

# Save Clemson Candidate Survey – Robert Brookover

## Q1: Why are you running?

To continue the momentum council and the city has built over the past four years and to continue working on: Developing the Green Crescent Trail; Fixing our roads and adding sidewalks; Updating our zoning ordinance to insure it supports our upcoming Comprehensive Plan; Implementing the recommendations from the parks and recreation plan; Improving our service and staffing levels across all city departments; Working on solutions for developing affordable and workforce housing; Continuing to improve and strengthen our relationship with the university - there is good progress being made in rebuilding our once strong town-gown relations.

## Q2: What have you personally done to improve the lives of Clemson residents? Be specific

I have worked very hard with Andy Blondeau (City Administrator) and Leslie Wilder (Director of Finance) to untangle the city's previously messy budget and finances. In doing so, we have significantly increased funding with almost no impact to primary homeowners and identified funding to work on a variety of quality of life projects. A few current examples of projects that have received funding because of these efforts include an upcoming new section of the Green Crescent trail, the renovations and new amenities coming to Clemson Park (splashpad, new shelters, new landscaping, skate park), and the new pickleball courts and additional parking at Nettles Park. This funding has also allowed the city to hire additional police officers and staff across all departments and we are adding dedicated EMS service this year.

## Q3: If you were on council when the HUB was voted on, how would you have voted?

In favor

## Q4: What did you personally do to support or oppose the HUB? Be specific.

Before I get into my answer for this question, I want to go on record saying that the previous question is absolutely unfair to any candidates who were not on council. The Hub vote was not a simple decision and there were far reaching issues, context, and consequences that had to be considered. Because of the lawsuit, there was important/pertinent information about evidence against the city (from prior to 2021) that the candidates who were not on council did not have. There should have been an "I don't know" or "I'm not sure" option to be fair to them. My answer: There could have been multiple developments on Keowee Trail before the moratorium and in at least one case the city unfairly interfered with that

development. Knowing that the Keowee Trail property owners and their attorney had evidence of that interference against the city made it an almost certainty they would have won the lawsuit. So, I worked hard to make the best of a bad situation by squeezing the maximum public benefit out of the developers including over \$2.7 million in impact fees for infrastructure and capital costs (police, fire, parks, water, sewer, sanitation) paid for by the developer rather than you our permanent residents, an additional \$1 million from the developers for the park, the subsidized retail space to help attract new business, and the permanently accessible 30,000 square feet of public plaza space on the site. We did all of that while avoiding a significant and painful financial loss to the city from the lawsuit that our insurance would not have covered (we have known that since 2021 and were reminded of that several times in the 6-9 months leading up to the vote). That financial loss would have taken 5-10+ years to dig out from under while having far reaching negative impacts across city services, for our city employees, and for you, our residents. I'm happy to provide more details in one on one and small groups. Please contact me to set up a time to learn more if interested.

Q5: If elected what would you do to support the creation of additional affordable workforce housing in Clemson?

I will continue the efforts that I have already started which have included identifying a piece of property that the city has already purchased and we are working on identifying partners to build affordable/workforce housing on that property. Additionally, I have been working on an initiative that we should be able to share more about in the near future that, if successful, will create a significant affordable/workforce housing fund and partnership to provide affordable housing for police, fire, nurses, teachers, university staff, etc. Also, I have supported the work of the Shaw Center and am continuing to research public-private partnership models that have been successful in other cities that might be replicated in Clemson.

Q6: If elected, what would you do (be specific) to get Clemson University to house a greater portion of their students on campus?

As a first step, I want to be sure everyone knows the full story and trends over the past 20+ years. I will start by asking the university to provide on-campus housing data from the year 2000-present and do an independent analysis of the percentage of students who have lived on campus over time (I will FOIA that info if necessary). In this analysis I will specifically look at the impact moving Bridge students on campus had on those numbers. Then, I will request that we do an independent market demand study for on-campus housing and work with the Joint City University Advisory Board and the Board of Trustees to make the case for the university to meet any gaps between the demand for and supply of on-campus

housing. Finally, I have been told that the university is planning to build additional housing beyond what was recently announced in Douthit Hills but they will not announce those plans until approvals are in place.

Q7: If elected what actions would you take to limit the growth of student housing in the city if negotiations with the university are not successful? Be specific.

Once the comprehensive plan is complete at the end of this year, I will work with staff and planning commission to insure that our zoning code is rewritten and updated to support the comprehensive plan. Additionally, if the comprehensive plan calls for student housing development in any areas, I will work to restrict purpose-built student housing to a few carefully selected, strategic areas that we identify and that can deliver public benefit through impact fees (money for parks, trails, and other infrastructure) and for other initiatives (like funding for workforce/affordable housing) through negotiations with developers. Additionally, I will advocate that we provide incentives and support for those who own older, student housing stock to upgrade and convert some of those properties into affordable/workforce housing. My other goal will be to have base, by right zoning that makes the need for student oriented, Planned Development (PDs) projects like the Hub unnecessary in the future. The other thing that appears to be on the uptick again is students renting/living in residential neighborhoods along with an increase in short term rentals owned by absentee, second homeowners. I will work to strengthen regulations to protect our residential neighborhoods from being taken over by long- and short-term rentals.

Q8: Do you plan to accept campaign contributions from apartment or home developers?

No

Q9: Please provide your name, phone number and candidate website (if available)

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