

VOTER GUIDE

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



Mary Gibson

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
		✓
		✓
✓		
✓		
✓		



Candidate Biography and Priorities

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CURRENT OCCUPATION

I was elected to Naperville Park District Board in 2021. As Park District Commissioner, I exercised prudent fiscal management over a \$53+ million budget and assets that span 138 parks, developed and implemented a 3-year strategic plan to guide the District's vision, purpose, and priorities, championed environmental sustainability measures such as native plantings and shoreline stabilization, updated employee policies to attract and retain the best staff for our city, and expanded programs and partnerships resulting in the highest resident satisfaction scores since we began tracking the metric. During my time with the Naperville Park District, we have also significantly increased our sponsorship offerings and partnerships with local businesses.

I was honored to be unanimously elected by my fellow Commissioners as Board President three times and Board Vice President in my first year, and I was awarded Master Board Member designation by the Illinois Association of Park Districts (IAPD) in recognition of my commitment to being a knowledgeable representative of my community. Additionally, I have served as Naperville Riverwalk Commissioner since 2021 and am a member of the Community Emergency Response Team (CERT). Lastly, I'm a graduate of both Naperville Citizen Police Academy and Naperville Citizen Fire Academy.

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

As a director at a data analytics firm, I advised Fortune 500 companies, government entities, and non-profits on public sentiment, unforeseen risks and strategic opportunities. I utilize these skills to identify and act on issues and opportunities facing the Park District and would do the same on city-wide decisions on City Council.



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ELABORATE ON YOUR POSITION FOR THE ABOVE KEY QUESTIONS.

I chose abstain for several answers in the above section because public policy is not a zero sum game, and context is needed otherwise it risks misleading voters. For all items that come before council, I will weigh the context and needs of the city with an openness to creative solutions.

To elaborate on one answer from above, the solution to the \$6 million annual shortfall from the repeal of the state grocery tax is not a problem with only one solution. There are several levers that we need to consider and model to arrive at the best solution. The first step should be a review of the existing expenditures and budget to identify areas where we can reduce waste and redundant costs to shore up some of the shortfall without compromising safety or quality of resident services. We should also analyze our other revenue sources to identify any that are priced below market. We can certainly look at underutilized assets to determine if it makes sense to sell any; however, that is not an annual source of revenue. Once we have completed all of that analysis we will know the true annual shortfall and then be able to work collaboratively on how to address it, which may include a grocery tax, although I want to explore all of our options before adding an additional burden to our residents.

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

Challenges facing Naperville's business community include infrastructure, an educated/trained workforce, and responsible development. An example of city infrastructure that hurt local businesses is the Washington St bridge replacement, which has significantly exceeded the projected time to complete and has negatively impacted downtown Naperville businesses. When the City Council receives a bid that looks too good to be true, it is Council's responsibility to reality test the vendor's assumptions to ensure they can execute as promised. With regard to providing an educated/trained workforce, we must have amenities and safety to attract workers to put down roots in Naperville. If elected, I will work hard to make Naperville the top destination for workers and businesses alike. Lastly, responsible development is an ongoing challenge for the city that directly impacts local businesses and tax revenue. There was much debate about the best use for the former K-Mart space on Ogden and the impact on traffic if Costco moved in. The city provided tax incentives to bring in Costco and the traffic flow design is one that works. It diverts traffic away from the neighborhoods to the north and does not compound Ogden's traffic. With Costco as an anchor tenant, the shopping center has added additional retail and restaurants which has rejuvenated the area. If elected, I will support policies to continue to attract and retain businesses in Naperville.



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WHAT IS YOUR ACTION PLAN FOR ECONOMIC GROWTH?

Expanding on the challenges identified and partially addressed above, I would prioritize making decisions that will solidify Naperville as the best place to live in the United States. By doing so, we draw people from the city and surrounding communities to our local businesses. We draw people to work here as well as live here. The keys to maintaining Naperville as a top destination include public safety, reasonable development, and providing high quality and reliable services and amenities. I would evaluate tax incentives to draw new businesses to Naperville on a case-by-case basis, prioritizing a strong payback over a reasonable time period. Additionally, I would look for spillover benefits to surrounding businesses (ie Costco drawing more traffic to smaller businesses on Ogden). Lastly, when it comes to infrastructure improvements, I would engage in a thorough vetting of the proposals to ensure that the vendor could deliver as promised, with minimal disruption to local businesses.

HOW WILL YOU COLLABORATE WITH THE NAPERVILLE AREA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

Advocacy and collaboration start with listening. I would engage with NACC and participate in its many events to speak directly with its members to understand their concerns and needs as well as the impact of City Council decisions. I would collaborate with the Business Works committee which advocates for business interests with legislators on issues. Many business owners' concerns overlap with mine: development, infrastructure, and taxes. NACC and the Naperville business community are key stakeholders in all of these discussions; I would work with NACC and the members to make sure I'm considering all facets of the issue and arriving at the best decision for the city and our community. It is certainly my goal to maintain and grow Naperville's thriving business community.



