

Gardner Mayor/City Council 2021

Response ID:8 Data

1. Candidate Information

1. Candidate Name

Steve Shute

2. Candidate for Ward # (if applicable)

3. Address

Street Address/Apt/Suite : 18401 Sycamore Ct
City/State/Zip : Gardner, KS 66030

4. Phone Number

913-732-3134

5. Email Address

steve@steveshute.com

6. Campaign Website

<http://www.steveshute.com>

2. Candidate Background

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

Senior Technical Consultant - Infor, Inc.
Senior Technical Consultant - RPI Consultants, Inc.
Infor Systems/Data Architect - Contract (various national and international clients)

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.

Gardner Chamber of Commerce - Chamber Board member

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

Mayor of Gardner, KS - 2018-present
Council President, City of Gardner - 2016-2018
Councilmember, 2013-2018

Mid-America Regional Council - Board Member

Southwest Johnson County EDC Executive Committee

I have also been active in my local community parks and rec departments serving as a youth soccer coach from 2007-present.

3. Issues and Policy

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

(1) Transportation/Infrastructure - we need to continue to pressure the State and County to work collaboratively with us to

come up with solutions to our transportation issues; primarily, the impact of more and bigger trucks going through our community to and from Logistics Park KC in Edgerton and New Century Industrial Park. Widening I-35, replacing the Gardner Road bridge, and a new interchange at Moonlight Road continue to be a priority, as well as extending New Trails Parkway all the way to 191st Street.

2) Attract a manufacturer with high paying jobs to Gardner.

3) Solve our broadband connectivity issues.

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

Compared to most of our surrounding communities, I believe we have done amazing things with the property and sales tax money that have been entrusted to us by our citizens. Our road network (with the exception of Main Street, which is not Gardner's responsibility to maintain) is very good; our water, sewer, and electric networks are solid; and we have streamlined our permitting processes to get developers through the system in a quick manner. We have an excellent police department and a new courthouse, and our Parks and Rec department has done much with limited funds. Financially, we are strong.

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

The fact is that Gardner is a growing community, with a growing population as well as commercial base which is putting a strain on our city's infrastructure. Our city has done an amazing job of coping with these challenges by proactively planning for possible failures before they occur. However, we will still need to increase the City's budget to deal with our issues because there is simply more of the city to cover with those tax dollars and continue to provide the same level of service. But we can limit that increase by smart planning and efficient use of resources.

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)

I have always been of the opinion that municipalities should be in the business of facilitating economic development, not limiting it. In this vein, we have overhauled our planning and development departments to streamline the permitting and approval process, while continuing to ensure that our development standards and codes continue to be met and exceeded.

We have also worked with citizen groups, local businesses and the Southwest Johnson County Economic Development Corporation to develop sustainable incentives and policies to attract businesses and investment to the city to bring amenities here, instead of forcing our citizens to go to Olathe.

14. How do you plan to communicate effectively with the businesses and citizens of the community? (100 words or less)

I am active on social media and I also do regular "walking tours" of our neighborhoods as well as our business districts. It is very important that we get the opinions of our citizens and businesses (good or bad) so we can be responsive to their concerns, instead of reactive.

15. 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)

We need to be sensitive to the needs of our citizens, while also understanding that outside development interests make their own decisions as to where and when they bring a project to an area. The City can protect the citizens' interests by ensuring that development agreements are structured so that they don't expose the city to financial risk, and developers pay their way with regard to infrastructure improvements. Incentives should only be used where a project of general benefit to the citizens could not be accomplished without them. And quality of life should be a paramount concern with any project.

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

We must be *fully* engaged in the regional ecosystem; if we don't do so, we run the real risk of having other communities determine our future for us. As Mayor, I worked hard to foster relationships with the Kansas City Area Development Council, the Mid-America Regional Council, the State of Kansas, and Johnson County Government to lend our voice to the discussion and get a seat at the table of issues that have short- and long-term impact on our citizens. I pledge to continue to work on strengthening these relationships as a Councilmember.

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

or less)

I am proud to say that of all of the municipalities in our area, the City of Gardner is one of only two communities that did not enforce mask mandates or gathering restrictions - we left those decisions up to businesses and individuals. We trusted our own citizens and businesses to control their own health and safety, free of government interference. As a result, we not only didn't lose businesses due to shutdowns, but we also saw our sales tax revenues increase, while other cities saw theirs get cut significantly. And we kept our vulnerable populations safe in the process.

18. 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)

1) We are getting increasingly challenged by industrial growth on both sides of our community (LPKC on the west and Olathe/New Century on the east/northeast). Although I acknowledge the population growth and opportunities for amenities that come with that, the truth is it also may lead to a degradation of quality of life for our citizens if we don't continue to plan for this industrial growth.

2) Changing technological trends - people are increasingly working from home (due to COVID), and working to help facilitate reliable, fast broadband access is critical to be able to work and learn from home.

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

In short, I would like to (1) ensure that the positive progression of my community continues in the right direction, and (2) assist both the incoming Mayor as well as the citizens in any way I can to keep Gardner "Blazing New Trails" into the future.

20. 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)

I am the only candidate in the race who has experience as Mayor. I believe that my willingness to take a step back (fulfilling a promise I made to my family that I would not serve a second term as Mayor) shows that I am a man of my word. Personal integrity is very important to me, and sets me apart from many others running for political office these days.

I also believe my mayoral experience gives me unique insight into how Gardner fits into the regional ecosystem. That's knowledge I would be happy to pass onto the next Mayor.
