

## **Cassidy Santaguida's Questionnaire Responses**

**1) If elected, what if anything will you change about planning, and the related rezoning process, to correct the current issues noted above? What factors will you consider most important when deciding how you will vote on a rezoning application?**

First and foremost I'll work to ensure the next iteration of New Hanover County's Comprehensive Plan provides a framework and guiding principles to address housing needs while protecting our environment. I'll work to make sure the plan addresses infrastructure, the availability of community services, including schools, and the cumulative impact of a rezoning request alongside neighboring projects. Finally, I will advocate for upzoning requests to undergo environmental impact assessments by the county's new Sustainability Manager.

**2) Beyond staff's technical recommendations, and their interpretation of the Comprehensive Plan, often as "adding to housing stock/high density" and "mixed use", what information will you use to gauge the impacts (and long-term costs to taxpayers) of a development on the entirety of the county's systems including roadways, schools and the environment? Beyond the public hearing, when projects may have already been decided, would you support including citizens in the planning and rezoning process?**

I support public input at every step of the planning and rezoning process, and I will always listen with an open mind to all feedback residents of the county have during this process. I will also call for a review of the current approach to assessing the infrastructure and traffic impact of proposed projects to ensure we are using the most up-to-date methodologies in these studies. Furthermore, every rezoning decision I make will be based on the full set of guiding principles set forth in the Comprehensive Plan.

**3) What specific steps will you take to address our population growth's impact on our already overcrowded schools and congested, unsafe roadways?**

As the population of our region grows so does the need for appropriate expansion of services offered by the county. We will need to build new schools, we need more reliable and robust transit options, and we need to be more intentional than ever to protect the remaining green spaces in our geographically small county. Our elected officials are responsible for ensuring that these services scale alongside the growth of our population. Specific steps I'll take to accomplish

this are:

- Advocate for the county to adopt a plan to increase bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure in the county, including connections to the City of Wilmington bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure.
- Improve communication and public relations efforts to enhance awareness and accessibility of our transportation services.
- Foster regional public-private partnerships that will allow us to add to public transportation offerings in cost effective ways.

**4) What will you do to balance the planning board members and planning staff to include more citizens, sustainability, resiliency and environmental representation?**

I will expect New Hanover County's newly hired Sustainability Manager to provide input on the sustainability and environmental impacts of projects brought to the planning staff and planning board. I will also bring a unique perspective to the board as a successful leader in the software industry with experience scaling up organizations, and no professional ties to development or land use planning. Finally, I'll take every measure possible to ensure residents are being engaged in planning projects, and I will always listen to the feedback and concerns of county residents.

**5) Do you believe the pace and scale of residential development is in alignment with the wishes of current citizens? If not, what would you do to address this?**

Housing costs and development concerns have come up in nearly every conversation I've had during my campaign for County Commissioner, and just about everyone I've talked to agrees that our locally elected officials must act to address these concerns. Given the recent pace of population growth in the county, I don't believe we've established a balanced and intentional strategy that will allow for increased housing inventory while also protecting our quality of life. Establishing this balance has to start with articulating both our vision for the future of the county and our strategy for achieving it, in the next iteration of the comprehensive plan.

**6) What steps would you take to ensure that tree preservation ordinances are monitored for compliance and enforced to the maximum for development projects? What revisions to the code or the comprehensive plan are needed to ensure that we protect our area's aesthetic and existing mature tree stands and roadway buffers?**

I believe the first step the county needs to take to protect our mature trees is to tighten our preservation standards to the same or higher level that's enforced by the City of Wilmington. Next, I'll work closely with an empowered Sustainability Manager to broaden our protection of buffers and transition zones. Finally, if necessary, I'll work with our state legislators to allow us a tree ordinance that is stricter than state standards and is more appropriate for our unique coastal environment.

**7) What efforts will you make to restore and conserve New Hanover County's wetlands that protect our coastal community and neighborhoods against the full impact of storm surges, and floods against sea level rise?**

For both economic and environmental reasons the county should limit development on wetlands. As an example, the county must work to conserve the land on the west bank of the Cape Fear River between the Cape Fear Memorial Bridge and the Isabel Holmes Bridge - this can and must be done in a way that fairly compensates those property owners. In addition, the county needs to continue its investment in the Stormwater Services Program to keep storm drains and ditches clear. Finally, the Planning Department, Planning Board, and County Commissioners must apply appropriate scrutiny to development projects near wetlands to understand in full the long-term economic impact of those projects; the future costs to support infrastructure, stormwater maintenance, and emergency management in those areas will be paid for by New Hanover county taxpayers.

**8) In closing, many municipalities are getting it right, bringing balance to how they allow development to look and feel. How would you improve the way growth and development is occurring in New Hanover County?**

Simply put, we need to elect city and county officials who will advance and foster a culture that respects our environment and the quality of life of current residents. While every development project and rezoning request must be considered individually, we need an overarching and balanced strategy for how to grow and change effectively. I will advocate for the updated comprehensive plan to provide a detailed and expansive vision to serve as a framework for future decisions about land use and development.