

## Twinbrook Community Association Municipal Candidate Questionnaire

Name Suzan Pitman

Neighborhood of Residence East Rockville

Office Seeking Council member

**TCA does not and will not endorse any candidates, and solely acts as a clearinghouse for information to assist the community in making a decision on which candidates they will vote for.** Answers to the following questions will be presented in their entirety to the entire Twinbrook community. It will be posted on the TCA website at [www.twinbrookcommunity.org](http://www.twinbrookcommunity.org), and the link will be shared on the TCA Facebook page and Twitter feed.

Please send your completed questionnaire to Marissa Valeri at [Twinbrook.President@gmail.com](mailto:Twinbrook.President@gmail.com) by October 1, 2019.

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1. What do you identify as the number one challenge facing Rockville today and how do you propose to address it?

**The most pressing question facing Rockville is how we will continue to grow. Will we allow unrestrained development, or will we actively engage in thoughtful, community-oriented development that enhances our quality of life and elevates our shared experiences.**

**Projects that are currently accounted for will potentially bring as many as 8,000 new residences. That's great! We need to also make sure that our open spaces and tree canopy are protected, walking and bicycling are safe and pleasant, that we are protecting our kids and their schools to the fullest extent, and our small local businesses have a home-court advantage. Density isn't what makes Rockville an exceptional place to live. It's our parks and public spaces, our excellent schools, vibrant neighborhoods, and the diversity that makes all of us proud that are the things that make people want to move here. We can't lose sight of that in favor of simply adding density.**

**That said, we have a great deal of opportunity on the Pike to add quality revitalization projects that focus on sustainable, environmentally responsible commercial activities and multimodal transportation that serves all residents, from our children to our seniors.**

2. What is the role of City government in addressing housing affordability issues in Rockville and what would you do to encourage the production of more affordable homes for working families?

**Recent research indicates that supply and demand is an important part of the affordable housing equation, but high-amenity, transit-oriented development doesn't always come with enough affordable units to make much of an impact, and income inequality has a great deal to do with housing affordability. We need to consider additional financial tools like tax credits for businesses that provide housing subsidies for employees below a designated payband to help people who work here afford to live here.**

**It's essential that the City work with REDI, the Chamber of Commerce, Rockville Housing Enterprises and those wishing to develop property within the city limits to address more affordable housing. I would like to see a better-defined "Champion Project" status that includes more MPDUs and housing that's affordable to those just over the MPDU allowance in order to receive the benefits of Champion Project status. As the minimum wage rises, we need to carefully monitor housing costs to make sure they do not rise so much that they remain unattainable by wage earners.**

**Additionally, the City should do more to implement the recommendations of the 2016 housing study, especially the recommendations regarding the need to create more tailored housing options for Rockville's growing senior population.**

3. How do you feel about the transportation options currently available in our city? Do we have enough options? How would you mitigate those concerns or change the situation?

**Our cultural and institutional approach to transportation needs a bigger push towards multi-modal. Improvements are on the horizon through the bicycle and future pedestrian master plans, but follow-through is critical. More options are needed and better movement through the city can be accomplished through a City-run circulator, strategic road diets that make way for better bike lanes and sidewalks, and by better connecting our neighborhoods to one another and to transportation, commercial, and recreation hubs with safer, more pleasant walking and bicycle paths.**

4. Do you believe Rockville's APFO (Adequate Public Facilities Ordinance) is working as intended? Why or why not? What changes would you propose?

**When the APFO forces the City to pause and have a conversation about who we are and who we want to be, it works. The conversation needs to come earlier in the process and should not be allowed to devolve into the ugly scene we all experienced last fall. In the end, the Mayor and Council found a way forward for the Twinbrook Quarter project, and the flexibility in the solution demonstrated that the APFO works.**

**We can't forget the APFO governs more than just school capacity, and includes traffic and water and sewer requirements. We need to be careful that housing and commercial growth don't outpace the growth of our infrastructure.**

**To make the APFO work better, the City needs to work harder to get more input from a broader cross-section of the residents of our City. Currently, most of the input the City gets on these issues comes from individuals with the time to provide their opinions and who are familiar with City government. The City needs to host more frequent and better publicized in-person and online town halls that allow a larger group of residents to express their opinions on what they want Rockville to be.**

5. How do you plan on maintaining a balance between environmental sustainability and economic development?

**The largest climate "offenders" are corporations, and the green standards in the new building codes the City is rolling out are a good start towards greater accountability for developers. We need to work with companies and property managers to retrofit their existing buildings with solar and wind power, to install roof-top gardens, and to otherwise do their part to improve the environment.**

**It's also essential that we protect our tree canopy and green spaces for our health and well-being, as well as for the climate. The newest iteration of our building codes takes away protections for large trees in some development scenarios and those need to be added back.**

6. How will you implement the City's commitment to Vision Zero? What strategies will you use to effectively partner with the County and State to ensure that Vision Zero is a reality?

**Effectively implementing Vision Zero will require an action plan grounded in equity. One of the first jobs of government is to keep its people safe, and without a commitment to Vision Zero and the safety of our residents we are failing to keep our compact with the people.**

**Because City, County, and State roads overlap and intersect, we need a designated staff member to coordinate implementation of our program with theirs. Moving the Rockville**

**Pedestrian Advocacy Committee under the Traffic and Transportation Commission will also demonstrate the City's commitment to walking as a legitimate form of transportation.**

7. As Rockville's population continues to grow and diversify, do you support increasing the size of the City Council to offer more opportunities for representation? How do you plan to involve residents from all corners of Rockville in the decision making process if you are elected?

**City Council should grow and I will advocate for a Charter Review Commission to be convened at the beginning of 2020. At least two seats should be added, and a special election should be held in 2021 or 2022 to fill the new seats and to create a rotating election so not everyone is running for office at the same time.**

**One thing Rockville does well is keep residents informed about fun events and programs, like the Farmers Market and recreation programs. True involvement in the democratic process, however, can be elusive. I will work with City staff and other members of Mayor and Council to take City Council meetings and Town Halls on specific issues to different locations around the City to make it easier for residents to attend in person at locations that are familiar and comfortable.**

8. Are you satisfied with Rockville's city-manager form of government? If not, how would you propose changing it?

**I am satisfied with this form of government, although as Rockville continues to grow, looking at different forms of municipal government should be on the table.**

9. Do you support protecting equal rights for all individuals in Rockville, regardless of gender, race, age, religion, ethnic origin, disability, immigration status, sexual orientation or gender identity?

**Yes! I want to continue Rockville's reputation as a warm and welcoming city where people from all walks of life want to live. By doing this, we ensure that we attract a diversity of quality residents to fill roles throughout the city staff, businesses, non-profit groups, and other government entities that call Rockville home. Having top quality residents will help move Rockville forward.**

10. If you received a \$1 million grant to use for the city any way you wanted, what would you do with it and why?

**I would use that money to pilot a participatory budget process in our neighborhoods the way New York has in theirs. We have a great city staff, but they don't know our needs and aspirations the way residents do, and this form of economic democracy gives us the ability to meet our own needs in the priority order that we determine.**

**<https://www.theatlantic.com/video/index/575161/participatory-budgeting/>**