

Voter Guide

[Charlotte Mecklenburg Climate Leaders \(CMCL\)](#) is a broad coalition of Charlotte-area organizations and individuals working to ensure the City of Charlotte, Mecklenburg County, and its municipalities set ambitious climate goals and successfully meet them. Together we are improving the health of our communities by advocating for equitable clean energy, carbon-reduction strategies, and climate justice.

[Sustain Charlotte](#) is a local 501(c)3 nonprofit with a mission to inspire choices that lead to a healthy, equitable, and vibrant community for generations to come. We advance this mission by partnering with neighborhood residents, community leaders, government agencies, local and regional officials, academic institutions, businesses, and nonprofits alike, all with the objective of forging solutions through collaboration.

To help our followers better navigate the local election scene and understand where each candidate stands with regard to a range of important issues that affect local environmental resilience and sustainability, the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Climate Leaders coalition in partnership with Sustain Charlotte surveyed candidates running for the office of Board of County Commissioners.

Questions were emailed to all the candidates who filed their candidacy with Mecklenburg County and who have provided their email addresses.

RESPONSES

Below are the responses we received verbatim as submitted by the candidates. We did not make any alterations to the wording of the submitted responses, so the original spelling/grammar is preserved. We did edit the format of the responses so that the paragraphs appear uniform. We cannot endorse candidates, but we can inform you of where the candidates stand on issues that we think are important.

The following candidates did not respond to the questionnaire and are therefore not listed throughout the voter guide:

- Arthur Griffin, Jr. (At-Large)
- Yvette Townsend-Ingram (At-Large)
- Elaine Powell (District 1)
- Vilma D. Leake (District 2)
- George Dunlap (District 3)
- Felicia R. Thompkins (District 3)
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(i) indicates incumbent

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QUESTION ONE

In your opinion, what is the most important environmental issue for Mecklenburg County and how will you target it with budget readjustments, policy changes, and other approaches?

At-Large

Leigh Altman (D)(i)

If we can secure the funding via a new 1-cent sales tax, we will have the capacity to dramatically improve our bus and our light rail system which will have a generational impact upon our clean air goals. This is a very heavy lift and a major policy initiative with the tremendous potential to positively impact the environment this term. We need all members of the community to help us make it a reality.

District 1

Aaron Marin (R)

For Mecklenburg County, one of the most pressing environmental issues is air quality. The region experiences challenges with air pollution, including particulate matter and ground-level ozone, which can have significant health impacts and affect overall quality of life.

- Targeting Air Quality with Budget Readjustments:

1. ****Invest in Public Transit****: Allocate funds to enhance and expand public transportation options. Improved transit infrastructure can reduce reliance on personal vehicles, thereby cutting down on vehicle emissions. This might include investing in electric buses and creating more efficient routes.
2. ****Support Green Infrastructure****: Budget for projects that increase urban green spaces, such as parks and green roofs, which can help absorb pollutants and provide cleaner air. Investing in tree planting initiatives can also be beneficial, as trees help filter air pollutants.

3. **Energy Efficiency Programs**: Increase funding for programs that promote energy efficiency in buildings, both residential and commercial. Incentives for retrofitting buildings with energy-efficient technologies can lower overall emissions and improve air quality.

- Policy Changes:

1. **Strengthen Emission Standards**: Implement stricter regulations on industrial emissions and vehicle standards within the county. This could involve adopting policies that require more frequent inspections and maintenance to ensure compliance with air quality standards.

2. **Promote Sustainable Development**: Update zoning and land-use policies to encourage sustainable development practices. This might include incentives for developers to use green building techniques and design projects that reduce environmental impact.

3. **Adopt a Climate Action Plan**: Develop and implement a comprehensive climate action plan with clear goals for reducing greenhouse gas emissions. This plan should include measures for transitioning to renewable energy sources and enhancing energy efficiency.

- Other Approaches:

1. **Community Engagement and Education**: Launch educational campaigns to raise awareness about air quality issues and promote actions individuals can take, such as reducing car usage and supporting local clean air initiatives.

2. **Partnerships and Collaboration**: Collaborate with local businesses, nonprofits, and other stakeholders to create joint initiatives aimed at improving air quality. This might include programs that incentivize companies to reduce their carbon footprint.

3. **Monitoring and Data Collection**: Invest in air quality monitoring systems to track pollution levels and identify major sources of pollutants. Accurate data will help in crafting more effective policies and measuring progress over time.

Addressing air quality effectively requires a multifaceted approach involving budgetary adjustments, policy innovations, and community efforts. By focusing on these areas, Mecklenburg County can make significant strides in improving environmental health and overall quality of life for its residents.

