

Voices to Votes NC Questionnaire: Cassidy Santaguida

1. If elected to City Council, which factor will carry more weight in your decision making...your professional experience and personal opinions or the wishes of a majority of Wilmington residents?

The needs of Wilmington residents will always come first. My professional experience helps me analyze problems, weigh tradeoffs, and design solutions, but ultimately, I'm running to represent the people of this city, not myself. My role is to listen, build consensus, and ensure policy reflects the needs and priorities of our community.

2. You spent 15+ years in Austin, Texas so you have seen the challenges and negative effects of rapid growth without concurrent infrastructure growth. Would you support a pause on approval of new multi-family developments until we can catch infrastructure up to effectively support our growth to date?

My time in Austin taught me how frustrating and damaging unchecked growth can be. However, blanket pauses on development can backfire by driving up housing costs even further. Instead of stopping development, we should be smarter about it and aim to focus these projects where we've already made infrastructure investment.

3. You state on your website "our community has grown, but our infrastructure has not kept pace. Our roadways are congested and in some places hazardous to motorists, pedestrians, and bicyclists". Would you support concurrency ordinances requiring expanded infrastructure including road improvements and more public transit systems to be in place before new projects could be approved?

I think we are at a place where we need to consider concurrency ordinances because they can be a useful tool to build the forward-looking policy we need. Growth should not outpace safety, livability, and affordability. If we want to continue to be a great place to live then infrastructure - roads, sidewalks, bike lanes, and transit - should be planned and funded alongside new development.

4. You have stated "despite its challenges, growth is a positive thing". How much population growth should we target for Wilmington? Projections are for 30,000 more

people to move here over the next 15 years. As a City Council member, would you advocate to build vertically and more densely even though there is simply no more room in our small city and county for the needed highway systems?

We can't stop people from wanting to move here, but we can shape how we grow. That means embracing smarter, more compact development where it makes sense—near transit corridors and employment centers—while protecting the character of our existing neighborhoods. We don't have the land for endless sprawl or the room for massive new highways. Instead, we should plan for density where it's sustainable, invest in transit, and balance vertical growth with green space and livability.

5. Regarding growth, do you believe existing Wilmington residents should be willing to sacrifice some level of their quality of life to create more housing for people who want to move to Wilmington?

I don't frame it as "sacrifice." Growth is already happening, our choice is whether it happens chaotically or intentionally. If we don't plan, we all lose quality of life to traffic, rising housing costs, and overburdened systems. By planning well, we can both welcome new residents and protect what makes Wilmington special. It's not about choosing between existing and future residents—it's about building a city that works for all of us.

6. How would you use your diverse set of educational and professional experiences to make the City Council function more effectively to better serve the citizens?

Throughout the course of my career I've developed crucial skills that will be important on the City Council: gathering input from diverse stakeholders, analyzing complex systems, and building consensus around solutions. I'm trained to listen first, weigh competing priorities, and then deliver results. I'll bring that same collaborative, data-driven, and problem-solving approach to City Council, helping us cut through gridlock and focus on practical outcomes for Wilmington residents.

7. If you are elected, what is the single most important goal you have that would help preserve the uniqueness of our community and improve the lives of existing residents?

The most important goal is ensuring Wilmington grows sustainably while improving affordability for residents. That means aligning housing, infrastructure, and economic development so we don't lose the character of our city to congestion, sprawl, and rising costs. Preserving Wilmington's uniqueness isn't about freezing it in time—it's about making sure our growth enhances, rather than erodes, the quality of life that makes people want to live here in the first place.