

City of Fairfax 2026 Mayoral and Council Candidates Questionnaire

Candidate Name: Kirsten Sides Lockhart

Office Sought: Mayor

Date Submitted: 12 September 2026

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

My name is Kirsten Lockhart and I'm running for mayor of the City of Fairfax. I am currently the Vice Chair of the City's Planning Commission, on which I have served for more than five years. Professionally, I have worked in management and strategy consulting for more than twenty years, predominately in federal and defense markets in the DC metropolitan area. I have lived in the City of Fairfax with my husband and two children since 2017, although I actually grew up just over the city-county line. Understanding that readers of the Independent obviously care deeply about development and environmental issues in the City, I'd like to take this opportunity to share my Planning Commission voting record on those items, as well as my other policy positions, all of which can be reviewed here: www.lockhartforfairfax.com/blog. Thank you for your consideration – I look forward to earning your vote, and to representing the best interests of all City of Fairfax residents going forward.

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?

The Small Area Plan initiative was undertaken to develop a roadmap to “complete” development of the City's core Activity Centers, thereby de-incentivizing isolated redevelopment projects that dilute commercial investment and negatively impact the City's existing residential neighborhoods. Since re-building our commercial tax base is critical to allow for investment in our outstanding public spaces and services, I believe that the Small Area Plans (in conjunction with the proposed zoning “islands”) provide defensible guardrails for a level of development that will drive commercial activation while remaining at a scale that is ‘livable’ for residents.

Based on City zoning as well as draft state-level legislation regarding data centers, I do not believe there are any “unresolved developments” in the City that would be eligible for re-application as a large-format data center. A small-format “micro” data center could be proposed under Commercial Office zoning and would be subject to the same ordinances as any other office building in the City. That said, data centers of any size are not long-term revenue drivers since (by design) they do not measurably generate jobs post-construction, so even a small-scale center would not likely clear the evaluation threshold of providing a net financial benefit to the City.

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.

I believe it would be prudent for the City to delay any spending on the redevelopment of Van Dyck Park until after the Blenheim Boulevard and Willard-Sherwood projects are complete. At that point, we will have a better understanding of how the park fits into our recreational ecosystem and can invite input from a new population of users. Also by that time, the City's Parks Foundation will have been operational for several years and can spearhead partnership opportunities to offset construction and/or maintenance costs. I made this same recommendation during the Planning Commission's review of the Capital Improvement Program (CIP) portion of the 2027 budget.

I am in favor of the 1% sales tax proposal because of its potential to cover much of the scope of work proposed under the 2024 school capital improvement bond, thereby removing those projects from the City's property tax levy. I would have voted to restrict the revenue to solely school capital expenditures, but I recognize that once we have funded the most critical improvements to our schools, the City may have an urgent transportation need that can be addressed more efficiently using sales tax revenue rather than waiting on state or federal funding coordination.

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?

Given our excellent bond rating and strong financial management, the City's tax rate is largely driven by operational spending. If it is the will of City residents that the property tax rate needs to freeze, or even be lowered, we will need to look at reduction of our current service levels, or even cancellation of services outright. There is absolutely value to doing this analysis and having these conversations - and to being able to publicly communicate either the cost of service preservation or the operational impact of budget cuts - but it has to be approached in good faith and with good data, not solely to achieve a palatable single-year tax rate that ultimately harms the sustainability of our public goods and services going forward.

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.

I view the mayor's participation in the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments; the Northern Virginia Transportation Commission and Northern Virginia Transportation Authority; and the Northern Virginia Regional Commission as the most important aspects of the role in terms of understanding upcoming challenges and opportunities in the region, communicating them to Council and City staff, and representing the best interests of the City when potential impacts are

identified. Our relationship with Fairfax County in particular is critical, and in addition to establishing strong working relationships at the leadership level, I would also work to ensure City staff are empowered to liaise directly with their County counterparts to share information and identify any City-specific considerations or concerns as projects are being conceptualized. Similarly, the City School Board and our Superintendent are the leads for engaging with Fairfax County Public Schools. Our School Board members in particular, through their participation in various FCPS steering committees, have a deep understanding of if and how the City might be most successful in re-opening the School Services Agreement with regard to shared versus retained responsibilities and associated resources.

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?

The first and most obvious is risk assessment (“what happens if the project is not completed?”), followed closely by conformance with the City’s Comprehensive Plan and any subordinate master planning guidance relevant to the specific project. Should those two considerations not yield a clear prioritization of efforts, the City should consider additional economic factors such as which projects are most likely to have substantial increases in cost-to-complete over time; which might be eligible for some degree of privatization or other partnership/revenue generation model as a form of cost-sharing or cost defrayal; and which introduce the most significant, unavoidable long-term costs for the City. The City has a tremendous opportunity over the next several years to undertake holistic assessment and optimization of its capital portfolio given recent land and property acquisitions, and I am so excited to participate in this truly generational decision-making effort.

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?

I am personally in favor of all three proposed amendments. I also acknowledge that not everyone will agree, and that the proposed amendments may not pass. There is no need for 100% ideological agreement on all things across the dais for that same deliberative body to discuss facts and make good decisions for the City based on data and public engagement.

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?

Facilitating productive resident engagement with the City government is a core platform of my campaign. To that end, one concrete action I would like to explore is separating public hearings from Council votes. Unfortunately, spillover from a public hearing that gets “heated” is often the first time that many residents hear about an issue – and of course, by then the vote has usually

been taken, leaving a significant portion of the City feeling unheard. I also don't believe that there are many, if any, Council members who arrive at a final public hearing prepared to change their mind based on last-minute comments. Separating hearings from votes would give residents time to contribute additional feedback and allow Council members to sit with what they heard before voting (ideally in calmer circumstances). Through canvassing over the past few months, I've also realized that we need ways for City residents to engage with each other – the strongest disagreements in recent years have been characterized as one or more neighborhoods versus the City, when the reality is that every neighborhood contains broad diversity of opinions. Channeling some of those strong feelings through earlier hyper-local discussions may help lower the temperature on the dais itself.

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 not a member of or beholden to any political party, platform, or affiliation (unless you consider PTA a special interest group). I view the role of mayor as fundamentally in service to the City of Fairfax and its residents, both as a representative of the City's interest in regional coordination and as the driver of resource stewardship and sound decision-making on the dais. I believe my deliberative record as a Planning Commissioner since 2021 speaks for itself in terms of the independent thought I bring to each question and vote, and I will continue the same level of transparency and accessibility that I have established as a candidate into the mayorship (www.lockhartforfairfax.com).

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

When my husband and I bought our home here in 2017, we obviously knew we liked the neighborhood, and we appreciated the walkability of the surrounding area – three playgrounds for our toddler within half a mile! Having grown up in nearby Fairfax County, I knew and loved the seasonal events like the Independence Day Parade and Fall Festival. But after making our home here for nine years, we feel so deeply lucky to be raising our children in a community that combines the best of an old-fashioned “small town” (a neighborhood pool, a walk to get ice cream or coffee, knowing people everywhere you go) with the amazing diversity and resources of the broader DC metropolitan area. We also love that there are so many opportunities to engage with both the history and the future of this specific place. The City of Fairfax is truly a gem, and it would be my honor to serve as its next mayor.

K. S. Lockhart