

2026 Scottsdale City Council Questionnaire

Candidate Name: Solange Whitehead
Email: solange@solangeforscottsdale.com
Years in Scottsdale: 30 years



Motivation, Values, and Governance

Why are you seeking election to Scottsdale City Council?

I'm running to keep delivering on community priorities—protecting neighborhoods and the Preserve, dedicating new parks and reinvesting in our oldest parks, supporting our public safety partners, securing Scottsdale's water future and safeguarding our environment and financial security for the long-term.

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

I have focused on transparency, fiscal discipline, and delivering resident-driven priorities. As the champion for our Preserve, parks, and neighborhoods – and by listening to residents - Scottsdale has won big at the ballot box: 2019 bond infrastructure funding, ratification of the General Plan 2035, and Propositions 490 and 491.

In 2027, I will restore public comment and the City Hall tradition of working with residents and small businesses. Critically, I will fund and keep Scottsdale Water's strategic plan on track. Restore the public's trust in City Hall with fiscal discipline and regular Council work study to engage residents and make decision making fully transparent. Create a work environment that (once again) attracts, retains, respects top technical talent and data-driven decision making.

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:

Scottsdale City Charter, Scottsdale General Plan 2035, Scottsdale Character Area Plans, Transportation Plan, Tourism Strategic Plan 2023, Westworld Strategic Plan, Budget, Sustainability Plan, Scottsdale Water Strategic Plan

Processes: Created, Improved, Reduced, or Eliminated

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

Policies to strengthen and more clearly define the independent role of the City Treasurer.

Design, Standards, and Policy Manual (DSPM) - With the legislative-driven loss of the Development Review Board authority, the City of Scottsdale must strengthen and tighten desired design standards in the DSPM. One example, the DSPM can be amended to include specific requirements and enforcement rules that govern the aspirations of Scottsdale's first Shade and Tree Plan.

Council civility on and off the dais.

The ability of a future Council majority to repeal adopted policies, plans, and mid-construction projects without community outreach, Council work study sessions, and data that demonstrates public benefit and a complete and transparent financial accounting.

Allowing personal phones and computers on the dais.

Conflict Resolution

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

In divided votes, particularly on large mixed-use and hotel developments, I have worked to identify compromise conditions while still voting against projects that I believed conflicted with the General Plan or neighborhood compatibility.

My initiative that became Prop 490 was an example of compromise. I strongly supported a 0.2% sales tax to include funding for additional land conservation. My colleagues opposed the inclusion of land purchases. I voted with my colleagues on a compromised 0.15% sales tax to fund the Preserve, parks, and public safety and it was subsequently approved by voters in every Scottsdale precinct.

Vision, Community, and Quality of Life

Vision for Scottsdale

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

My vision emphasizes preserving character and open space while allowing appropriate growth. This is reflected in my repeated support for General Plan 2035 adherence during rezoning debates. Strengthening the partnership between Council and the citizens we represent is a critical component in maintaining our quality of life and safety.

Community Engagement

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

While large zoning cases make the news, the majority of my time is spent working with residents on neighborhood specific issues. I am available seven days a week and regularly meet with residents. I write newsletters to keep residents informed, and represent the city at numerous events within Scottsdale and statewide.

In March 2020, when covid struck, I began volunteering with the city to provide food for low-income seniors. I enjoy volunteering so much that I continue to this day.

Public Safety & Neighborhood Quality of Life

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

In 2022, I earned the endorsements of Police Officers of Scottsdale Association (POSA) and the Scottsdale Fire Fighters Association. I am the only incumbent to have earned the endorsement of POSA in 2026. The Fire Fighters have not yet endorsed candidates.

With my leadership, the city added a police ranger unit, an ambulance service, and ramped up wildfire mitigation efforts. I served on the Props 490-491 PAC and walked door-to-door with the fire fighter association members in support of the propositions. Together with public safety support, voters overwhelmingly approved both. On my watch, Scottsdale was named a “top 10 safest city in the nation”

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?

undefined

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?

Growth pressure coupled with State Legislature pre-emption laws, housing availability, open space, and neighborhood protection have defined many Council debates,

My focus has helped insure that approved development includes community investments that add value. Key issues are ensuring long term water security and addressing growing traffic concerns.

Key Issues for Residents

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

The loss of a voice and ability to influence decisions at City Hall and Scottsdale's water security are critical issues. The current Council majority's move away from heat mitigation in Scottsdale also threatens our tourism industry, has increased the summer exodus of residents, and negatively impacts public health and the ability of small businesses to stay in business.