District 2

Angela White Edwards (R)

I'm not a politician, I am a concern Citizen and Charlottean for all my 62 years. What I see in some part of Mecklenburg County he looks old and it looks like no one cares for the look of that environment. I would target communities that is suffering with such places. I want to help make these places beautiful again

District 4

Mark Jerrell (D)(i)

One of the most pressing environmental issues facing Mecklenburg County is environmental justice. Environmental Justice efforts focus on areas related to air quality, clean water, land acquisition, park and open space access to name a few. These elements have a direct impact on outcomes that negatively and disproportionately impact communities of color and our socio-economically disadvantaged residents. The County's Environmental Leadership Action Plan includes specific policy prescriptions, in addition to funding recommendations to support these and other efforts that will provide equity and address the historical harms experienced by some of our most vulnerable communities.

District 5

Laura Meier (D)(i)

With ongoing development, I believe the greatest environmental issue is preserving green space. I will continue to advocate for funding for land acquisition and will use my vote to ensure the land we have now, we will continue to preserve for the future.

District 6

Susan Rodriguez-McDowell (D)(i)

There are many important environmental issues so it is hard to pick just one. Something we are currently working on is protecting our green spaces with conservation easements. This will require policy changes that we are currently working on in our Environmental Stewardship Committee. We have been directing our financial resources toward land acquisition in recent years, and now we must protect it.

Jim Marascio (R)

Mecklenburg County's greatest environmental challenge is its rapid growth. The County isn't directly responsible for zoning and the way the City of Charlotte or towns within the County plan development. As a County Commissioner, I plan to seek appointment to the Intergovernmental



Relations Committee, which works with the various area municipal governments, as well as the State.

QUESTION TWO

What role do you believe parks, greenways, nature preserves, and recreation centers play in the county? What will you do to ensure that all residents have access to these resources that are essential to health, mobility, and well-being as Mecklenburg's population grows?

At-Large

Leigh Altman (D)(i)

Parks, greenways, nature preserves, and recreation centers are Mecklenburg County's most popular service of all that the County provides. These amenities are not only necessary for mental and physical health but also have critical impacts on community building, crime reduction, and economic development. I am proud to have voted in each and every budget to raise the allocation for land acquisition from \$6 million to \$50 million and will continue to do all I can to protect and expand these programs.

District 1

Aaron Marin (R)

Parks, greenways, nature preserves, and recreation centers are crucial to Mecklenburg County for several reasons:

- Roles They Play:

1. **Health and Well-being**: They provide spaces for physical activity, stress relief, and mental health benefits. Access to green spaces has been linked to improved overall health and well-being, offering residents opportunities for exercise, relaxation, and social interaction.

2. **Environmental Benefits**: These areas contribute to environmental sustainability by improving air quality, managing stormwater, and supporting local wildlife. Green spaces help mitigate urban heat islands and enhance biodiversity.

3. **Community and Social Cohesion**: Parks and recreation centers serve as communal spaces where people can gather, interact, and build community relationships. They often host events and activities that foster a sense of belonging and community pride.

4. **Mobility and Access**: Greenways and recreational trails provide safe, non-motorized transportation options that connect neighborhoods, schools, and businesses. They encourage walking, cycling, and other forms of sustainable transport.

- Ensuring Access as Population Grows:

1. **Expand and Diversify Facilities**: Invest in the development of new parks, greenways, and recreation centers, particularly in underserved and rapidly growing areas. Ensure that new facilities cater to a diverse range of needs and interests, including playgrounds, sports fields, and community gardens.

2. **Improve Connectivity**: Enhance the connectivity of existing and new greenways and trails to ensure seamless access across the county. Develop comprehensive plans that link parks with residential areas, schools, and commercial centers to facilitate easier and more convenient access.

3. **Equitable Distribution**: Prioritize equitable distribution of green spaces and recreational facilities, ensuring that all neighborhoods, especially those historically underserved, have access to high-quality parks and recreation options. This might involve revising zoning and planning policies to require or incentivize green space development in new and redevelopment projects.

4. **Maintenance and Upgrades**: Allocate funding for the maintenance and upgrading of existing facilities to ensure they remain safe, clean, and enjoyable for all residents. Regularly assess the condition of parks and recreation centers and invest in necessary repairs and improvements.

5. **Community Engagement**: Involve local communities in the planning and decision-making process for new parks and recreation facilities. Gather input on what residents want and need from these spaces, and incorporate their feedback into development plans.

6. **Programming and Access**: Develop programs and activities that are inclusive and cater to various age groups, abilities, and interests. Ensure that these programs are affordable or free to avoid barriers to participation. Additionally, provide transportation options or partnerships with local transit services to improve access for those who may not live close to these resources.

7. ****Sustainable Practices****: Incorporate sustainable practices into the design and management of parks and green spaces. Use environmentally friendly materials, implement water-saving techniques, and focus on creating habitats that support local flora and fauna.

By focusing on these strategies, Mecklenburg County can ensure that as its population grows, all residents have equitable access to the essential health, mobility, and well-being benefits provided by parks, greenways, nature preserves, and recreation centers.

