

VOTER GUIDE

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



Derek McDaniel

Naperville City Council Candidate

Candidate Status: New Candidate

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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
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?	✓		

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CURRENT OCCUPATION

I currently serve as an Associate Vice-President with Benjamin F. Edwards, where I work as a Financial Advisor, helping families and business owners plan for the future. My role involves providing tailored financial solutions, including investment modeling, financial analysis, and retirement planning, to help my clients achieve their long-term goals.

Prior to joining Benjamin F. Edwards, I worked at Merrill Lynch, where I gained valuable experience in client acquisition and portfolio management. My professional background has equipped me with the expertise to understand and address the financial challenges faced by individuals, families, and businesses, and I am passionate about using this knowledge to benefit our community.

EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND

I earned my Bachelor of Arts in Marketing from Purdue University and later completed my MBA with a concentration in Corporate Finance from DePaul University, graduating with distinction. While at DePaul, I was honored to receive the Campbell Finance Scholarship and the Nicholson Scholarship for my academic achievements. Additionally, I completed the Wall Street Prep training course, gaining advanced knowledge in Financial Statements Modeling, Corporate Finance, and Trading Comparables. These experiences have provided me with a strong foundation in finance and strategic planning.

RELEVANT BUSINESS EXPERIENCE

My unique qualifications stem from a combination of advanced education, professional expertise, and deep community involvement. I earned my MBA with a concentration in Corporate Finance from DePaul University, equipping me with the analytical and financial skills necessary for effective decision-making. With over six years in the financial services sector and my recent promotion to Associate Vice President-Investments, I have developed a proven ability to manage complex budgets, analyze data, and make fiscally responsible decisions—skills that are essential for serving on the City Council.

In addition to my professional background, I have served two terms on Naperville's Planning & Zoning Commission, where I've worked collaboratively with stakeholders to guide our city's development and zoning policies. This experience has given me a deep understanding of urban planning and the impact of development decisions on infrastructure, community growth, and quality of life. My combined expertise in finance, governance, and community engagement positions me to thoughtfully address the challenges and opportunities facing Naperville.



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ELABORATE ON YOUR POSITION FOR THE ABOVE KEY QUESTIONS.

I am generally supportive of the 5th Avenue redevelopment project, as it offers opportunities to increase tax revenue and promote economic growth, which are essential to keeping property taxes low and maintaining Naperville as an affordable community for all residents. However, any proposal must fit well with the surrounding neighborhood, which is family-friendly and vibrant. The concerns and needs of local residents should be a top priority in the planning process.

Additionally, economic development opportunities shouldn't be limited to 5th Avenue. Underutilized parts of Naperville's business districts, along with continued efforts along the I-88 tech corridor, are key areas to consider. I strongly support growth in the tech corridor as it has the potential to bring high-skilled jobs to Naperville, further strengthening our local economy.

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

Naperville's business community faces several key challenges that are critical to address in order to maintain and grow our city's economic success:

Rising Costs for Business Owners: Inflation has significantly increased wages, rent, and other operating expenses, making it more difficult for small businesses to thrive. If we don't find ways to support our local businesses in managing these costs, we risk losing the vibrant diversity that makes Naperville's business districts unique.

Increased Competition from Surrounding Cities: Nearby communities are stepping up their economic development efforts, offering incentives to attract businesses and consumers. Naperville must remain competitive by fostering a pro-business environment that attracts new enterprises while supporting existing ones.

Infrastructure Improvements: Maintaining and upgrading infrastructure, including roads, utilities, and parking, is essential for supporting our business districts. Ensuring that our infrastructure meets the needs of businesses and their customers is critical to attracting and retaining commerce in Naperville. These issues are critical to Naperville's long-term economic success. Addressing them will help us maintain our reputation as a regional economic leader, support our local entrepreneurs, and ensure the continued prosperity of our community.



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WHAT IS YOUR ACTION PLAN FOR ECONOMIC GROWTH?

To address the challenges facing Naperville's business community, I would focus on policies and initiatives that support local businesses, attract new investment, and ensure a thriving and diverse economic environment.