Land Use and Zoning Framework

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

I have cited the voter-approved General Plan in opposing projects that significantly exceeded planned density or height, including project citywide.

Land and Zoning Framework

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

By helping to write and pass the General Plan 2035, I helped protect against building heights adjacent to single-family neighborhoods, advocating for step-down transitions and compatibility standards. I removed infill incentives which were used to bypass transitions and allowed for increases in height and density while lowering development standards.

To protect against a future Council majority designating an area as a "growth corridor", my initiative to require a super majority vote was also added to the General Plan.

My Council colleagues and I re-wrote and adopted an Old Town Character Area Plan with significantly reduced height allowances and required public open space, pedestrian infrastructure, and shade.

Rural and Low-Density Areas

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

I have supported preserving rural zoning in both north and south Scottsdale (along Oak St west of 64th Street). I'm not always successful. My effort to make subdividing a 5-acre parcel a major general plan amendment was (essentially) vetoed by the State legislature.

However, on multiple occasions, zoning attorneys cited my opposition for their client's decision not to pursue zoning. Examples include an upzoning of a 5-acre parcel in Cactus Acres, a 2-story development on Oak St, and a 10-acre parcel near Tom's Thumb Trailhead

Conditional Zoning and Enforcement

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

I have pushed for stronger enforcement of zoning stipulations, particularly when projects fail to meet traffic mitigation, noise, or operational conditions imposed at approval.

Conditional Zoning and Enforcement

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

I led the effort to add 5-year expiration dates on zoning cases. Per state law, the zoning does not automatically revert however. A Council-led process is still required.

Conditional Zoning and Enforcement

How would you achieve improved code enforcement?

I supported increased focus on enforcement staffing and responsiveness, especially tied to short-term rental complaints and neighborhood nuisance issues. I have worked with the police department to create a special unit to address short term rental issues.

I am also proud that Scottsdale continues to eliminate graffiti within hours of complaints being filed.

Major Redevelopment Projects

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

In multiple Council discussions, I have emphasized requiring developers to demonstrate infrastructure capacity, traffic impact mitigation, and neighborhood compatibility before approval.

Large projects approved during my time on the City Council include large, public open spaces, more robust tree and landscaping plans, rainwater harvesting, energy efficiency and water conservation, and other neighborhood investments.

Housing Affordability and Workforce Housing

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

I negotiated the first multifamily project that included a workforce housing component. Since that time, many approved projects include units designated for teachers, police, fire, and nurses. Also, by restricting multifamily projects to areas that have transportation and jobs, I hope to reduce the costs of living and working in Scottsdale. I continue to strongly oppose blanket upzoning that conflicts with existing neighborhoods.

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**?

Fully fund Scottsdale Water including the four identified projects in the Strategic Plan: Scottsdale APRW, Harquahala, Bartlett Dam expansion, and Phoenix APRW. Increase staffing levels in the conservation department to expedite our community's desire and willingness to take steps to "tap" the abundance of water available through conservation, leak and evaporation prevention, and technology advances to reduce water needs - without reducing quality of life

Transportation and Infrastructure

What priorities should guide updates to the Transportation Master Plan?

With a former Council in 2023, we adopted a new Transportation Action Plan (TAP) that scheduled road paving and improvement projects based on need and cost. The Plan allowed our Council to remove a proposed road in the McDowell Sonoran Preserve – a road that would have been costly to residents and wildlife alike. A sidewalk in South Scottsdale was added and is now under construction. But a proposed road widening on a tree lined street in the Shea corridor was eliminated. The TAP specifically eliminated any reference to light rail.

Road efficiencies have improved with better traffic light management and the addition of turnout bays citywide. While funding Council approved a road paving schedule and funded quick response pothole repairs.

Transportation and Infrastructure

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

I have supported data-driven parking studies to balance business needs with neighborhood spillover impacts. In 2022, my Council reviewed and adopted more stringent parking codes requiring visitor parking in multifamily developments.

I negotiated underground parking for all major development projects approved in the airpark and Old Town Scottsdale. Two Old Town Scottsdale projects also include underground public parking at a discount for tax payers.

Entertainment and Activity Districts

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

I have supported data-driven parking studies to balance business needs with neighborhood spillover impacts. In 2022, my Council reviewed and adopted more stringent parking codes requiring visitor parking in multifamily developments.

