

City of Fairfax 2026 Mayoral and Council Candidates Questionnaire

Candidate Name: Steve S. Chang
Office Sought: City Council, City of Fairfax
Date Submitted: 9/14/2026

1. Opening Statement - under 300 words (All opening statements will appear in print in the October edition of The Fairfax Independent)

Hello City of Fairfax. My name is Steve S. Chang. I am running for Fairfax City Council because my wife Jie and I love this community and want to help ensure that Fairfax remains a welcoming, thriving, and financially responsible city.

My campaign has been about building relationships with each City resident. In my eagerness to talk to you, I get so excited when I head out to door knock every day. Because public policy requires people and without people, we don't have a City. You are important to me. And I can make one true promise to you that my door will open for you when you knock on mine.

My background spans business, non-profit leadership, Christian ministry, and community service. After pursuing doctoral studies in theoretical physics, I founded several businesses, including an IT company. I later founded Global Mission Church of Virginia and am one of four owners of The Independent News Press.

My commitment to Put Fairfax First focuses on community-driven leadership, fiscal responsibility, support for local businesses, environmental stewardship, and safe neighborhoods. I believe residents deserve meaningful input on decisions, and taxpayer resources must be managed carefully.

As Fairfax evolves, we must balance growth with protecting neighborhood identity, green spaces, and public services. Working alongside residents, city staff, the Mayor, and Council, I will seek practical, enduring solutions through respectful partnership. Please visit my website chang4fairfax.com for more information.

This City has given much to my family, and I am eager to give back. I would love to grab a cup of coffee or wine so please sign up for my events. Please welcome to my website to sign up for events at chang4fairfax.com.

I would be honored and grateful to earn your vote on November 3.

2. Development & Quality of Life (under 200 words)

The City is experiencing redevelopment in areas such as Northfax, Kamp Washington, Old Town, and along the Route 50 corridor. What level and type of development do you believe the City can realistically accommodate without negatively affecting residents' quality of life? In addition, if an existing unresolved development was sold to a data center developer, would you approve this application?

I believe Fairfax City can grow responsibly without losing the character that makes our community special. But growth must be balanced with the capacity of our roads, schools, utilities, public safety services, and neighborhoods.

I support revitalizing aging commercial properties, attracting businesses, and creating welcoming public spaces. However, I don't believe more buildings, greater density, or additional tax revenue automatically mean progress.

Before approving major redevelopment, we should ask some basic questions: Can our infrastructure support it? How will it affect traffic, schools, and nearby neighborhoods? Will existing residents benefit? And who will pay for the long-term costs?

Regarding a proposed data center, I would be inclined not to vote for it so close to a dense population.

Fairfax City is only about six square miles. We must be thoughtful about every square foot. Growth should serve our residents, not the other way around.

3. Budget & Priorities (under 200 words)

The City has limited resources and cannot fund every worthwhile project. What is one program, project, or spending priority you would be willing to delay, reduce, or reject—and why? In addition, please add your thoughts about the general retail sales tax not to exceed 1% to provide revenue solely for eligible capital projects involving the construction or renovation of schools, public transportation purposes, or both that will appear on the November 3 ballot.

Every family has to make choices about spending. City government should be no different.

I would prioritize public safety, essential infrastructure, schools, and maintaining the services residents depend on. I would be willing to delay nonessential capital improvements, beautification projects, or new amenities when the City cannot clearly demonstrate their necessity or long-term affordability.

Before committing taxpayer dollars, Council should examine the full cost, including future maintenance and operating expenses.

Regarding the proposed 1% sales tax referendum, I recognize that our schools have significant capital needs. But before asking residents to pay another tax, we should carefully examine our

existing financial obligations and the City's longstanding school services agreement with Fairfax County.

I believe that agreement deserves a comprehensive review to ensure Fairfax taxpayers are receiving a fair and accountable arrangement.

Before proposing a 1% sales tax referendum, shouldn't the City revisit its school funding formula with Fairfax County, last renegotiated in 1978—nearly 50 years ago?

My position is simple: Before asking taxpayers for more money, City Hall must demonstrate that it is spending the money it already collects wisely.

4. Taxes & City Spending (under 200 words)

Fairfax City has a relatively high level of services for a small municipality, but residents are also facing rising costs. How would you balance maintaining the services residents expect with keeping property taxes and other local costs affordable?

Fairfax City residents deserve excellent public services, but they also deserve a government that respects their hard-earned money.

Rising property assessments, taxes, fees, and everyday expenses are placing real pressure on families, seniors, and small businesses. We cannot simply continue increasing revenue without seriously examining how we spend it.

My priority would be a careful review of the City's budget, identifying unnecessary expenses, overlapping services, opportunities for greater efficiency, and projects that can be postponed.

I would also examine long-term financial commitments and agreements with regional partners to ensure Fairfax taxpayers are getting fair value.

Economic development matters, but it must be responsible. We should strengthen our commercial tax base by supporting existing businesses and attracting new investment without approving excessive development that creates greater infrastructure costs.

I would insist on greater transparency so residents can understand where their tax dollars go and why spending decisions are made.

Government should learn to live within its means, just as the families it serves must do every day.

5. Regional Cooperation & Development (under 200 words)

Projects in neighboring jurisdictions can significantly impact the City (e.g., the AT&T redevelopment). How would you collaborate with regional partners to manage these impacts,

and how would you resolve situations where the City's interests differ from theirs? In addition, please add your thoughts about FCPS and City partnership review.

Fairfax City may be small, but decisions made beyond our boundaries can have significant consequences for our residents.

The proposed redevelopment of the former AT&T property in Oakton is one example. Traffic, infrastructure, schools, and environmental impacts do not stop at jurisdictional lines.

