

2026 Scottsdale City Council Questionnaire

Candidate Name: Barry Graham
Email: barrysgraham@gmail.com
Years in Scottsdale: 30 Years



Motivation, Values, and Governance

Why are you seeking election to Scottsdale City Council?

I'm seeking re-election to continue delivering on the two promises I made in my 2022 campaign: I don't go along to get along, and I always put residents first. As the only incumbent councilmember who voted against Axon's 1,900 apartments, I have worked to restore resident values to city government through fiscal scrutiny, ideology-free decisions, and strong neighborhood protection.

If elected, what would you most like to accomplish during your term?

Build on what I've already delivered: continued financial accountability, full funding for public safety and road maintenance, protection of open spaces and neighborhoods from unsupported high-density development, and keeping city government focused on basic services — all while preserving our tourism economy and quality of life.

Are there any matters that may reasonably come before the City Council in which you would have a potential conflict of interest? If yes, please describe it generally.

No

Governing documents you have reviewed in preparation for your candidacy:

The General Plan, various character area plans, transportation action plans, and various others.

Processes: Created, Improved, Reduced, or Eliminated

Please address which City of Scottsdale (COS) or citizen processes you believe should fall into the following categories.

Created: No answer

Improved: No Answer

Reduced: No Answer

Eliminated: No answer

Conflict Resolution

When faced with disagreement among City Council members, what approach would you take to encourage productive discussion and reach effective outcomes?

I follow the facts, resident input, and fiscal reality — exactly as I did when we stopped the controversial Scottsdale Road roundabout and road diets after listening to residents. Asking three simple questions — “Does this protect neighborhoods? Can taxpayers afford it? Do residents support it?” — leads to practical, lasting results.

Vision, Community, and Quality of Life

Vision for Scottsdale

What is your long-term vision for Scottsdale over the next 10–20 years?

A city that preserves its character, open spaces, and tourism appeal while delivering strong public safety, well-maintained roads, and sound finances. I’ve already helped deliver record tourism and sales tax collections, historic low crime rates, and home values rising faster than surrounding communities by keeping government ideology-free and resident-focused.

Community Engagement

How will you engage with residents and neighborhoods before making policy decisions?

I will continue what I’ve always done: regular communication with residents, direct responses to emails and calls, availability for meetings, and listening to their ideas. I make no major decision without clear resident feedback — the same approach that stopped the prior council’s extreme, blank-check climate plan.

Public Safety & Neighborhood Quality of Life

What actions would you prioritize to improve public safety and neighborhood quality of life citywide?

I’ve already prioritized ending tourism-threatening homeless encampments and aggressive panhandling while fully funding police and firefighters. I will continue pushing for faster response times, targeted enforcement, and strong code compliance to protect neighborhoods citywide.

Noise Management and Enforcement

Noise management and enforcement have been ongoing concerns in certain areas of Scottsdale, including high-activity and entertainment districts. What is your approach to balancing vibrant activity areas with improved enforcement of existing and future noise standards to protect nearby neighborhoods?

Enforce existing ordinances consistently and expand them when and where appropriate. Vibrant districts support tourism and our economy, but they cannot degrade nearby homes and condos. I support clear rules and timely responses.

Growth, Land Use, and Housing

Key Issues for City Council

What do you see as the three most important issues currently facing the City Council?

1. Fiscal accountability.
2. Protecting residents' quality of life by managing growth — development must be resident- supported, which is why I voted against Axon's apartments.
3. Protecting tourism, open spaces, and neighborhood character.

Key Issues for Residents

What do you see as the three most important issues currently facing the City Council?

1. Preserving neighborhood quality of life and open spaces amid growth pressure.
2. Maintaining roads and infrastructure.
3. Ensuring the city government stays focused on basic services rather than ideology.

Land Use and Zoning Framework

How should the General Plan guide rezoning and land use decisions?

Every land-use decision must be evaluated through the voter-approved General Plan. I have consistently voted against high-density apartments that did not align with it.

Land and Zoning Framework

Under what circumstances, if any, do you support increases/decreases in building height or density?

Only when clearly supported by surrounding residents, when it does not endanger neighborhood character, and when infrastructure (roads, water, safety) is already in place without burdening taxpayers. I've voted this way on every project.

Rural and Low-Density Areas

How should Scottsdale approach rezoning requests affecting rural or low-density areas?

With extreme caution. These areas define Scottsdale's appeal. Rezoning should only occur with neighborhood support and when it maintains the rural or low-density character residents value — exactly as I have approached every land-use vote.

Conditional Zoning and Enforcement

What is your view on conditional zoning approvals and compliance enforcement?

I support conditional zoning when conditions are clear, enforceable, and in the public interest.

Conditional Zoning and Enforcement

Under what conditions should approvals be modified or revoked by City Council action, or allowed to expire?

When the applicant fails to meet agreed conditions, when significant new impacts emerge that were not disclosed, or when the project no longer serves the public interest as originally represented.

Conditional Zoning and Enforcement

How would you achieve improved code enforcement?

Better communication across departments, increased staff training where needed, prioritizing resident complaints, public tracking of compliance, and holding departments accountable — building on the enforcement gains we've already made.

Major Redevelopment Projects

What principles should guide City Council decisions on large-scale redevelopment projects that significantly affect surrounding neighborhoods or infrastructure?

Resident support, full infrastructure capacity, protection of neighboring residents' quality of life, and ensuring the project pays its own way. These are the exact principles I applied when I voted against Axon's apartments.