I negotiated underground parking for all major development projects approved in the airpark and Old Town Scottsdale. Two Old Town Scottsdale projects also include underground public parking at a discount for tax payers.

Short-Term Rentals and Neighborhood Impacts

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

I have worked with other Arizona municipalities to advocate for state legislative reform of short-term rental laws, which currently limit local control. While I have not been able to fully-restore local control, we have made significant gains. I have worked with the city's legal team to write and adopt the strictest short term rental ordinances in Arizona. I have ensured that the police department enforces the ordinances to the fullest extent allowed under the law. I am also there for residents struggling with the worst offenders, often taking their calls over the weekend and at night.

Economic Development and Tourism

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

I support maintaining and expanding Scottsdale's tourism economy to include innovation and knowledge-based industries. The Axon campus will make Scottsdale the global destination for law enforcement professionals that will now travel to Scottsdale to attend conferences, participate in the R&D of future public safety technology, and attend training seminars. A huge win for public safety in Scottsdale and a nice demographic group of visitors!

We must restore a culture that respects small business owners and never disparages the owners or their businesses in public meetings. A city should help their small businesses to succeed – especially those trying to grow – rather than use bureaucracy as an excuse to shut down businesses.

We need to recognize that a clean and healthy environment is crucial to Scottsdale's economy as well as a culture that respects and welcomes people of all backgrounds and cultures. Without these priorities, Scottsdale's hospitals and other businesses will not be able to attract staff, Scottsdale will no longer be attractive to start-up companies (both US and non-US based), and we will continue to tarnish and undermine Scottsdale's enviable brand as a luxury destination.

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?

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

With fiscal discipline and empowered, qualified staff, a Council can deliver the best results while preparing for dips in the economy. My track record is proof:

- Doubled the City's financial reserves and adopted policies requiring higher reserve levels.
- Prop 491 raised the expenditure limit which had not been addressed for 14-years and instituted a policy requiring an annual review and Council action when justified.
- Proposition 490 – secured dedicated funding for resident priorities and included strong citizen oversight and strict council accountability
- Over my tenure, paid down public safety pensions (PSPRS) by \$110 million. This results in a \$5-6 million per year savings and gives public safety officers confidence
- Capitalized on record low interest rates to reduce taxpayer costs on the Preserve debt.
- Renegotiated contracts citywide to be more favorable to taxpayers.

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

In budget discussions, I have emphasized funding for public safety, infrastructure maintenance, code enforcement, parks and the Preserve, and programs that serve our veterans, seniors, and other vulnerable populations.

In my tenure, resident requests have been vetted and have directly influenced the adopted budget.

This year, I am working to protect against dangerous budget cuts to water and other critical infrastructure projects and resident services.

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)?

I am a fiscal conservative at home and at City Hall. I am cautious in the spending of revenue, particularly revenue that may fluctuate with the economy. I believe in rainy day funds – as noted above – and ensure tax dollars spent directly benefit taxpayers to maintain service levels and long-term financial health in good times and in bad.

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

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?

I have supported improving transparency through public-facing data and performance reporting, allowing residents to better evaluate city operations.

The City of Scottsdale and its departments are routinely the recipients of national recognition awards for our financial policies and accounting.

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

I have served on the City's Audit Committee for eight years. Scheduled and detailed audits and a team culture have identified cost savings opportunities, found waste or inefficiencies, and have helped the Council negotiate partner contracts that better protect tax dollars and maximize results.

What is not acceptable is to use factors outside the control of the City Council or staff, such as the record-breaking inflations, as an opportunity to undermine trust in City processes and staff.

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?

I have engaged with regional partners and state legislators, particularly on short-term rental reform efforts where cities have sought greater authority to address neighborhood impacts.

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).

Helped led the successful effort to protect our Preserve in 2018 (prop 420), former Scottsdale McDowell Sonoran Preserve Commissioner, former Waste Not Board Member, Arizona Wildlife Federation's Conservationist of the Year, founding, volunteer Rainforest Run race director donating over \$100,000 to TNC rainforest conservation projects, and provided the funding to establish a 3-D printing lab at the Scottsdale Community College.

Volunteer at the City of Scottsdale Food bank (2020-present).

Additional Comments

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

- Preserve Champion
- Funding resident priorities including parks and public safety.
- Support for General Plan–aligned growth
- Advocacy for neighborhood protection
- Focus on transparency and enforcement
- Willingness to take principled positions on controversial development cases