

Mayor and/or City Council 2021

Response ID:85 Data

1. Candidate Information

1. Candidate Name

David Neal

2. Candidate for Ward # (if applicable)

Merriam Ward 4

3. Address

Street Address/Apt/Suite : 6127 Antioch Rd.

City/State/Zip : Merriam

4. Phone Number

913-908-5072

5. Email Address

david@nealformerriam.com

6. Campaign Website

www.nealformerriam.com

2. Candidate Background

7. Occupation/Work History (last 5 years - 25 words or less)

I am a small business owner with a construction business and a software development consulting business.

8. If you are or have been affiliated with a chamber of commerce or other business organization, please list which organization(s) and any leadership positions you have held.

I have attended numerous events as an elected official but am not a Chamber member.

9. Other recent political/community experience (50 words or less)

I am a current City Council member representing Ward 4 in Merriam. I have served on the National League of Cities' federal advisory committee for Information Technology and Communications for the past 3 years, representing the Kansas League of Municipalities and local communities on matters in information technology and telecommunications.

3. Issues and Policy

10. As a candidate, what are your top three policy issues? (100 words or less)

1. Rational redevelopment in terms of balance between "economic development," livable neighborhoods, and sustainability.
2. Threats to revenue sources (discussed in question 17), particularly the over-reliance on auto sales tax.
3. Improvements to our downtown (discussed in another question) which first involves flood control work. Removing the downtown area from the 100 year flood plain would free up that area for revitalization by removing the prohibition against building new or modifying existing structures there.

Unfortunately there is not enough room here to expound on these issues, particularly since they are specific to Merriam and

require a more detailed contextual understanding.

11. What are your views on the services and value the City's citizens receive for their local tax dollars? (100 words or less)

As a smaller land constrained city surrounded by a large metro area, the benefit of bringing "jobs" inside the city has less importance than encouraging economic activity within the city. Any incentives should be used to help our commercial areas be put to best use in terms of economic activity that generates tax revenue and enhances the quality of life for residents. Improving the housing stock and attracting residents to our community seems to be more important than locating jobs within the city limits. We must maintain a healthy balance between residential and commercial areas similar to our current configuration.

12. What changes, if any, would you like to see to the City budget? (100 words or less)

We (the staff and Governing Body) are currently working on the new budget for next year. My suggested changes are being communicated through that process. In general I am concerned with the rise in property taxes on residential constituents due to property valuation increases. I would like to see that situation mitigated as much as possible, especially for fixed-income homeowners. My thoughts on the revenue side of the city budget are extensive and unfortunately cannot be fully explained in the 100 word limit of the question.

13. What role, if any, do you believe the City should play in economic development to bring jobs and capital investment to the community? (100 words or less)

As a smaller land constrained city surrounded by a large metro area, the benefit of bringing "jobs" inside the city has less importance than encouraging economic activity within the city. Any incentives should be used to help our commercial areas be put to best use in terms of economic activity that generates tax revenue and enhances the quality of life for residents. Improving the housing stock and attracting residents to our community seems to be more important than locating jobs within the city limits. We must maintain a healthy balance between residential and commercial areas similar to our current configuration.

14. As the City considers future development and redevelopment projects, describe your views on how the City should best manage and balance growth? (100 words or less)

As a land constrained city, managing and balancing growth tends more towards the managing rather than the growing. In order to encourage growth, the city should be focused on helping stakeholders to enhance the assets they are responsible for. Residential stakeholders already can get assistance from the City to improve their property in the form of grants which I have consistently supported. We should continue this approach and possibly expand it. Local businesses should be supported similarly where appropriate. Redevelopment ideas should be fully considered, with the reasonableness and need for tax subsidized re-development subject to discerning eyes.

15. What is your philosophy on the role the City should play in terms of metro-area issues? (100 words or less)

The City should be a leader where possible in collaborative efforts across the metro as we were in passing one of the early nondiscrimination ordinances (NDOs) in Johnson County. Collaboration on climate change/weather mitigation issues and transportation are also high priority opportunities for coordinated action with our neighbors.

16. What do you believe the takeaways for the City should be, if any, from the COVID-19 pandemic experience? (100 words or less)

There unfortunately are interested parties who make spreading fear and disinformation profitable for themselves. Governments need to realize that the "truth" is sometimes difficult to discern and so good reliable information from government is essential. We must never be complacent in our communications with the public on public health issues (and other issues). Two way communication and transparency are essential.

17. What do you believe are the greatest challenges the City faces over the next ten years and how would you address them? (100 words or less)

The greatest challenge to the City over the next few years is possible threats to the city revenue stream if the Kansas Legislature changes how sales taxes are distributed from vehicle sales in Kansas. We must consider ways to diversify our sales tax base since over 50% of our general fund revenue comes from sales taxes.

The city's commercial districts are largely redeveloped and there is little undeveloped land available. I have been in continuous communication with our federal representatives to fund the federal portion of the Upper Turkey Creek flood control project that would free up downtown for improvements.

18. Why are you seeking this public office? (100 words or less)

I am seeking re-election in order to finish several initiatives including rejuvenation of downtown and to continue helping Merriam to remain the strong city it is. My unique knowledge and skill sets compliment other council members skills, strengthening the legislative arm of city governance. I am not afraid to ask hard questions when proposals are made without as full a vetting as would be warranted in the private sector for such a project. From my professional work, I also understand revenue and taxation issues more deeply than typical citizens and I always look out for constituents best interests.

19. What do you believe makes you uniquely qualified to serve in this position and most distinguishes you from your opponent(s) in this race? (100 words or less)

With a strong and diverse professional background in construction, engineering, and information technology, I have expertise in areas that would seem to be useful in making policy decisions at the municipal government level. I have successfully operated several businesses which have provided me a first hand understanding of the issues and policy that can help (or hurt) local businesses.

I have 30 years of experience in project analysis and project execution. I have worked with local governments across Kansas for more than two decades. I ask the right questions and provide Merriam with a discerning eye when initiatives are proposed.
