

### **How will you support businesses and ensure the area thrives, including our historic main street and downtown?**

### **Gregg McArthur**

There is no better organization that is equipped to help support businesses and ensure that the area is thriving then a well-run, active Chamber of Commerce. I will make sure that the City of St George Continues to fully support the St George Area Chamber of Commerce and other community driven non-profits that are focused on supporting our local business community and our downtown.

### **Jimmie Hughes**

The purpose of the recent downtown master plan was undertaken for this very purpose. This was accomplished by having a collaborative group of interested residents and businesses owners from the downtown area as well as city planners, and engineers and council members. I will continue with that collaborative effort to ensure business owners will continue to receive the support they need.

Continued support of St George Musical Theater and their building is an important step in bringing people to downtown and South Main. I will continue to support them.

I will also push forward with getting proposals for the city owned property on St George Blvd. The potential for this property is very exciting.

### **Steve Kemp**

Add more mixed use areas. Work with city officials to simplify the approval process for new businesses. Especially businesses that already have to get county or state agency approvals.

### **Dannielle Larkin**

I have been a strong proponent for supporting local businesses throughout my time on council and I will continue to have this be one of my #1 focus areas. Historic Downtown is the heart and soul of our community. As such, we must preserve and protect its character, charm, and ability to be our economic hub. Creativity in mixed use commercial/retail/housing downtown will be vital



for continued success. Downtown is where visitors and residents alike gather to celebrate our traditions and culture, as well as where we will build new traditions and celebrations. We have worked hard to build a brand that includes activity and optimism, as well as making our downtown a historic, art centered, lively gathering space that is inviting to all. I will continue to champion economic creativity and success in our incredible downtown. In fact, I love and cherish downtown so much, I sold my home in Little Valley a few years ago and built downtown. We have loved the opportunity to bike and walk in our charming city center!

### **Kimball Willard**

I will do all I can to remove unneeded city codes that hinder the development and growth of businesses.

### **Greg Aldred**

Shop local is the key for any city to prosper. Marketing and management lies within the business. Having a strong Chamber of Commerce can make your business thrive. Take advantage of what your membership offers and go get a piece of the pie. Sponsor events if you can and support your local businesses. When we talk about our downtown let's be real. I'll look at what best serves our citizens. Public comment is always welcomed as we go forward and thrive.

### **Wendi Bulkley**

It is no surprise that people want to work and live in the City of St. George. We must maintain a business friendly environment that attracts top talent and high paying jobs. I will make it a priority to streamline business permitting processes to reduce barriers to entry in the economy. St. George should be the most business-friendly city where entrepreneurs come to thrive. I am a collaborator who understands the need for balance between economic growth and the preservation of our community's culture and character. As a member of the City Council, I will be supportive of workforce development, adequate infrastructure, and a business friendly environment that supports the quality of life that we all enjoy. I believe that all voices should be heard, and I am a listener. I realize that there are complex issues facing the city with multiple possible solutions. I can disagree without being disagreeable and I know that open communication, transparency, and honesty are key to moving St. George forward. I am grounded by core principles but willing to work with anyone to propose bright new ideas and find reasonable and intelligent solutions.

I want to get back to business and back to the basics! I will put in the time to listen and care for the residents of St. George City. I don't have any personal agendas for running. I understand that I am representing my constituents and that my role in City Council is to work hard to represent your viewpoints and be YOUR Voice!

### **Brad Bennett**

I'm committed to reducing unnecessary bureaucracy while ensuring safety, fostering an environment where businesses can flourish in the face of changing challenges.

The Economic Development Department is a crucial resource. I'm dedicated to promoting its services, which encompass overcoming obstacles and accessing grants and tax incentives. By maximizing its potential, we can empower all local businesses.

Supporting our historic downtown area includes expanding parking choices and encouraging diverse events. These actions will draw more visitors, leading to increased business activity.

### **Steve Jennings**

As a local business owner for many years, I feel that I understand and/or am very sympathetic toward the specific challenges that St. George business owners face. I am passionate about raising the tide for business here in our community as I believe that a thriving business community improves the quality of life for residents. I am supportive of reducing unnecessary or outdated regulations, policies, or ordinances that are onerous to business owners. I love the downtown historic district and central business district and understand that a vibrant downtown (with many small retailers, restaurants, and other businesses) is critical to the economic success of our city.