Opposition to Policies that Burden Businesses: I oppose the Tipped Wage Ordinance recently passed at the state level. This measure has significantly increased costs for restaurant owners and is opposed by many restaurant workers who feel it does not align with their needs.

Smart and Targeted Zoning Updates: I support targeted zoning updates similar to those that succeeded along the East Ogden corridor. Specifically, I would propose an amendment to the definition of "financial institution" in downtown zoning districts. This amendment would include retail banking and would require these firms to seek approval on a case-by-case basis through the variance process. Retail banks do not generate sales or food and beverage tax revenue. Limiting their presence on the first floor would allow more space for businesses that contribute directly to Naperville's tax base and vibrant downtown economy.

Infrastructure and Business-Friendly Initiatives: Infrastructure improvements, such as enhanced parking options and well-maintained roads, are critical for supporting businesses and attracting customers. Additionally, I would work to streamline processes for business owners, such as permitting and licensing, to reduce barriers to opening and expanding businesses in Naperville.

HOW WOULD YOU COLLABORATE WITH THE NAPERVILLE AREA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE?

As a current member of the Business Works Committee and a former board member of the Naperville Area Chamber of Commerce, I am well-positioned to collaborate effectively with the Chamber to promote economic growth in our district. I plan to leverage my existing relationships both within and outside of the organization to strengthen partnerships and foster initiatives that support our local business community.

Additionally, I intend to continue serving on the Business Works Committee as a dedicated voice and liaison for the Naperville City Council. By maintaining open communication and working collaboratively with the Chamber, I will ensure that the perspectives and needs of our business community are represented in policymaking, and together, we can create an environment that encourages innovation, investment, and sustained economic growth.



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WHAT ARE YOUR BUDGET PRIORITIES FOR BUSINESSES?

I believe balancing the city's budget requires a commitment to fiscal discipline and strategic decision-making. I am committed to ensuring that we continue to spend tax dollars wisely, allowing Naperville to maintain one of the lowest property tax rates in the state. Keeping property taxes low ensures Naperville remains an affordable and desirable place to live and work, benefiting all residents and businesses alike.

Another priority is to grow our local economy by attracting new businesses to Naperville and revitalizing underperforming areas. My experience on the Planning and Zoning Commission has shown my commitment to smart economic development. I have consistently supported projects like Block 59 and the revitalization of the East Ogden corridor, which have transformed underutilized areas into thriving business hubs. These efforts generate essential sales tax revenue that helps fund city services while alleviating the burden on property taxpayers.

Additionally, investing in our first responders is non-negotiable. Public safety is our number one priority, as it directly impacts both the well-being of our families and the success of our businesses. A safe city is a thriving city.

Finally, as Naperville transitions from a growing community to an aging one, it's essential to invest in maintaining and upgrading our infrastructure. We must plan for the future to ensure our city can continue to support the needs of residents and businesses for years to come.

WHAT ARE YOUR REVENUE AND TAX STRATEGIES?

I believe it should be a top priority to avoid raising Naperville's property tax rate. We need to ensure that Naperville remains an affordable place to live and property taxes are a key component. Instead, we should focus on exploring alternative revenue sources that minimize the financial impact on our residents.

At the same time, I strongly believe we should avoid regressive taxation methods that disproportionately impact lower-income residents. Ensuring that our revenue strategies are fair and equitable is essential to maintaining Naperville's reputation as an inclusive and fiscally responsible community.

Naperville is fortunate to have the lowest home rule sales tax in the western suburbs, which is a competitive advantage for attracting shoppers and diners to our city. Notably, 50% of restaurant and retail sales in Naperville are generated by visitors who do not live here. While I do not support raising taxes or fees as a first resort, aligning our home rule sales tax rate more closely with surrounding suburbs could provide an opportunity to increase revenue without directly impacting local business owners' bottom lines or placing an undue burden on residents

This approach ensures that a significant portion of the tax burden is shared by visitors who benefit from our city's amenities and infrastructure. Balancing the need for government revenue with the burden of taxes requires a thoughtful approach that prioritizes fairness & maintains Naperville's competitive edge.