District 2

Angela White Edwards (R)

All these places such as green ways natural preserves etc has a lot to do with our psyche.

District 4

Mark Jerrell (D)(i)

Parks, greenways, nature preserves, and recreation centers play a critical role in ensuring that every resident of Mecklenburg County can experience a high quality of life. These are vital spaces where residents can engage in physical activities and foster social interactions. As our population grows, these areas become more essential, promoting health, mobility, and overall well-being. As our population grows, we must expand our network of parks and greenways, ensuring they are strategically located within every neighborhood, so no area in our community is left behind.

District 5

Laura Meier (D)(i)

I have always been a park/greenways/preserves champion. I will continue to push for more land as it is essential to our residents' physical health, well being and mental health.

Greenways play a huge role in transportation and keeping cars off the road. Connectivity is imperative in a county this size and if we want to keep clean air standards high, we must give our residents options beyond the automobile.

District 6

Susan Rodriguez-McDowell (D)(i)

Parks, greenways, nature preserves and recreation centers have many benefits for our residents such as cleaner air, mental & physical health, and quality of life. As our population

grows we must continue to invest in making green space available and accessible to all. I am committed to this end and will continue to prioritize these efforts.

Jim Marascio (R)

All of the world's greatest cities have extensive park systems. While some of the individual municipalities within Mecklenburg County have independent parks, the majority of the parks are created and maintained by the County. The County must continue to expand its parks as an amenity to its citizens and guests. Studies show that quality of life and health are improved through access to parks. As our population increases, we need to ensure that all citizens have access to parks and greenways. As population density increases, we'll need to leverage greenways even more than they have thus far. Most greenways receive more foot traffic than parks and are an integral part of healthy mobility (walking, running, and biking) throughout the County.

QUESTION THREE

The County Environmental Leadership Action Plan (ELAP) calls for transitioning County facilities and fleet vehicles to net-zero carbon energy sources by 2035. How will you work with County staff to make this happen by 2035? Are there any areas where you believe that we need to be doing more at this point?

At-Large

Leigh Altman (D)(i)

We are continuing to fund 1) deep energy retrofit projects and solar on our buildings and 2) electrifying our fleet. We are doing it in a tiered manner, i.e. as vehicles age-out we are replacing with them EVs as available. We anticipate being a 100% electric fleet by 2035. In addition, we have changed our design standards for future construction to reflect our commitment to carbon neutrality by 2035.

District 1

Aaron Marin (R)

Transitioning Mecklenburg County facilities and fleet vehicles to net-zero carbon energy sources by 2035 is a significant and ambitious goal. Here's how I would work with County staff to make this happen, along with areas where more focus might be needed:

- Steps to Achieve Net-Zero Carbon Energy Sources:

1. **Develop a Comprehensive Transition Plan**:

- **Assessment and Benchmarking**: Begin with a detailed assessment of current energy use and emissions for County facilities and fleet vehicles. Establish baseline data to track progress and identify the most energy-intensive areas.

- **Roadmap Creation**: Create a clear roadmap that outlines the steps needed to achieve net-zero carbon by 2035. This should include timelines, specific milestones, and resource requirements.

2. **Invest in Energy Efficiency**:

- **Upgrade Facilities**: Retrofit County buildings with energy-efficient technologies, such as LED lighting, advanced HVAC systems, and improved insulation. Implement energy management systems to monitor and optimize energy use.
- **Green Building Standards**: Ensure all new construction or major renovations meet high sustainability standards, such as LEED or similar certifications.

3. **Transition to Renewable Energy**:

- **Solar Power**: Install solar panels on County buildings and explore community solar programs. Evaluate the feasibility of large-scale solar installations or partnerships with local renewable energy providers.
- **Energy Procurement**: Shift energy procurement to 100% renewable sources. Consider power purchase agreements (PPAs) or green energy tariffs to support this transition.

4. **Electrify Fleet Vehicles**:

- **Vehicle Replacement**: Develop a phased plan to replace fossil-fuel-powered vehicles with electric or hybrid models. Start with high-use vehicles and expand to the entire fleet.
- **Charging Infrastructure**: Invest in the necessary charging infrastructure for electric vehicles (EVs), including installation of charging stations at County facilities and planning for future needs.

5. **Implement and Support Policies**:

- **Internal Policies**: Adopt internal policies that mandate energy efficiency and sustainability measures for all County operations. Encourage or require departments to integrate these practices into their daily operations.
- **Incentives and Funding**: Seek grants, incentives, and funding opportunities to support the transition. Explore federal, state, and local programs that can help offset costs.

6. **Monitor, Report, and Adjust**:

- **Regular Monitoring**: Implement a robust monitoring and reporting system to track progress toward net-zero goals. Regularly review energy use, emissions, and the effectiveness of implemented measures.
- **Adjustments and Continuous Improvement**: Use data to make informed adjustments to the strategy. Adapt the plan as needed to overcome challenges and take advantage of new technologies or methods.