Housing Affordability and Workforce Housing

What role, if any, should the city play in addressing housing affordability for workforce residents?

Limited to removing unnecessary regulatory barriers and ensuring new development includes adequate infrastructure. I do not support subsidies, and Scottsdale cannot house everyone.

Economy, Infrastructure, and City Operations

Water Sustainability

Following the shift from the 2024 Sustainability Plan to the current Sustainability Task Force, what is your vision for Scottsdale's long-term water resiliency? Specifically, how would you prioritize competing needs such as the expansion of the **Advanced Water Treatment facility** for direct potable reuse, **continued aquifer 'banking'**, and community-facing incentives like **turf removal rebates**?

Prioritize proven reliability: continued aquifer banking and responsible treatment capacity. The city is also considering options including purchasing water rights and participating in the expansion of the [relevant dam]. Every decision must be evaluated on cost-effectiveness and actual water savings while protecting ratepayers. This is why I voted against waiving Axon's water commitments — equivalent to the annual needs of 12,000 homes.

Transportation and Infrastructure

What priorities should guide updates to the Transportation Master Plan?

Maintaining and improving existing roads first, reducing congestion, and protecting residents' safety from ideological projects such as dedicated bus lanes, road diets, and multi-lane roundabouts on arterial roads.

Transportation and Infrastructure

How should parking needs be addressed, particularly in high-activity areas?

We are delivering an unprecedented two parking garages — one bond-funded and voter-approved in Old Town, and another in the entertainment district. We must also protect existing parking and enforce current rules. I have stood up to Dark Money attempts to overturn voter-approved Old Town parking—after which we discovered a behind-the-scenes agenda to sell the Corral lot to a private developer to stack high-density housing—and will continue defending practical parking for residents and businesses.

Entertainment and Activity Districts

What considerations should guide the creation, regulation, and ongoing oversight of entertainment or special activity districts?

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Short-Term Rentals and Neighborhood Impacts

What tools should cities have to manage short-term rentals and mitigate neighborhood impacts?

The city should use every tool possible to mitigate neighborhood impacts—and should continue pressuring the legislature to return local control.

Economic Development and Tourism

What role should the City Council and city administration play in economic development partnerships, tourism promotion, and cultural investments?

Support partnerships that strengthen tourism and jobs while protecting the open spaces, safety, and character that drive our record collections. Demand real accountability — every partnership and investment needs clear metrics, measurable return on investment, and regular review so residents benefit first. I was proud to vote for the first-ever metrics with the Scottsdale Arts contract.

Fiscal Policy and Accountability

Fiscal Sustainability

Fiscal sustainability is often debated but rarely defined. To understand your approach to the city's long-term financial health:

How do you personally define "Fiscal Sustainability" for the City of Scottsdale?

Living within our means — funding basic services without unnecessary tax or fee increases, maintaining healthy reserves, and avoiding debt that burdens future residents. I've delivered this by re-prioritizing road maintenance and rolling back ideological spending.

What priority level should the Council assign to sustainability versus immediate community needs?

Both must be balanced. Long-term fiscal health protects our ability to meet immediate needs — exactly what the new conservative council majority has been achieving.

What specific actions would you take to ensure the Council remains focused on these principles during the budget process?

Require performance metrics for every department, carefully review new spending, and tie every budget item to resident priorities.

Revenue and Expenditures

The city must constantly balance its income sources with its service obligations. What specific principles should guide your decisions to create, increase, or eliminate city revenue sources (e.g., taxes, fees, or bonds)?

Only when necessary for basic services, after exhausting efficiencies, and with full transparency. I've consistently voted this way.

How would you prioritize spending when city revenues exceed expectations versus when they fall short?

When revenues exceed expectations: pay down debt, accelerate capital projects, and improve basic services. When they fall short: protect public safety and infrastructure first, then find efficiencies — the same discipline that produced record tourism and sales tax under our leadership.

Departmental Performance and Accountability

Defining a budget is only the first step; ensuring those funds are used effectively is the second. How would you improve transparency and performance measurement across city departments?

Ensure charter officers communicate and collaborate to deliver regular outcome-based reports to Council — building on the accountability gains from hiring a business-minded City Manager.

What metrics or "red flags" would you look for to determine if a department is being held accountable for its spending and results?

Missed response times, repeated budget overruns, high unresolved complaints, and lack of measurable resident-focused outcomes.

Regional and State Relations

Representing Scottsdale at the State Level

Cities do not control state legislation, but they are often affected by it. How would you approach working with state legislators and regional partners to communicate Scottsdale's interests and concerns on state-level issues that impact the city?

Build strong, fact-based relationships to protect our local control, water rights, fiscal health, and resident priorities — the same approach I use on Council.

Civic Leadership & Final Insights

Please list organizations, civic volunteer involvement, and any Scottsdale boards, commissions, or task forces you have served on, including the year(s).

Planning Commission
Chairman, Transportation Commission
Chairman, Building Advisory Board of Appeals
Chairman, Yes to Bonds (2015)
Citizens Fire Academy
Scottsdale Leadership Program, Class 28 (2014)

Additional Comments

Please share any additional information you believe would help voters better understand your approach to city government leadership.

Scottsdale thrives when we keep government focused on the basics: fiscal responsibility, neighborhood protection, and resident-driven decisions. I've kept my word since 2022 — standing up to special interests, delivering resident-friendly results, and putting taxpayers first. I have also helped uncover \$150 million in project cost overruns.