

**Most people aren't born with disabilities, but as we age, we tend to develop disabilities which can be temporary or permanent and can change over time. In fact, people with disabilities and seniors make up almost half of the population in the United States. The Americans with Disabilities Act was signed into law in 1990 and has just reached its 33rd anniversary; yet there is still a long way to go to ensure accessibility for and inclusion of people with disabilities.**

**1. There are various types of disabilities including developmental, hearing, intellectual, invisible, mental health, mobility, physical, and visual disabilities amongst others. Active leadership by persons with disabilities is necessary to ensure that any decisions made are made with these voices being present to identify how those decisions may impact our community. Please describe your experience with individuals with disabilities. How will you engage with and help to increase the engagement of individuals with disabilities?**

As a product of Knox County Schools, I was fortunate to attend an elementary school, South Knox Elementary, that maintained a partnership with the nearby Tennessee School for the Deaf. As a result, we had integrated class rooms and recreational activities with TSD students. This experience had a profound impact on my foundational understanding and acceptance of how we all show up in the world with different abilities but some of us are privileged to have experienced a world that has been built for us - the walkers, the drivers, those with 20/20 vision, or perfect hearing, and so on and so on. The experience taught me patience and to try to look at a situation not only from my perspective but also from that of others.

It continued during my time working at the downtown Lawson McGhee library where our goal was to serve a diverse population of residents according to their needs and abilities, constantly working to ensure our catalog was as accessible as possible.

I carry these experiences with me into elected office and consider accessibility and inclusivity as two of the most important values that a government can work to uphold.

**2. Knoxville's Disability Services Office (DSO) serves over 300 residents and visitors with disabilities each year, and is comprised of one full-time, and one part-time employee. This office is responsible for providing information, addressing ADA complaints, guiding the City's ADA compliance efforts and implementation of the ADA Transition Plan, providing City employee and constituent accommodation requests as well as reviewing procedures, programs and policies for compliance. CODI has long supported the expansion of this office in order to provide additional support and services to individuals with disabilities who live and visit Knoxville. With specific examples, how would you ensure that our City makes more headway in supporting persons with disabilities?**

As stated in answer 3 below, my dream and vision for Knoxville is that we commit to fulfilling our civil rights obligations to our residents and our visitors. Doing so will require adequate

financial investments and 1.5 employees to carry out the disability services work of the city is simply unacceptable.

To be proactive rather than reactive and be able to stay on top of federal policies and best practices from other cities requires that we invest in the human infrastructure needed to do this work well. I will continue to encourage the administration expand our staffing committed to anti-discrimination efforts and I will continue to bring proposals before council for consideration when appropriate.

**3. The City of Knoxville has aging and outdated recreational facilities and park spaces that are included in a 2015 ADA study to identify what needs to be done to make these areas inclusive, and able to promote healthy lifestyles for people of all ages and abilities. While the City has renovated a number of facilities, more funding is needed to complete the renovations to the remaining facilities from the study and ADA Transition Plan. What is your plan to help ensure that accessibility and ADA compliance is a known requirement when it comes to providing internal and external resources and funding for these projects?**

My long term vision for the city of Knoxville is that we would establish a civil rights office that would work to uphold the city's obligation to prohibit discrimination against people of protected classes, including people with disabilities. With a fully staffed office, we could work to grow the understanding not only among city staff but also the public regarding the city's obligations and stated plans to carry out those obligations. When we speak of curb cuts in terms of a civil rights obligation rather than something we should applaud ourselves for prioritizing, then we begin to shift our culture and our thinking around such investments, making it easier to automatically include them in future budgets.

**4. Part of a robust age-friendly plan is having adequate and affordable housing where older adults can age in place. To quote AARP, "affordability is only affordable if it is also accessible." For many older adults, the cost of living in Knoxville is an extreme burden, with senior homelessness on the rise and support networks diminishing because of the costs to live in the City. Knoxville's lack of accessible and affordable housing and a rapidly aging population compounds the problem. This can force individuals to live in institutional settings vs. independent living within their communities. How will you help to increase the percentage of accessible and affordable housing units in proximity to community gathering spaces and health services that is necessary to address this systemic issue?**

I will continue to meet with members of the administration to push for investments in strategies that have proven successful in other cities and I will continue to bring legislative solutions before council for consideration. Other cities have created forgivable interest-free loan programs for developers and low to moderate-income homeowners to be able to access funding for affordable housing development. Loans do not become due until the owner sells, transfers ownership, or undertakes a cash-out refinance. In Boston, homeowners can access up to \$50,000 for the construction of an ADU, in the city's effort to add more affordable housing stock. In other cities, their ADU program looks at only the income of the renter and not the

homeowner and automatically forgives a construction loan if the ADU is used for low-income housing for a certain number of years. What are being called granny flats, these ADUs have great potential to add more affordable housing to our neighborhoods more quickly and in a way that would allow our older residents to age in place and remain in their neighborhoods of choice.

**5. Transportation is more than simply vehicles or busses and includes infrastructure such as sidewalks, curb ramps, and pedestrian signals. Accessible options are a critical concern for thousands of individuals with disabilities and those aging in the Knoxville area. These options should be safe, affordable, dependable, and user-friendly. What is your vision for the future of accessible transportation in Knoxville?**

My vision for the future of accessible transportation is that we grow a multimodal public transit system that is actually accessible and affordable to the majority of our residents and represents a system that residents can rely on for commuting to work, school, the airport, and getting around town. To get there, we need to have an understanding as a community regarding what it will take to get there. We just went through the KAT Reimagined process and many were disappointed to learn that through the process, the bus route would simply be changed rather than expanded. As a result, we did not even have a discussion about what the cost of an ideal bus system might be that we could work towards in the future. If we don't discuss it and plan for it, we will never have the public transit system that so many of us wish to see.