- **Areas for Increased Focus**:

1. **Community and Stakeholder Engagement**:

- **Public Awareness**: Increase efforts to educate the public and stakeholders about the benefits and progress of the net-zero transition. This can help build support and understanding.

- **Collaboration**: Engage with local businesses, organizations, and other governmental entities to align strategies and share best practices. Collaborative efforts can enhance the overall impact.

2. **Innovative Technologies**:

- **Research and Development**: Invest in research to explore new technologies and solutions that can accelerate the transition to net-zero. Keep an eye on emerging trends in energy efficiency, renewable energy, and electrification.

3. **Resilience and Adaptation**:

- **Climate Resilience**: Ensure that the transition plan includes considerations for climate resilience. As energy systems and infrastructure are updated, incorporate measures to withstand extreme weather and other climate-related challenges.

4. **Equity and Inclusion**:

- **Equitable Benefits**: Ensure that the benefits of the transition are equitably distributed across all communities. Address any potential disparities and ensure that low-income or underserved areas also gain from improved energy efficiency and access to clean energy.

By following these steps and focusing on these areas, Mecklenburg County can work towards achieving its goal of transitioning to net-zero carbon energy sources by 2035, while also setting a leading example in sustainability and environmental stewardship.

District 2

Angela White Edwards (R)

We are so unorganized when it comes to people life, and family situations. I must start at the bottom of building we the people first.

District 4

Mark Jerrell (D)(i)

To achieve the goal of transitioning Mecklenburg County's facilities and fleet vehicles to net carbon zero energy sources by 2035, will require an unyielding commitment through strong policy initiatives and accountability. It is important to conduct continuous assessments of current fleet operations and facility energy usage, which will allow us to identify opportunities for improvement, prioritize, and track milestones. In addition, we should focus on maintaining visibility to the latest advancements/improvements, engage in community education and offer incentives for residents who adopt sustainable practices.

District 5

Laura Meier (D)(i)

It's all about funding. To get to our goals, we must continue to push for funding to pay for these upgrades to our facilities and to continue to add to our electric fleet. Before you know it, 2035 will be here. The BOCC needs to request regular updates to make sure we are heading in the right direction and hold us all—staff included—accountable.

District 6

Susan Rodriguez-McDowell (D)(i)

We must continue to apply pressure during the budget process and keep the ELAP intact and funded. The only way to do this is to keep at least 5 votes in our column!

Jim Marascio (R)

There is a misconception that electric vehicles are the most "green". The costs associated with sourcing and recycling batteries, power distribution, and the maintenance of roads supporting heavier vehicles are all variables that need to be considered when investing in the next generation of the County's fleet vehicles. I support solutions that are at the intersection of what is both best for our environment, and a responsible use of taxpayer dollars.

QUESTION FOUR

Name one environmental issue you would work on with each of the following:

- Charlotte Mecklenburg Schools (CMS)
- City of Charlotte
- Towns of Mecklenburg County
- Our legislative delegation
- NACO and the NC Association of County Commissioners
- Your constituents

At-Large

Leigh Altman (D)(i)

1. I have been collaborating with CATS and CMS for the last six months to bring CATS services to CMS bus riders in a new pilot program to increase bus ridership and help create the next generation of bus riders.
2. We collaborate on a whole spectrum of environmental priorities with the City of Charlotte. One example: the County allocated \$250,000 for tree canopy efforts. Another example: for Spring 2025, we have now funded a \$150,000 program to partner with the City to offer incentives for our solarized program (bulk purchasing of residential solar) to offer to low/moderate income households.
3. All the work we do is supportive of the Towns, including our programs around stream restoration which protect our clear water sources and invasive removal, to name two examples.
4. We have been working with Catawba River Keepers to advocate at the state level for more rigorous storm water run off regulations which helps to protect the cleanliness of our water and lessen the impact of damaging rushing water following heavy storms.
5. I believe Commissioner Powell sits on an environmental committee through NaCO and would be best placed to provide this information.
6. On a weekly basis I receive inquiries from my constituents regarding a host of issues, many of which implicate environmental priorities and needs. Constituent services are incredibly important to me and very rewarding. I do my utmost to be prompt, detailed and responsive for any concerns brought to me by residents.

District 1

Aaron Marin (R)

1. Charlotte Mecklenburg Schools (CMS)

****Issue: Waste Management and Recycling****

****Approach:**** Implement comprehensive recycling and waste reduction programs in schools. Educate students about waste management through curricula and hands-on activities, and work on setting up effective recycling stations in classrooms and cafeterias. Consider integrating sustainability into school projects and encourage initiatives like composting food waste.

2. City of Charlotte

****Issue: Urban Heat Island Effect****

****Approach:**** Develop and enhance green infrastructure to mitigate the urban heat island effect. This can include increasing tree canopy coverage, expanding green roofs, and creating more parks and green spaces throughout the city. Implement policies that encourage or require the incorporation of cool roofs and reflective materials in new and renovated buildings.