I would work proactively with Fairfax County, VDOT, FCPS, and neighboring communities to ensure Fairfax City has a meaningful voice in regional planning. Cooperation is important, but it must never mean compromising our residents' interests.

I also believe it is time for a comprehensive review of our longstanding school services agreement with Fairfax County. Our City owns four school buildings and makes substantial financial contributions, while FCPS provides educational services.

We should examine whether the funding arrangement, responsibilities, and accountability provisions remain fair and appropriate for today's needs.

I would approach these discussions respectfully, with facts, transparency, and a willingness to negotiate.

Being a good regional partner does not mean accepting every arrangement without question. My commitment is simply to put Fairfax first.

6. Major Projects & Infrastructure (under 200 words)

The City is making significant investments in infrastructure and facilities, including the Willard-Sherwood Health & Community Center. What criteria should City Council use to determine which major projects receive funding when resources are limited?

Public safety, essential infrastructure, and projects that prevent more expensive problems in the future should receive priority.

The Willard-Sherwood Health & Community Center illustrates why careful financial planning matters. I support the principle of ensuring that the City's financial obligations and cost-sharing arrangements are fully understood before committing significant taxpayer resources.

Council should know the complete cost of every major project, including construction, financing, maintenance, staffing, and long-term operating expenses.

I would also examine whether existing facilities could meet community needs at a lower cost. For example, could we have renegotiated the \$3.5M repayment to VDOT for the George Snyder Trail? These are questions that leaders act on.

As a businessman and someone who has managed organizations through financial challenges, I understand that even worthwhile projects sometimes must be delayed.

Good leadership is not measured by how much money government spends. It is measured by how responsibly that money is spent and how well it serves the people.

7. Virginia Constitutional Amendments (under 200 words)

The November 3 ballot will include three proposed amendments to the Virginia Constitution concerning reproductive freedom, marriage rights, and voting rights after felony incarceration. Do you support or oppose these amendments, and why? As a Fairfax City Council member, how would your views on these constitutional questions influence the way you lead and represent residents who may strongly disagree with you?

The three proposed constitutional amendments address deeply personal and important questions involving reproductive freedom, marriage equality, and voting rights.

I respect that Fairfax City residents hold different convictions about these issues. I also recognize that the Virginia Constitution belongs to all Virginians, and every voter has the responsibility to consider these proposals carefully.

Regardless of my personal vote, I believe a City Council member must respect the democratic process, uphold the Constitution, and represent all residents fairly.

My role on City Council would not be to impose personal beliefs on others. It would be to focus on the responsibilities entrusted to local government: public safety, responsible spending, infrastructure, schools, economic development, and protecting our quality of life.

Throughout my life, I have worked with people from different backgrounds, cultures, and beliefs. Those experiences have taught me the importance of listening with humility.

We do not have to agree on everything to respect one another and work together to put Fairfax first.

8. Civility & Governance (under 200 words)

City Council decisions can generate strong disagreements among residents and elected officials. What specific steps will you take to maintain a civil, respectful, and productive Council—even when you strongly disagree with another Council member?

I believe we can disagree without being disagreeable.

Throughout my years in business, ministry, and community leadership, I have learned that listening is often more valuable than speaking and that no single person has all the answers.

If elected, I will approach my fellow Council members with respect, even when we strongly disagree. I will focus on facts, ask thoughtful questions, and judge proposals on their merits rather than on who introduces them.

I will also make an effort to build relationships with Council members, City staff, and residents before difficult decisions arise.

When Council makes a decision, I will respect the lawful outcome while remaining accountable to the residents who elected me.

I believe leadership requires humility, patience, and the willingness to admit when someone else has a better idea.

Fairfax residents deserve a Council that spends more time solving problems and debating rather than arguing with one another.

9. Accountability & Ethics (under 200 words)

How can Fairfax City residents, rather than any political party or special interest group, hold you accountable, and what will you do to ensure transparency in your decisions and follow-through on your commitments?

I am running to serve Fairfax City residents, not a political party, special interest, or personal agenda.

Accountability begins with listening. I will remain accessible to residents, welcome questions, and explain my decisions openly, including when people disagree with me.

I believe major spending and development decisions should be supported by clear information, meaningful public participation, and transparent financial analysis.

I will advocate for understandable budget reports, better communication about major projects, and regular opportunities for residents to share their concerns before decisions are made.

I will also be straightforward about what I can and cannot accomplish. A Council member is one voice among several, and I will not make promises I cannot personally deliver.

My commitment is to work diligently, follow through, acknowledge mistakes, and explain my reasoning.

My experience in business and community leadership has taught me that trust is earned through actions, not slogans.

Residents should never have to wonder whom their Council member represents. My answer will always be the people of Fairfax City, especially those who put Fairfax first.

10. What do you love about the City and your final thoughts? (under 200 words)

What I love most about Fairfax City is its people. Especially, more so now that I have been door-knocking since July.

My wife and I have called Fairfax home for almost eight years. We have enjoyed its neighborhoods, parks, schools, local businesses, and the wonderful sense of community that makes our City so special.

Fairfax is more than a place on a map. It is where families build their lives, neighbors become friends, and people from different backgrounds come together.

As a husband, father, pastor, businessman, and longtime community leader, I have been fortunate to experience many opportunities in this country. I now want to give something back to the community my family calls home.

I am not running because I believe I have all the answers. I am running because I believe good leadership begins with listening, asking the right questions, and working together to find common ground.

I want Fairfax to remain a welcoming, safe, affordable, and vibrant City for my grandchildren and future generations.

My promise is simple: I will listen, I will serve with integrity, and I will always strive to put Fairfax first.

I respectfully ask for your vote on November 3.

Steve S. Chang