

VOTER GUIDE

Find out what key issues that impact Naperville this candidate supports or opposes in the Naperville City Council Election 2025.



Ashfaq Syed

Naperville City Council Candidate

Status: Returning Candidate

Campaign Website: ashfaqfornaperville.com

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KEY QUESTIONS

Do you support or oppose the Grocery Tax Proposal?

Do you support or oppose the creation of new tax incentives?

Do you support or oppose plans to build the Nichols Library Parking Garage?

Do you support or oppose the redevelopment of the 5th avenue area?

Do you support using city resources to help small businesses recover and stay competitive in Naperville?

| SUPPORT | OPPOSE | ABSTAIN |
|---------|--------|---------|
| | ✓ | |
| | ✓ | |
| | ✓ | |
| ✓ | | |
| ✓ | | |



Candidate Biography and Priorities

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CURRENT OCCUPATION

Banker and Business Owner

EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND

JD, Boston College Law School, 2007; BA, Vanderbilt University (magna cum laude), 2004; Neuqua Valley High School Class of 2000 (1st Graduating Class). I am admitted to practice law in the State of Illinois, the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, the Northern District of Illinois, and the United States Supreme Court.

RELEVANT BUSINESS EXPERIENCE

With a successful career in finance and banking, I bring a strong background in fiscal management, budget oversight, and economic strategy—critical skills for serving on the Naperville City Council. As Co-Chair of the 2020 Complete Count Committee, I helped Naperville secure millions in state and federal funding through a best-in-the-nation census response rate, ensuring resources were properly allocated to support local businesses and community services.

As President of the Naperville Public Library Board, I oversee a multi-million dollar budget, ensuring efficient operations while maintaining one of the highest-rated public library systems in the nation. My experience in contract negotiations, strategic financial planning, and resource management has strengthened public services while keeping costs low for residents.

Additionally, my work on the Board of Directors for Loaves & Fishes Community Services and the Naperville Environment and Sustainability Task Force has allowed me to develop partnerships, secure funding, and implement programs that directly benefit Naperville businesses and families.

I understand economic development, responsible budgeting, and smart investments—ensuring Naperville remains a place where businesses thrive and residents receive high-quality services without unnecessary financial burden.



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ELABORATE ON YOUR POSITION FOR THE ABOVE KEY QUESTIONS.

I support allocating city resources to create programs and incentives that help small businesses recover, grow, and remain competitive in Naperville's economy. Small businesses are the backbone of our local economy, providing jobs, driving innovation, and fostering a unique and thriving community. However, they face increasing challenges such as rising operational costs, supply chain disruptions, and workforce shortages.

To ensure that Naperville remains a hub for small business success, I'll advocate for:

- A dedicated small business grant or loan program to assist with expansion, technology upgrades, and hiring.
- Prioritizing Naperville-based businesses for city RFPs and contracts to keep taxpayer dollars circulating within the community.
- Streamlining the permitting process to make it easier for entrepreneurs to launch and expand businesses.
- Providing technical support and resources to help businesses adapt to changing market demands.
- Developing partnerships with regional and national business networks to ensure Naperville's businesses have opportunities to grow beyond our city's borders.

Naperville has the potential to be a leader in economic innovation, with businesses that are not just competitive locally, but regionally and nationally as well. By investing in smart business policies and fostering a pro-business climate, we can create an environment where entrepreneurs and small businesses thrive, bringing jobs and long-term economic stability to our community.

WHAT ARE THE TOP CHALLENGES FACING NAPERVILLE'S BUSINESS COMMUNITY?

Naperville's business community faces several challenges that impact economic success:

- Commercial Affordability: Rising property costs and leasing rates make it difficult for small businesses to thrive.
- Infrastructure & Traffic: Congestion and limited transit options hinder accessibility for customers and employees.
- Regulatory Barriers: Business owners cite zoning, licensing, and approval processes as obstacles to expansion and innovation.

Addressing these challenges is essential to ensuring that Naperville remains a business-friendly city that fosters both entrepreneurial success and corporate investment.



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WHAT IS YOUR ACTION PLAN FOR ECONOMIC GROWTH?

To strengthen Naperville's economy, I will focus on:

- Streamlining Business Approvals: Reduce bureaucratic hurdles by improving the permitting process.
- Public-Private Partnerships: Collaborate with businesses to develop job training programs tailored to local industry needs.
- Infrastructure Investments: Improve transportation and parking to support business growth.
- Incentives for Growth: Explore incentives for businesses investing in sustainability, job creation, and technology.
- Supporting Small Businesses: Develop mentorship programs and access to low-interest business loans.

By fostering innovation, reducing red tape, and investing in infrastructure, we can keep Naperville's economy strong.

HOW WILL YOU COLLABORATE WITH THE NAPERVILLE AREA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

The Naperville Area Chamber of Commerce is vital to a thriving business climate. As a Council Member, I will:

- Engage in Regular Dialogue with the Chamber to understand evolving business needs.
- Advocate for Business-Friendly Policies that simplify regulations and promote economic growth.
- Support Infrastructure Investments that improve business accessibility and commercial districts.
- Champion Entrepreneurship Programs that connect startups with mentorship, funding, and networking opportunities.
- Encourage Workforce Development Partnerships between businesses, schools, and workforce training organizations.
- Promote Local Business Participation in City Bidding Processes by working with the Chamber to inform members about city contracts and ensuring transparency in procurement opportunities.

A strong business community means a strong Naperville. My commitment is to work collaboratively with the Chamber to maintain a competitive and prosperous local economy.



WHAT ARE YOUR BUDGET PRIORITIES FOR BUSINESSES?