3. Towns of Mecklenburg County

****Issue: Stormwater Management****

****Approach:**** Collaborate with the towns to improve stormwater management practices. This can involve updating local codes to require or incentivize the installation of rain gardens, permeable pavements, and other green infrastructure solutions. Support community education on the benefits of managing stormwater and reducing runoff.

4. Our Legislative Delegation

****Issue: Statewide Environmental Regulations****

****Approach:**** Advocate for stronger state-level environmental regulations, particularly around air and water quality. Work with the delegation to draft and support legislation that enhances environmental protections, supports renewable energy initiatives, and provides funding for environmental programs and infrastructure improvements.

5. NACO and the NC Association of County Commissioners

****Issue: Regional Climate Resilience****

****Approach:**** Engage with these associations to promote regional climate resilience strategies. Develop and support policies that address the impacts of climate change on various counties, including Mecklenburg. This can involve creating a regional climate action plan, sharing best practices, and securing funding for climate adaptation projects.

6. Your Constituents

****Issue: Personal and Household Energy Efficiency****

****Approach:**** Provide resources and incentives for constituents to improve energy efficiency in their homes. Offer information on available rebates for energy-efficient appliances, insulation, and solar panels. Host workshops or seminars to educate residents on how to reduce their energy consumption and lower their carbon footprint.

District 2

Angela White Edwards (R)

The biggest problem is the identity crisis.,we don't know who we are and there is no positive looks that we can see.

District 4

Mark Jerrell (D)(i)

1. Charlotte Mecklenburg Schools (CMS) – Waste reduction through a comprehensive recycling program
2. City of Charlotte – Strengthen the tree canopy preservation program
3. Towns of Mecklenburg County – Land acquisition and preservation
4. Our legislative delegation – Protection of wetlands and vital ecosystems
5. NACO and the NC Association of County Commissioners – Initiatives focused on clean air and water
6. Your constituents – Continued implementation of the County's Environmental Leadership Action Plan

District 5

Laura Meier (D)(i)

Charlotte Mecklenburg Schools (CMS): instead of building more sports fields, which is sorely needed, I would like to see us partner more with schools for this as well as partnerships for parks and green space.

City of Charlotte: work with the city to ensure enough green space as they continue to approve development

Towns: see city of Charlotte—preserve green space!

Legislation; advocate for transportation funds. We must provide mass transportation, including to and from Matthews!

NACo and NCACC: environmental concerns take a back seat at these conferences. We must educate more on why we need to put this at the forefront of the issues.

Constituents; we serve them so I want to listen to their needs and at the same time, educate why green space benefits them—the air we breathe, our mental health, physical health. Eastland should have been a park. The residents didn't want it. I think the BOCC failed in showing why this would have created such a great economic impact for East Charlotte.

District 6

Susan Rodriguez-McDowell (D)(i)

1. Bus fleet electrification; 2. Solarizing homes through the “Solarize Char-Meck” campaign; 3. Connecting greenways; 4. Transit decisions made closer to the people through local elected officials; 5. Collective efforts with other counties to sway the General Assembly to allow for more local control of stormwater regulations; 6. Grow awareness and education around recycling and possibly composting.

Jim Marascio (R)

1. Indoor air quality
2. Stormwater management
3. Stormwater management
4. Effective transportation planning strategy
5. Improving our parks system through adopting best practices of other municipalities
6. Meck Parks and Rec expansion and services

QUESTION FIVE

Would you support allowing a sales tax referendum for transportation to be put on the ballot for Mecklenburg County voters to decide? Explain why or why not.

At-Large

Leigh Altman (D)(i)

Yes. This is a once-in-a-generation opportunity to improve our transit infrastructure which is critical to our environmental priorities, as well as for the ways in which it will help people access affordable housing, jobs, and health care. I will be on the front lines fighting for it.

District 1

Aaron Marin (R)

Supporting a sales tax referendum for transportation in Mecklenburg County could be a strategic move, depending on various factors. Here's a detailed look at the considerations involved:

- **Reasons to Support the Referendum:**

1. **Funding for Transportation Improvements:**

- **Revenue Generation:** A sales tax increase could provide a dedicated and substantial source of funding for critical transportation projects, including road improvements, public transit expansions, and infrastructure upgrades.

- **Targeted Investment:** Funds from the referendum could be earmarked for specific projects that address transportation needs, such as expanding bus routes, developing new light rail lines, or improving bike and pedestrian infrastructure.

2. **Voter Empowerment:**

- **Democratic Process:** Allowing voters to decide on the sales tax referendum ensures that the decision reflects the will of the people. It provides an opportunity for residents to have a direct say in how transportation funding is allocated and used.

- **Community Support**: If there is broad public support for the transportation projects and the sales tax increase, it can be a clear mandate for action, making it easier to implement and support these initiatives.

