

## Candidates' views on issues

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The Lansing State Journal posed five questions to mayoral candidates Virg Bernero, the incumbent, and Councilwoman Carol Wood. Questions about achieving a permanent reduction in city expenses to fix Lansing's structural budget deficit and city programs that should be eliminated or that are badly underfunded ran in Monday's State Journal.

What will you do to advance regional cooperation?

Bernero: We now have the business community's attention. We're all going to be putting our shoulder to the wheel and working together. It's about what we can do in Lansing. We're looking at all the entities. I really believe I worked a lot on regionalism. We're working with our regional partners.

We're working with East Lansing on a number of projects, especially the Michigan Avenue corridor. We're going to be working on the Saginaw corridor with Delta (Township). We're going to be working on road improvements on Waverly with Lansing Township and Delta.

Wood: Regional cooperation requires trust, polite dialogue and mutual interests. As mayor, I am committed to rebuilding the trust between Lansing and the rest of the region, establishing polite and professional dialogue, discerning the mutual interests of Lansing and neighboring communities, and leading the region forward to bring more value to Lansing residents.

Downtown versus neighborhoods is a continuing theme in Lansing. What's the right balance of attention and spending for each?

Bernero: If it is downtown vs. the neighborhoods, then I lose and she wins because that is a myth that she's continued to perpetuate. That's absolute nonsense. It isn't downtown vs. the neighborhoods. It's downtown and the neighborhoods. We all love downtown. Even if you never visited downtown, it's the cash register for the entire city. Much of the revenue that we spend in neighborhoods throughout the city is generated here in downtown.

Most of the money we spend in the city we spend in the neighborhoods. If you look at the CSO program, it's probably 10 to 1, the money that we spend in the neighborhoods fixing roads ... compared to what we spend downtown. We're developing the downtown. Our downtown is looking better than ever. We can all come down here on the riverfront and see the great new things happening, the wonderful new city market.

Wood: Downtown Lansing is a neighborhood, as well as a commerce center. Attention and spending should be equitably distributed in a comprehensive manner throughout all four wards of the city so that scarce resources are not being arbitrarily diverted away from one neighborhood to another.

Regarding the North Capitol Avenue parking ramp, should the city have made the deal with Lansing Community College or not, and why?

Bernero: Of course, the city should have. It was the appraised value of the property. It was a good deal for the city, a good deal for LCC and a good deal for the neighborhoods. Carol Wood blocked it. She stopped it for whatever reason. She's not a professional real estate appraiser. Her and some of the others were saying they didn't think we got enough for it. Yeah, I'd love to get a million more dollars for it. The fact is, it was the right deal at the right time, even if they're right and it was worth a hundred thousand more. LCC is not a private-sector business. This is a public institution, who was one of our leading partners. It was a good deal. It was just fine, and it should have been approved.

It's a classic example of her micromanaging where she wants to kill the deal. She wants to run the place. If she can't dictate the terms, then she'll kill the deal. She's going to take the ball and go home. We saw that with the example of Frances Park. We saw it with (Grand River) Park, with the marina ... She killed a million-dollar grant to approve public recreation with those two parks.

Wood: The North Capitol parking ramp generates revenue for the city of Lansing. It's a money maker. The deal that was proposed failed to provide sufficient benefit to Lansing to justify giving up the revenue the ramp currently generates for the taxpayers.

City assets should be treated as assets. Leveraging them is not the same as giving them away. A more equitable proposal might justify the sale of the ramp in the future, but it has to be a good deal for the city.