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WHAT ARE YOUR BUDGET PRIORITIES FOR BUSINESSES?

The budget is not a zero sum game. Many budget priorities have ripple effects elsewhere, so while it is important to examine every line item, it is equally important to consider the interrelatedness of line items to achieve our goals. With respect to creating a thriving economic ecosystem, the city needs to have infrastructure in place to meet the needs today and tomorrow as people's consumer and other behaviors evolve. It is critical that we thoroughly vet plans and bids for infrastructure projects to assure completion on time and with minimal disruption to residents and businesses. The protracted Washington Street bridge project has been devastating to businesses downtown. The City's Road Improvement Plan is an important step to improving the traffic flow around town and I would analyze the data so that we are prioritizing the projects that yield the highest impact for the dollar which would benefit our community. Public services like snow removal and trash collection may not sound exciting but are critical and need to be done efficiently and well. Lastly, our city budget must prioritize public safety. I am 100% committed to ensuring Naperville is the safest place in America. I am a proud graduate of both the city's police and fire Citizen Academies and I would use those insights to ensure our first responders continue to have the tools and resources needed to keep our city safe.

WHAT ARE YOUR REVENUE AND TAX STRATEGIES?

By expanding the tax base, we can reduce the burden of property taxes. That's why I support carefully targeted tax incentives in specific cases where they provide clear, long-term benefits that complement versus harm existing businesses. This will attract new businesses to Naperville. We should also look at municipal-specific fees and make sure they are in line with similar suburbs. Lastly, I will be a responsible steward of tax dollars and seek to deliver high quality services and amenities in the city without increasing the budget above the inflation rate, which is consistent with what I have achieved as Park District Commission for the last four years.



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

Naperville has some great partnerships today that we can build on to ensure that we are building a pipeline of talent to meet the current and future needs of employers. The high schools partner with community colleges to offer dual credit courses, such as business courses. They also run mini-Shark Tank programs where students learn how to identify a market need, develop and manufacture products, market products, seek investment, and ultimately bring those ideas to market. Many business leaders in Naperville participate as mentors. Community colleges such as College of DuPage have two year academic programs and trades programs to prepare students for employment. We also benefit from local colleges such as North Central College. Beyond entry-level employees, Naperville benefits from a highly educated population. There are also nonprofits that serve the area for job transitions and re-employment. The Naperville Library offers resume and cover letter coaching with their business librarians and job coaches. The role of the city is to encourage these endeavors to produce a productive and nimble workforce. This may come via grants to fund programs that meet these goals.

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

We live in a fast-moving, exciting time. AI holds a lot of promise but we have not yet figured out how to harness it to serve us best. Some jobs that exist today may disappear and be replaced by technology. As the workforce's needs evolve, Naperville needs to be in dialogue with local businesses to understand those needs and the gaps in skills, training, and experience so that we can work together to fill those gaps. That may mean sponsoring internships, developing programming at our libraries, or coordinating with nonprofits and local governmental employment institutions to close those gaps.



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

Naperville's current infrastructure adequately supports business operations but there is room for improvement. The most consequential infrastructure projects facing Naperville are the IMEA energy contract and the city's Roads Improvement Plan. IMEA has proposed a decades-long extension on a no-bid basis which is a non-starter. It would be irresponsible to not put our energy contract out to bid to ensure that we are getting the best services at a reasonable cost to resident and business taxpayers. Thus far, residents' needs and costs have received the bulk of attention when we talk about our energy future contract, but we need to ensure business needs, and in particular the structure of business pricing, is considered in any future electric contract. With respect to the Roads Improvement Plan, this will have a direct impact on local businesses. I'm excited to dig into the data to identify the improvements that will yield the largest return for our investment and drive efficient traffic movement throughout the city to save time and cost across all of our stakeholders.

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

While I am a new candidate for City Council, I currently preside over the Naperville Park District board as its president. In that role, I developed and implemented a three-year strategic plan to set the vision and guide the Park District's purpose and priorities. I have also managed a \$53+ million budget and broad portfolio of assets including 138 parks. This experience will be invaluable on the City Council and position me to support and advocate for Naperville's business community. I work collaboratively with my peers of all political stripes to serve our community and will bring that spirit and track record of achievement to the City Council. Our City Council is non-partisan and I believe that our constituents want us to work together on our local issues. You have my commitment that is my top goal. I have seen what is possible when we check our ideologies at the door and get down to work for the people and that is what I will bring to the City Council. I'm committed to keeping taxes low by expanding our tax base in the areas of town that need it most, pursue reasonable development and tax incentives with short payback periods, and deliver high quality reliable services and amenities to keep Naperville as the best place to live and work in the United States.