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

Naperville is fortunate to have exceptional educational resources that play a crucial role in shaping the future workforce and ensuring the success of our community. To build a strong workforce pipeline that meets the needs of current and future employers, collaboration between our schools, businesses, and local organizations is essential.

I would work closely with the Naperville Development Partnership, which has been instrumental in fostering economic growth and creating connections between businesses and the community. Additionally, partnering with local high schools such as Naperville Central, Neuqua Valley, and others, as well as North Central College and the College of DuPage, will help expand opportunities for students and employers alike.

One key focus would be promoting and encouraging work-study and internship programs that connect students with local businesses. These programs provide students with valuable hands-on experience, help them develop critical skills, and expose them to potential career paths. By strengthening these partnerships, we can ensure students graduate with the knowledge and tools necessary to succeed in today's evolving job market.

Furthermore, I believe it's essential to highlight the importance of skilled trades, labor, and first responder careers, such as police officers and firefighters.

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

In a rapidly changing economy, it is crucial that businesses have the resources and support they need to adapt to new technologies, market demands, and workforce challenges. As a member of the Naperville City Council, I would work closely with the Naperville Development Partnership to attract and retain businesses that drive innovation and economic growth. I would also establish partnerships with local educational institutions like North Central College and College of DuPage to create workforce development programs that provide specialized training in emerging industries, such as technology, advanced manufacturing, and healthcare. Additionally, I would collaborate with the Naperville Area Chamber of Commerce to better understand the evolving needs of our existing businesses and advocate for initiatives that support their long-term success.

To ensure Naperville businesses remain competitive, I would champion programs that offer small business grants or low-interest loans for technology upgrades, allowing local businesses to invest in automation, cybersecurity, and e-commerce solutions. I would also promote public-private partnerships to develop apprenticeship and internship programs that create direct pipelines between students and local employers, ensuring our workforce is equipped with the skills needed for the jobs of tomorrow.



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

Naperville's infrastructure is at a critical juncture. While projects such as the Washington Street Bridge replacement and the Downtown Streetscape improvements may be costly, they are essential to the continued health and vitality of our community. As a city that is no longer in its growth phase but transitioning into an aging community, these updates are necessary to ensure safety, functionality, and sustainability.

Infrastructure improvements are the single largest driver of the 2025 budget, accounting for \$179.38 million. Much of the infrastructure installed decades ago is now at the 'end of its useful life' and requires replacement. Proactively addressing these needs will not only maintain the quality of life for our residents but also ensure that Naperville remains an attractive place for businesses and visitors. Thoughtful investment in infrastructure today will help us avoid higher costs and greater challenges down the road.

HOW WOULD YOU SUPPORT NAPERVILLE'S BUSINESS COMMUNITY, AND WHAT NEW IDEAS WOULD YOU BRING TO CITY COUNCIL?

As a new candidate for Naperville City Council, I bring both a deep commitment to supporting our business community and a fresh perspective to promoting economic growth and business success. My two terms as a Planning and Zoning Commissioner have provided me with invaluable experience in evaluating projects and initiatives that drive economic development while balancing the needs of residents and businesses

I also have established relationships with members of the Naperville Development Partnership and other community leaders. My ability to work with key stakeholders across the city ensures that I can hit the ground running to create meaningful partnerships and solutions.

As a member of the Naperville City Council, I would bring fresh ideas to the table, such as:
Targeted Zoning Updates: Building on the success of areas like the E. Ogden corridor, I would focus on smart zoning changes to attract the right mix of businesses in underutilized areas, while maintaining the character of our community.

Advocating for a Diverse Economy: By promoting partnerships between businesses and educational institutions like Naperville Central, Neuqua Valley, North Central College, and the College of DuPage, we can develop a pipeline of skilled workers to meet the demands of our local economy.

A Balanced Approach to Policy: I would work to ensure that policies, like the Tipped Wage Ordinance, do not create undue burdens for business owners while remaining responsive to the needs of workers.