3. **Addressing Congestion and Growth**:

- **Infrastructure Needs**: Mecklenburg County is experiencing significant growth, and transportation infrastructure needs to keep pace. The referendum could help address congestion, improve mobility, and enhance overall quality of life by investing in modern transportation solutions.

- **Economic Benefits**: Improved transportation infrastructure can boost economic development by making it easier for businesses to operate and for people to access jobs, education, and services.

- **Reasons to Oppose the Referendum**:

1. **Economic Burden on Residents**:

- **Impact on Low-Income Families**: A sales tax increase could disproportionately affect low-income residents, who spend a larger portion of their income on everyday goods and services. This added burden may be a concern, particularly if there are alternative funding mechanisms available.

- **Economic Uncertainty**: In times of economic uncertainty, increasing sales taxes might be viewed as an additional financial strain on households and businesses, potentially impacting local economic conditions.

2. **Effectiveness and Accountability**:

- **Project Prioritization**: There needs to be a clear and transparent plan for how the funds will be used. Without a well-defined and accountable plan, there could be concerns about whether the money will be spent effectively and whether it will address the most pressing transportation needs.

- **Previous Efforts**: Consideration should be given to past transportation funding initiatives and their outcomes. If previous referendums or funding measures did not meet expectations or were poorly managed, there might be skepticism about additional tax measures.

3. **Alternative Funding Sources**:

- **Exploring Other Options**: It's important to evaluate other potential funding sources for transportation projects, such as state or federal grants, public-private partnerships, or reallocation of existing budget resources. If alternative funding sources can achieve similar goals without increasing the sales tax, they might be preferable.

- **Conclusion**:

Supporting a sales tax referendum for transportation should be contingent on a few key factors:

- **Strong Evidence of Need**: Ensure there is a clear, demonstrated need for additional funding and that the proposed projects are well-aligned with the county's transportation priorities.
- **Detailed Plan and Transparency**: Advocate for a detailed, transparent plan that outlines how the funds will be used, with specific projects and expected outcomes.
- **Community Engagement**: Gauge public opinion and ensure there is broad community support for the referendum. Engaging with residents and stakeholders can help address concerns and build consensus.

If these conditions are met, supporting the referendum could be a viable way to address transportation needs while empowering voters to make important decisions about their community.

District 2

Angela White Edwards (R)

No more taxes right now.

District 4

Mark Jerrell (D)(i)

I believe that allowing a sales tax referendum for transportation in Mecklenburg County is not just about funding, but about establishing a framework that addresses transit and transportation in a way that will create a more equitable and connected future for our community. By putting this decision in the hands of the voters, we will empower residents to shape the infrastructure that supports their daily lives, whether it's improving public transit, enhancing roadways, or creating safer pedestrian pathways.

District 5

Laura Meier (D)(i)

Absolutely. The voters should have a say in a possible increase in taxes.

District 6

Susan Rodriguez-McDowell (D)(i)

I am currently undecided on this important issue. With the elimination of the Silver Line, and the General Assembly's arbitrary imposition of the 40% cap on light rail, it is difficult for me to vote for this flawed approach. In my view, the way the General Assembly's plan causes tax payers to foot more of the bill for roads than they should be. More state money should be allocated for

roads, and this is a way for the General Assembly to skirt that responsibility and penalize Mecklenburg County residents. I am concerned with the inequitable application of the transit funds creating a second-class system of bus service for east side and Matthews residents while prioritizing light rail for the northern towns. In my view, we should all stick together to get the best deal for all residents.

Jim Marascio (R)

Yes. While I think that we can be much more efficient in our current spending, Mecklenburg County is behind in its transportation planning. We need to attempt to catch up with (if not get ahead of) growth. Transportation, coupled with economic development, and education/training are key tenets of any vibrant community.

QUESTION SIX

Charlotte's tree canopy is threatened and is under the 50% goal. There are predictions that the canopy may decline by another 10% within the next 15 years, leading to more urban heat islands, dirtier air and more storm water flooding. What do you see is the County's role in helping to preserve and protect the region's tree canopy?

At-Large

Leigh Altman (D)(i)

In addition to the \$250,000 referenced above for tree canopy this year, I believe we as commissioners need to continue to push to acquire as much green space on behalf of the residents of this community as quickly as we can. Preserving naturally-wooded areas and reclaiming areas to turn into parks and greenways to ensure we have equity in the access to green space are crucial. As a member of the Environmental Stewardship Committee, this is one of my core commitments.

District 1

Aaron Marin (R)

Preserving and protecting Charlotte's tree canopy is crucial for maintaining environmental health, mitigating urban heat islands, improving air quality, and managing stormwater. Given the challenges and predictions regarding canopy decline, the County has a significant role to play in addressing these issues. Here's how the County can contribute:

1. Implement and Enforce Tree Protection Policies:

- **Strengthen Tree Preservation Ordinances**: Update local ordinances to enhance protections for existing trees, especially during development and construction. This includes enforcing stricter regulations on tree removal and encouraging the preservation of mature trees.

