

Save Clemson Candidate Survey – Robert Halfacre for Mayor

Q1: Why are you running?

My service, thus far, to our amazing community has been challenging and rewarding. I am proud of all we have accomplished together as a council, city team, and a community. We have overcome some adversity over the years as my term began with the onset of COVID and has recently been defined by difficult discussions and decisions around student housing and zoning. I am seeking reelection as many of our biggest challenges are still in front of us: primarily ensuring that the safety, accessibility, beauty, and inclusivity of what gets built in Clemson involves thoughtful and collaborative direction. Further, I want to bring focus back to all the positive aspects of our community and continue putting effort towards improving resources that bring a better quality of life to all our residents.

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

I am present. I am at the ball fields cheering on our local athletes and getting to know their friends and families. I am at the elementary school volunteering as a mentor and greeting children and their families on walk to school day. I am at Daniel High School a couple of days each semester teaching a credit class to the Juniors and Seniors. I am in all the neighborhoods (as invited) talking with residents and helping to clean up their parks. I am downtown setting up tables for community events and talking with business owners and residents about their needs. I am at city events supporting our amazing staff and getting to know them better. I began serving this community many years before I became involved with council, it's the little things I do that help identify the big things we work towards as a community. A few specific examples: Championed the Green Crescent Trail and local park enhancements, consistently make fiscally responsible decisions to preserve the financial health of our community, currently Chairperson of the Pickens County Municipal Association, and served on the Board of Directors of the Daniel High School Foundation for ten years.

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

Support

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

The entire council originally agreed that considering a Planned Development on the Keowee Trail property was a viable alternative to existing zoning. Additionally, the approval of the development would translate to the sale of the property and the settlement of the \$5.25(+) million lawsuit against the city. I was designated (along with one other council member) to join a group that met with the developer to discuss plans and find compromises. (This designation is a documented fact).

These meetings resulted in regular updates to the full council (articulated in Memos that are available to the public, also a documented fact) that allowed us to seek further changes/compromises as needed. As zoned, student housing could be built to encompass the entire property, line to line, with no benefit to the public. The HUB as approved, allows for public green spaces adjacent to Abernathy Park, retail areas with developer incentives to house complementary businesses, a limited number of townhouses and financial help in revitalizing Abernathy Park among other benefits. Voting for the HUB was a difficult decision but one that I stand behind. Now that Keowee Trail lawsuit has been dropped, you will be hearing specifics on what we stood to lose by turning down this development and taking on the lawsuit. You should also understand that the Keowee Trail property is zoned to allow student housing. Upon commencement of the (now dropped) lawsuit, the right to build student housing would still be in place.

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

An important start is to consider solutions that are viable in a small city. While we are not in a position to support an independent housing authority, I am in support of some innovative ideas currently in the works that will provide resources towards great improvements in this area. I, along with others, am currently working with City Administration on an initiative that would use property tax dollars (paid by an existing development) to create affordable/attainable & workforce housing within city limits. We are hopeful to have a relevant ordinance in place by year end. Further, I supported the initiative to acquire land to accommodate affordable/attainable housing. The city was awarded a \$2.7 million grant (thanks to our amazing administration) to support this project. I will continue to champion these existing efforts while seeking other innovative ways to serve our community workforce with better housing options.

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

I have spent the past 4 years working towards improved relationships with University leadership. This effort has contributed to numerous joint projects between the City and the University. From collaborative efforts to make COVID testing readily available to our community, to consistent meetings involving leadership from both, to sharing the SNOW facilities (old Y beach site), to jointly hosting a successful music festival: we continue to explore ways to join together for the good of the area. It is this relationship that will facilitate conversations around the growing student population and the housing issues that have resulted. I won't pretend that I can force the University to act in any particular way.....which is why the relationship that I have grown and fostered is so important.

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.

A big part of finding solutions to the influx in student housing is recognizing that there is value in long-range planning. And that doesn't mean ZERO growth. It means SMART growth. We need to closely regulate when student housing is needed, where it gets built and how it looks. If and when it does get built, we need to make sure it gives something substantial back to the public good. ClemsonNext, a strategic plan for our city's development which resulted from research conducted by the consultant firm, Development Strategies, and included feedback from the overall community, is a solid blueprint. Additionally, our Planning Department and Planning Commission is in the process of updating our comprehensive plan and zoning within the city. The lawsuits brought about by local residents and the discord created from within the council are counterproductive and bring work we need to be doing as a cohesive council and community to a standstill. Councils of the past were unable to predict the growth, which is how we got here. Sitting in turmoil and creating false (and therefore unproven) narratives will only put us further behind.

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

Undecided

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

Robert Halfacre, 864-888-7127 Facebook: Halfacre for Clemson Mayor