

MEET THE CANDIDATES

The Times Free Press mailed each City Council candidate a letter asking them to answer a series of questions so readers could compare their stances on topics important to city leaders and residents. Responses have been edited for clarity and length.

City Council race

Questions



Chip Henderson

District: 1
Age: 56
Education: Jacksonville State University, Tennessee Temple University
Job: Owner of Henderson Construction Co. for 26 years



Susan Miller

District: 1
Age: 49
Education: University of Tennessee at Chattanooga, bachelor's in computer science; UTC, master's in business administration
Job: Senior auditor, Unum



Jay Nevans

District: 1
Age: 47
Education: University of Tennessee at Knoxville, bachelor's degree
Job: Small business owner, event timing and management



Mickey McCamish

District: 2
Age: 74
Education: University of Chattanooga, bachelor's in business administration
Job: Epilepsy Foundation of Southeast Tennessee, executive director; Riverbend Festival, director of sponsorships



Jerry Mitchell

District: 2
Age: 62
Education:
Job: City councilman; previously directed Chattanooga Parks and Recreation and worked in commercial real estate

What is your biggest accomplishment to date?

When a large development was proposed for the Hixson area of District 1, I used my leadership skills to lead a coalition of community leaders to find a solution that protected our neighborhoods while allowing the development to happen, which is key to broadening our tax base so we can hold the line on property taxes.

It has always been clear to me that nothing I could ever do would surpass the difficulty of finishing college as a first-generation college graduate. The determination and sacrifice necessary to accomplish that goal are foundational to my belief system. People face different challenges, but I believe there is a pathway to success for everyone who is willing to work hard to find it.

Being part of the three-foot law committee, getting the law passed, and spending three years as a bike ambassador to inform driver education classes on the law and the rules of the road. The law requires that vehicles maintain at least three feet from all pedestrians and cyclists.

My family. Serving my country, serving as a commanding officer in the United States Navy and retiring at the rank of captain; president of Myrtle Beach Golf Holiday; helping grow the Riverbend Festival to its current size and bringing in roughly \$30 million to Chattanooga; growing and developing the Epilepsy Foundation of Southeast Tennessee; establishing the Chattanooga Unite Veterans Resource Center.

Worked to ensure city ownership of Dixie Mills property for remediation and supported increases to city's paving and road maintenance budgets.

Crime and violence are key concerns for Chattanooga. What should the city and the council do to reduce crime and violence?

We need a holistic approach with community buy-in to overcome gang violence. We need to address the needs of our youngest citizens and ensure diverse educational opportunities for them, create options for people to leave gangs, and strongly focus on deterrent efforts.

I think it is time to analyze data and refocus resources. I support predictive policing as a short-term measure for addressing crime. If used cautiously with respect for civil rights, it is an effective tool for making the most efficient use of police resources. The longer-term solution is economic opportunity and community outreach. We focus a lot of attention on young men because young men, statistically, tend to commit a higher percentage of violent crime.

The city really needs to expand its affordable housing stock. Our rent is rising at the same rate as Los Angeles and New York City. Additionally, creating job opportunities and improving education would also reduce crime.

First, we must stand together; communities and businesses working together until all Chattanoogaans are safe. This issue must be solved by Chattanoogaans. Chattanooga showed the world how to honor our Fallen Five with "A Tribute on the River"; how to clean up industrial pollution, becoming one of the cleanest cities in America; how to innovate with high-speed internet. Now we must show America how to make our communities safe with vision, unity, compassion and toughness."

I will continue to advocate for a stronger focus on community policing, using predictive policing technologies as a tool to prevent future crimes from happening, and thinking "outside the box" to offer new alternative solutions and facilities for our youth.

Given the makeup of your district, what will you do to encourage prosperity for your constituents and for the city residents as a whole?

We must hold the line on taxes, work with business and educational leaders to establish a workforce development program, and encourage economic development by supporting small business programs.

I can't overstate the value of education. I realize that not everyone will pursue a bachelor's or post-bachelor's degree; many people, including most of my family, have made a wonderful life for themselves by pursuing trades (e.g., carpentry, plumbing and electrical work). I would encourage everyone to continue to learn. Whether the choice is a four-year college, a two-year technical school or a vocational degree, it pays to make the sacrifice.

I would further encourage our transition from manufacturing to an outdoor tourism-based economy: hospitality training, restaurant training, landing more national events, etc. There is much opportunity in sharing our activist past. Also, I would make sure that my constituents are getting the services for which they are taxed.

District 2 should lead the city. My job will be to remove bureaucratic barriers so that there is a clear path for my constituents to be successful. District 2 must be a safe place to live, work, play and visit. District 2 must receive the necessary level of police oversight; parks must be safe and maintained. Education: We must stay a strong partner with Hamilton County to ensure our schools are the best in the state.

I will ensure Chattanooga remains as "business friendly" as possible. In addition, I believe we need to create more workforce development programs that ensure adults and students have the skills necessary to succeed in today's highly competitive job market.

What are the greatest infrastructure needs, such as sidewalks, paving, etc., in your district, and how would you go about addressing them?

Road paving continues to be the greatest concern for District 1. Over the last four years, we have doubled our investment in paving and we need to double our investment again over the next four years.

Sidewalks and paving are by far the greatest concerns. I have personally made requests on behalf of my District 1 neighbors inside of Lookout Valley and outside for sidewalk construction — both requests were for sidewalks adjacent to elementary schools. The need for basic infrastructure maintenance and construction is not lost on me, particularly when requested in areas where young families are raising school-age children.

There is much roadwork that needs to be done in the Lookout Valley and Mountain Creek precincts. We need to use our road funds efficiently. The stormwater is eroding the foundation of the roads in many places for lack of maintenance. I would also try to make the road paving schedule public information ... so that anyone could check to see when their area will be serviced.

Road repair, increased sidewalks and protective structures for people using public transportation. The road repair issues are citywide problems and all council members should stand together on these issues. Lack of sidewalks impacts pedestrian safety, stifles community interaction, and affects community aesthetics. These needs are shared by all districts, and the council could work together to create uniform and cost-effective solutions.

The condition of our roads is one of the top issues raised by residents. Since taking office, I have worked to double the city's paving budget. Yet, we have more work to do, which is why I will continue to advocate for more increases in the paving budget.

What is the greatest challenge in your district in the next four years, and how do you plan to address it?

We have to address our infrastructure needs to ensure we are equipped for future growth. We need to continue to invest in the latest technologies and ensure our police department has the tools it needs.

Crime is the foremost concern followed by infrastructure improvements. We all want to feel safe where we live and work. I will push hard for more visibility into the VRI or a program that can demonstrate progress. I want to see data on the program and evidence of continued improvement.

Finding solutions for problems that don't affect the budget. By working with nonprofits and for-profits and finding grants and other fundings sources, we can do school-based mentoring, single stream recycling, a grocery store, and affordable home ownership.

Managing intelligent growth and funding. ... We must be thoughtful in our growth and engage our constituents in a continuing, timely dialogue so that our growth reflects our community's values and desires. Traffic, parking and pedestrian safety must all be managed so that the District 2 renaissance continues in a controlled and thoughtful manner.

Our district faces three challenges: roads, public safety and public education. My No. 1 priority will be to ensure the city continues to increase its paving budget. I will strengthen neighborhood associations to work with police to deter property crimes. ... I will continue to support Normal Park, Rivermont and Creative Arts to make them even better.