A balanced budget should reflect both fiscal responsibility and economic growth by:

- Prioritizing Infrastructure Improvements: Enhancing roads, public transit, and commercial districts to support business operations.
- Supporting Business Incentives: Investing in local grants and tax credits to encourage new business development.
- Public Safety & Emergency Services: Ensuring Naperville remains a safe place for businesses and customers.
- Sustainability Initiatives: Promoting energy efficiency programs that reduce costs for businesses.
- Smart Spending Strategies: Carefully assessing new expenditures while ensuring long-term financial stability.
- Ensuring Fair and Transparent Procurement Practices: Reviewing the city's bidding process to prioritize Naperville-based businesses for municipal contracts and RFPs.

By aligning our budget with business growth, we can create a thriving and resilient local economy.

WHAT ARE YOUR REVENUE AND TAX STRATEGIES?

Naperville must maintain a competitive tax structure that supports business growth while ensuring the city's financial health. My approach:

- Avoid Overburdening Businesses: Keep business taxes low while diversifying revenue sources.
- Leverage Grants & State Funding: Secure external funding for key infrastructure and business development programs.
- Review and Modernize Fee Structures: Ensure that permit and licensing fees remain fair and reflect actual service costs.
- Promote Economic Expansion: A growing business community leads to increased revenue through sales tax and property taxes.
- Encourage Smart Development: Strategically plan commercial and mixed-use developments that generate long-term revenue.
- Support Local Procurement: Keep tax dollars in Naperville by ensuring that city contracts and vendor partnerships prioritize local businesses whenever possible.

A strong local economy depends on policies that attract investment while maintaining financial responsibility.



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HOW WILL YOU HELP BUILD A STRONG WORKFORCE PIPELINE FOR NAPERVILLE'S EMPLOYERS?

Naperville businesses need a skilled workforce. I will advocate for:

- Stronger Partnerships with Local Schools & Colleges: Expand vocational training and apprenticeships.
- Business-Led Job Training Programs: Connect businesses with students and job seekers for mentorship and hands-on experience.
- Encouraging High-Growth Industries: Support STEM, tech, healthcare, and trade programs to prepare workers for in-demand jobs.
- Attracting & Retaining Talent: Invest in quality of life initiatives—affordable housing, transit, and cultural amenities—to keep professionals in Naperville.
- Apprenticeship & Internship Incentives: Work with city government and businesses to expand internship and apprenticeship programs for local high school and college students, ensuring a steady pipeline of skilled workers.

By bridging education and industry needs, we can ensure Naperville remains a top destination for talent and innovation.

HOW WOULD YOU HELP BUSINESSES ADAPT TO ECONOMIC CHANGES, NEW TECHNOLOGIES, AND WORKFORCE CHALLENGES?

In today's fast-changing economy, businesses must be able to adapt and innovate. I will:

- Expand Small Business Resources: Provide access to grants and technical support for businesses adopting new technologies.
- Encourage Digital Transformation: Help businesses integrate e-commerce, digital marketing, and automation.
- Advocate for Smart Zoning Policies: Allow businesses to repurpose spaces and expand operations efficiently.
- Support Sustainability Programs: Help businesses reduce operational costs through energy efficiency incentives.
- Develop Remote Work & Shared Space Strategies: Foster a flexible work environment that attracts startups and growing businesses.
- Ensure Local Businesses Are Included in Economic Growth Plans: Encourage policies that prioritize Naperville-based businesses when the city invests in economic development projects.

A business-friendly city must equip companies with the resources to stay competitive and grow.



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HOW WOULD YOU RATE NAPERVILLE'S BUSINESS INFRASTRUCTURE, AND WHAT PROJECTS WOULD YOU PRIORITIZE FOR GROWTH?

Rating: 7/10 – Naperville's infrastructure is strong but needs modernization to support future growth.

Priorities:

- Transit & Parking Improvements: Address traffic congestion and ensure accessible parking.
- High-Speed Internet Expansion: Invest in industry leading broadband to support tech and remote-work businesses.
- Smart Traffic Management: Use data-driven approaches to improve road efficiency.
- Sustainable Infrastructure: Expand electric vehicle charging stations and green building incentives.
- Revitalizing Commercial Districts: Support projects that enhance downtown and business corridors.
- Ensure Infrastructure Investments Support Local Businesses: Prioritize construction and maintenance contracts for Naperville-based businesses, ensuring that city infrastructure projects boost the local economy.

A future-ready Naperville requires investment in transportation, technology, and sustainability.

AFTER YOUR PREVIOUS CAMPAIGN, WHAT LESSONS HAVE YOU LEARNED, AND HOW WILL YOU BETTER SERVE LOCAL BUSINESSES?

Running for office has given me invaluable insight into the needs and challenges facing Naperville's business community. Through conversations with businesses, entrepreneurs, and stakeholders, I have gained a deeper understanding of how we can better support small businesses, foster economic growth, and ensure a thriving local economy.

One lesson from my previous campaign is the need for stronger partnerships between the city and our business community. Many businesses feel disconnected from city resources and decision-making processes. If elected, I will advocate for proactive engagement with businesses, ensuring that they have a direct line of communication with city leaders and a seat at the table when economic policies are being shaped.

Additionally, I have learned that prioritizing local businesses for city contracts and RFPs is a crucial step in keeping Naperville's economy strong. Investing in local businesses not only creates jobs and strengthens our tax base but also ensures that our city's success benefits those who have invested in our community.

I also recognize the importance of helping businesses stay competitive—not just locally, but regionally and nationally. Naperville should leverage its position as an economic hub by expanding workforce development programs, streamlining business regulations, and fostering innovation through smart economic incentives.

I will take these lessons and use them to champion policies that enhance economic success.