- **Tree Replacement Requirements**: Implement policies that require developers to replace trees lost during construction with a sufficient number of new trees, ensuring that replacements meet size and species criteria.

2. Expand and Enhance Urban Green Spaces:

- **Increase Tree Planting Initiatives**: Launch and support large-scale tree planting programs across the county. Partner with local organizations, schools, and businesses to engage the community in planting efforts and increase tree cover in urban and suburban areas.
- **Develop Green Infrastructure**: Invest in green infrastructure projects, such as green roofs, rain gardens, and urban parks, that incorporate trees and other vegetation to enhance the tree canopy and manage stormwater.

3. Promote Sustainable Land Use and Development:

- **Incorporate Trees into Zoning and Planning**: Ensure that tree canopy preservation is integrated into land-use planning and zoning regulations. Encourage or require the inclusion of green spaces and tree-lined streets in new developments and redevelopment projects.
- **Encourage Tree Canopy Goals**: Set specific tree canopy targets for new developments and incentivize builders and developers to exceed these targets through tax benefits or other incentives.

4. Support Community and Public Engagement:

- **Educational Campaigns**: Develop educational programs to raise awareness about the importance of tree canopies and the role they play in environmental health. Engage schools, community groups, and residents in tree conservation and planting activities.
- **Volunteer Programs**: Support and expand volunteer tree planting and care programs. Facilitate partnerships with local nonprofits and community organizations to foster community involvement and stewardship of local green spaces.

5. Invest in Tree Maintenance and Management:

- **Tree Care and Maintenance**: Allocate funds for the ongoing care and maintenance of existing trees, including pruning, disease management, and watering. Implement a regular tree maintenance schedule to ensure the health and longevity of the county's tree canopy.
- **Monitoring and Data Collection**: Invest in monitoring systems to track the health and growth of the tree canopy. Use data to inform management practices and make data-driven decisions about tree preservation and planting efforts.

6. Secure Funding and Resources:

- **Seek Grants and Partnerships**: Pursue grants and funding opportunities from state, federal, and private sources to support tree planting and canopy preservation initiatives. Partner with businesses and philanthropic organizations to secure additional resources.
- **Budget Allocations**: Ensure that the county budget allocates sufficient funds for tree canopy programs, including planting, maintenance, and management. Prioritize tree canopy projects as part of the county's environmental and sustainability goals.

7. Foster Regional Collaboration:

- **Coordinate with Neighboring Jurisdictions**: Work with neighboring municipalities and counties to develop regional strategies for tree canopy preservation and enhancement. Share best practices and collaborate on projects that span multiple jurisdictions.
- **Participate in Regional Planning**: Engage in regional planning efforts to address tree canopy loss and integrate solutions into broader urban planning and climate action plans.

Conclusion:

By taking these actions, Mecklenburg County can play a pivotal role in preserving and enhancing the tree canopy, thereby contributing to a healthier, more resilient urban environment. Addressing canopy decline proactively will help mitigate urban heat islands, improve air quality, and manage stormwater more effectively, ultimately benefiting the entire community.

District 2

Angela White Edwards (R)

There are too many trees are cut down due to more housing is required. I don't think Charlotte was designed for all these people. We are stretching the balloon and guess what it will burst.

District 4

Mark Jerrell (D)(i)

Mecklenburg County stands at a pivotal crossroads in the preservation of tree canopy. The County can take a major leadership role through the implementation of strong policy initiatives, community engagement and education. Policies must prioritize preservation and provide incentives that encourage practices that support sustainability. In addition, alignment of economic development goals with environmental goals are key components to addressing the issue.

District 5

Laura Meier (D)(i)

Buy land and save the trees!

District 6

Susan Rodriguez-McDowell (D)(i)

Preserving green space through land acquisition and conservation easements has been a focus for our Environmental Stewardship Committee of which I am a member. Also, we need to keep prioritizing stream restorations and pushing for more tree protections and plantings. While it is a very difficult task to expand tree canopy while also trying to keep up with explosive growth, we need elected and appointed leaders responsible for planning and zoning to be more intentional about tree canopy preservation and planting.

Jim Marascio (R)

We're fortunate to live in one of the top metro areas in the country for tree canopy coverage. It's something that we need to protect with responsible growth. The top ways for the County to protect this are through effective stormwater management reducing erosion, and maintenance and growth of our parks system. Most development is the result of city and town zoning regulations.

QUESTION SEVEN

How would you partner with Charlotte Mecklenburg Climate Leaders (CMCL) to prioritize environmental issues?

At-Large

Leigh Altman (D)(i)

I always welcome hearing from members of CMCL who bring deep expertise and passion when it comes to our recycling efforts, environmental justice, on our advisory boards, and other related forums. I also appreciate the collaboration between staff and CMCL. It is a valuable partnership.

