

Nick Burrell Coralville City Council Candidate

Why are you running and what are your priorities if elected?

1. Coralville's future will be brightened by an independent voice. This includes a voice that understands real growth and diversity is achieved through the acceptance of ideas from all sides for the primary objective of building a strong community that benefits everyone. When the pandemic and racial injustice issues hit several months ago, I reached out to community leaders to get involved. When the council position opened up, I realized it was one way for me to do this. Our city needs a voice that can unify the experiences of the past with fresh, innovative thinking of today's youth to bring about change. I have that ability and I want to be that unifying voice for our city.

I have two main priorities: (1) create revenue streams for Coralville to help deal with the financial impact from the pandemic and (2) bring unity to address racial divisions. All candidates can

campaign about building new city projects such as affordable housing. However, as a business owner impacted by the pandemic, I know that many solutions take money and also require downstream buying power from our citizens. We must get creative to create new streams; for example, we should at least discuss the luxury tax. We also need to set up committees to see the allocation of new funds to ensure they dispersed appropriately within the community to have the most positive impact. That would include educational programs, affordable housing, small business funds diversity programs etc. To make some real change, we need funds and creative ideas to make those happen.

The second issue to address is unifying our city. We are a rich, racially diverse area. Racism is a deep rooted, complex issue. Candidates can talk and empathize on this issue—but to bring about real change you need to really understand it. And, the only way to understand it to have personally experienced it. That's a viewpoint we need within our city council in order to build trust and unity. As a bi-racial business owner and father, I understand these issues. As a community, let's start asking how instead of accepting the what. During my campaign I have met with community leaders and citizens to learn their issues and voices. This included officers, police chiefs, and members of the sheriff department. I also met with neighborhoods we are all advocating to help. To address inequality requires taking time to meet the groups we are advocating for. That is why I got involved in the September 18 National Black Voter Day – I was the only candidate there. These are important events for us to gather input and show our support to build trust. I have endorsements from all sides on this issue. Why? Because in my business I've proven my ability to listen to and communicate with varied groups of people and backgrounds. Meeting both sides of every issue is a goal to find a common ground and develop solutions.

2. How would you facilitate a continued favorable economic environment for your community?

Having transparency is the key to this. We need our citizens to really understand our debt and where our money is being spent. We as a county need to seriously look at a county sales tax on non-essential goods. We are the only county in Iowa that does not have that. Some say it would lead to 12-14 million dollars a year that we could use to pay city debt and support community projects. And with the arena, the sporting events, and related shopping much of that could be funded by tourists coming from outside our county.

3. How do you feel about the current government regulatory environment and how might you improve what is currently in place?

Our community members need to know what is going on and how decisions affect them. I have learned a lot over the past few weeks about Coralville's finances. For one, small business owners should not be competing against the city for business while also paying property taxes, or have permits blocked due to competing with the city. There should be numerous community boards to help oversee what is being done with taxpayer money to ensure all projects benefit the community. There is no reason why Coralville can't build things like the arena while also ensuring those projects help other areas that need it.

4. What are your thoughts on TIF funding for projects that enhance economic growth and are you favorably disposed as to how this has been utilized by current and past councils?

TIFs need to be stricter and more balanced, especially with the current pandemic impacts to both schools and our businesses. We cannot take tax revenue from schools right now with numerous families struggling to connect online. There have also been numerous issues in the past including where TIFs have led to lawsuits which cost the city as well. TIFs need to be used in real circumstances to better a part of a community that needs it, such as for developers that would otherwise not develop here. If our small businesses start failing due to COVID-19, then that also is a risk to projects we have built with TIFs. TIFs have also been extremely useful and have made Coralville what it is, so we should not abandon them, but rather modify their use.

5. How do you plan to address the issue of affordable housing in your community?

I understand while these candidates talk about affordable housing, they miss the underlying issues of inequality. They miss the fact that many people in affordable housing right now struggle with basic education opportunities due to systemic oppression. I understand what it's like to apply for affordable housing as I once had to. I also understand that creating affordable housing while not creating opportunities is a band aid over the bigger issue. The question we need to answer is how can we make it so people don't need affordable housing. We should not fall victim into thinking the answer to complex questions is simply offering more of the current solution or more housing. Fix the underlying issue; fix the problem.

We must also notice that the cost of building is going up, so affordable housing is becoming not so affordable. And we need to recognize budget shortfalls that exist right now. From discussions with numerous developers, they are struggling to come to agreements with the city.

Home building generates substantial local economic activity, including new income and jobs for residents, and additional revenue for local government. The estimated one-year impacts of building 100 single-family homes in a typical local area include: \$28.7 million in local income, \$3.6 million in taxes and other revenue for local governments, and 394 local jobs. The additional, annually recurring impacts of building 100 single-family homes in a typical local area include: \$4.1 million in local income, \$1.0 million in taxes and other revenue for local governments, and 69 local jobs. So, yes we need building and home development to continue.

6. How do you plan to engage our membership to further enhance our area?

We need to get diverse in our thinking. Numerous groups in our city need their voices heard so city council can make the best decision instead of relying on just a select few. This includes the Greater Iowa City Area Home Builders Association. It is important that every voice is heard, and I have seen over the past couple weeks that numerous organizations have no voice and are not even considered in the decision making. That needs to change! Unprecedented times call for unprecedented thinking. We need diversity in thought. I want to represent that by representing the many voices of Coralville and bringing unity. I would reach out and keep your group involved. I would openly seek input from your leaders and members.