### **What will be your strategy for increasing economic opportunity (i.e. number of jobs, higher paying jobs, etc.) in St. George for future generations?**

### **Gregg McArthur**

The way we need to enhance economic opportunity in St. George involves a multifaceted approach. The city should focus on diversifying its industries by attracting a range of sectors such as technology, biotech, aerospace and clean manufacturing. This can be achieved by establishing partnerships with local educational institutions to align training programs with these specific industries needs and by creating an entrepreneurial ecosystem that supports startups and innovation. The city also needs to have available development lands that can house these industries. This is why the planning on our SGU Airport lands and Tech Ridge developments is so important.

### **Jimmie Hughes**

I have been privileged to be a part of hiring the cities new Economic Development Director. He is going to be an incredible asset in promoting economic growth in St George. Tech Ridge is our flagship effort to attract higher paying jobs to benefit future generations. Continued support for that development is a must.

### **Steve Kemp**

Get the Tech Ridge CDA finished ASAP. Within reason, provide support and let the free market work to create jobs. Government does not create jobs, private companies create jobs.

**Dannielle Larkin**

My husband and I own a commercial plumbing/HVAC business so we have been part of the building economy, but we are the first to recognize that our economy must become more diversified for our future success. I have been very supportive of the University's move to a poly-tech vision, of Tech Ridge and of the school district's focus on tech. Higher paying tech jobs will be an important part of our future economic growth. Encouraging local entrepreneurship and making sure the city is a business friendly environment is vital. Supporting education is a big part of the vision. We need the local talent pool for local businesses to thrive. We must foster economic growth with business friendly policies and a welcoming and inclusive environment. We must ask ourselves if we are doing all we can to build a resilient economy. Do we have quality, affordable infrastructure in place that businesses can depend upon? Are we building an environment that is safe, affordable, livable, healthy, with a strategic vision for the future?

Dannielle Larkin

**Kimball Willard**

The result of allowing and encouraging businesses to be developed in St. George will be an increase in economic opportunity. More entrepreneurs will create more businesses, which will create more jobs, which will allow the younger generation to be able to stay here.

**Greg Aldred**

Can a city councilmen create jobs? They can however support the process by allowing business to prosper with less restrictions which in turn creates better jobs. I do support Tech Ridge. We have specific people in our county that look at different industries coming here. I believe that the best thing for new opportunity is having government get out of the way. If there is a vote that needs to be made by the City Council, just know that as a past business owner I support small business.

**Wendi Bulkley**

Business Attraction and Retention: I will actively work to attract new businesses to our city, leveraging its unique strengths and resources to create an environment that encourages investment. This includes promoting the city as an attractive destination for businesses through targeted marketing campaigns, providing incentives for businesses to establish or expand operations locally, and streamlining permitting processes to reduce barriers to entry. I will focus on fostering an environment that attracts businesses, encourages entrepreneurship, and creates quality job opportunities for residents. I will support sustainable economic growth, which will enhance the quality of life and provide a solid foundation for our city's future.

I will strike a balance between economic expansion & preserving our community's character. I believe in the power of collaboration and partnerships. I will actively engage with local businesses, industry associations, education institutions, and community organizations to foster collaboration and shared goals. With this collaboration we can work to develop programs that align workforce skills needed for emerging industries. We can provide our residents with the skills and training necessary and create more jobs to keep our children and grandchildren here. Adequate infrastructure is essential. I will work to improve and expand infrastructure, including transportation networks, utilities, and broadband connectivity. By investing in infrastructure, we can attract businesses, enhance productivity and improve the overall quality of life for residents.

### **Brad Bennett**

I am committed to bolstering economic opportunity in St. George for future generations by fostering a thriving and diverse business ecosystem that caters to enterprises of all sizes. Job creation is paramount, and achieving this entails attracting new industries and supporting the growth of existing businesses. Supporting initiatives like Tech Ridge, which has already shown promise in cultivating innovation and economic growth, will ensure we have well-paying jobs needed for the future. By forging strong partnerships with local educational institutions, we can develop specialized training programs that equip our workforce with the skills demanded by evolving industries, thus creating a sustainable talent pipeline. This approach, grounded in collaboration, strategic investment, and education-industry alignment, will drive employment, attract industries, and ultimately establish a resilient economic landscape for the benefit of both present and future residents.

### **Steve Jennings**

Economic development is extremely important to me. I have been heavily involved in local economic development efforts for nearly the last 20 years. I am passionate about attracting value-added businesses to our community that will bring high-paying technology or light manufacturing/distribution jobs without competing with our already existing local businesses.

###