District 1

Aaron Marin (R)

Partnering with Charlotte Mecklenburg Climate Leaders (CMCL) to prioritize and address environmental issues involves leveraging their expertise, networks, and resources to develop effective strategies for local climate and environmental challenges. Here's how you can collaborate with CMCL to achieve shared goals:

**1. Establish Clear Communication Channels**

- ****Regular Meetings****: Set up regular meetings or working groups with CMCL to discuss priorities, share updates, and coordinate efforts. This ensures continuous alignment and fosters a collaborative relationship.

- ****Point of Contact****: Designate key contacts within both the County and CMCL to streamline communication and facilitate the exchange of information and resources.

**2. Develop Joint Priorities and Action Plans**

- **Collaborative Assessment**: Work with CMCL to conduct a thorough assessment of the most pressing environmental issues in Mecklenburg County. Use their data, insights, and community feedback to identify and prioritize key areas of focus.

- **Shared Goals**: Define and agree on common goals and objectives. Develop a joint action plan that outlines specific initiatives, timelines, and responsibilities for addressing these priorities.

3. Leverage Expertise and Resources

- **Utilize CMCL's Expertise**: Tap into CMCL's knowledge and experience in climate science, policy advocacy, and community engagement. Their insights can help shape effective strategies and solutions for local environmental challenges.

- **Resource Sharing**: Collaborate on funding opportunities, research, and technical support. CMCL may have access to grants, volunteer networks, or technical resources that can be beneficial for County projects.

4. Engage the Community

- **Public Awareness Campaigns**: Partner with CMCL to launch community education and outreach campaigns on key environmental issues. Use their platforms and networks to reach a broader audience and raise awareness.

- **Community Involvement**: Involve community members in environmental initiatives through joint events, workshops, and volunteer opportunities. CMCL's existing community connections can help mobilize local support and participation.

5. Advocate for Policy and Program Support

- **Policy Recommendations**: Work with CMCL to develop and advocate for environmental policies and programs at the local, regional, and state levels. Use their research and recommendations to support policy proposals and initiatives.

- **Joint Advocacy**: Coordinate advocacy efforts to influence policy decisions and secure funding for environmental projects. Leverage both the County's and CMCL's influence to build support among stakeholders and decision-makers.

6. Monitor and Evaluate Progress

- **Tracking Metrics**: Collaborate with CMCL to establish metrics for tracking progress on environmental initiatives. Regularly review and assess the effectiveness of joint efforts and adjust strategies as needed.

- **Report and Share Results**: Share progress reports and outcomes with the community and stakeholders. Highlight successes and lessons learned to maintain transparency and build trust.

7. Foster Innovation and Best Practices

- **Pilot Projects**: Collaborate on pilot projects to test new approaches or technologies for addressing environmental issues. Use these projects to gather data, demonstrate effectiveness, and refine strategies.

- **Knowledge Exchange**: Facilitate the exchange of best practices and innovative solutions between the County and CMCL. Learn from successful models and adapt them to local conditions.

8. Build Long-Term Partnerships

- **Strategic Alliances**: Develop long-term strategic alliances with CMCL to ensure sustained collaboration. Regularly revisit and update the partnership goals and strategies to adapt to evolving environmental challenges.

- **Joint Celebrations**: Celebrate milestones and successes together to strengthen the partnership and acknowledge the contributions of both parties.

Conclusion

By partnering with Charlotte Mecklenburg Climate Leaders, you can effectively address environmental issues through a collaborative, data-driven approach. Leveraging CMCL's expertise and resources, engaging the community, advocating for supportive policies, and fostering innovation will help drive meaningful progress towards a sustainable and resilient future for Mecklenburg County.

District 2

Angela White Edwards (R)

I would go to the House of Representatives and to demand that they reverse the law against ,not being about to take owners of property that is abandoned and makes our communities look bad..I would have to see what's on the table with CMCL remember success is collaboration.

District 4

Mark Jerrell (D)(i)

Partnering with the Charlotte Mecklenburg Climate Leaders presents an amazing opportunity to unite our community in addressing our most pressing environmental issues. I believe by working together we can foster action through collaboration, establishing a shared vision, and advocacy. I would work with CMCL to reach out to underserved communities and integrate their voices into initiatives to create lasting change and ensure that everyone has a stake in the future of our environment.

District 5

Laura Meier (D)(i)

The more groups, leaders, business community members etc., who want to protect our natural resources, the better!

District 6

Susan Rodriguez-McDowell (D)(i)

Educating the public is a huge part of prioritizing environmental issues. I would love to be more involved in raising awareness and participating in educational events.

Jim Marascio (R)

I'd be happy to meet with CMCL to better understand its initiatives and consider how the County can support them in a collaborative manner that best represents the interests and use of the tax dollars of its citizens.