

Candidate Name: Steve Arnold
District #: Fitchburg District 4 Seat 7

Sierra Club - Four Lakes Group
2009 Fitchburg City Council and Mayoral Questionnaire
Spring Election, April 7, 2009

1. Land Use

"Compact, contiguous development" is said to be the opposite of sprawl. Much development in Fitchburg has tended to increase automobile dependency, with subdivisions on the periphery of the City that will be difficult to serve with mass or alternative transit. The Agriculture and Rural Affairs Committee is considering changes to the Rural Residential Development Criteria which may lead to increased pressure to develop outside the urban service area.

1.a Do you support compact, contiguous, development that is mass transit, bike and pedestrian friendly? If so, how would you avoid sprawling development on Fitchburg's edges?

I support "compact, complete, connected, and contiguous" development, that is: high density, with a fine-grained mix of uses, with small blocks and a grid layout (wherever possible) of narrow streets, carefully phased so new development reinforces rather than diminishes the value of the old. I favor in-fill over green field development. (These are the principles of the New Urbanism. Please see the Charter of the New Urbanism for more principles that shape my policies: <http://www.cnu.org/charter>.)

I support the regional design process taught by Prof. Phil Lewis (in summary: develop within one mile of rail corridors, but not in environmental corridors). I have worked hard on Fitchburg's permanent urban development boundary; strict phasing of new neighborhoods to prevent leapfrog development; a transfer of development rights program to support the development boundary; public transportation improvements; high densities that save farmland, increase security, and help retail and transit succeed; and policies to support a vibrant agricultural sector, including urban agriculture.

I opposed and continue to oppose the automobile-dependent, single-use commercial area that is Orchard Pointe (home of the Fitchburg SuperTarget), development in the southeastern third of Fitchburg's Northeast Neighborhood, and rural landowners that want to grow houses instead of crops. Orchard Pointe should have been a pedestrian-friendly, mixed use development. There should be no development in the NE Neighborhood adjacent to Swan Creek and the preserved farms and wetlands of Dunn. Rural landowners have the right to farm, but the privilege to develop should be granted by the City in a carefully controlled way when additional urban neighborhoods are in the public interest.

I oppose reopening Fitchburg for rural residential development just to gain rural landowners' trust for City government. The interests of both the rural landowners and the City as a whole would be better served by a transfer of development rights program.

The Capital Area Regional Planning Commission is considering a new requirement of 300-foot buffers around wetlands to further control runoff and protect wildlife.

1.b Would you support 300-foot wetland buffers around wetlands in Fitchburg?

Yes. I support the 300-foot wetland and riparian buffers in Fitchburg's draft comprehensive plan, with an opportunity to reduce or increase their width by action of the Resource Conservation Commission and the Plan Commission under certain conditions.

2. Transportation

Transportation and land use are closely related. Solutions to either one greatly affect outcomes with the other.

Transit improvements.

Transport 2020 has recommended increasing regional bus service as a component of new transit options for outlying communities in Dane County.

2. a Would you support creating a Regional Transportation Authority?

Yes. I support a regional transit authority (RTA), using funding and governance principles yet to be developed. I believe the RTA should not attempt to cover all of Dane County. Rather it should cover the metropolitan planning organization area plus the remainder of Fitchburg and all of the Village of Oregon. Other areas should be able to opt in.

I believe the RTA should provide bus and commuter rail service throughout its service area, taking over the assets and services of Metro from the City of Madison and executing the Transport 2020 rail plan. I support the activation of commuter light rail in the corridor from the Village of Oregon to the Dane County Airport as part of the RTA's rail system. I am working to develop a corridor partnership of the municipalities along the route to pay for a feasibility study of high volume public transit in that corridor.

I oppose using RTA resources for road improvements in outlying towns and villages in exchange for their support of the RTA. Rather, those outlying municipalities (e.g., Brooklyn) should opt into the RTA when they receive bus or rail service or when they perceive they would benefit in some other way.

Are there other transit initiatives and/or alternatives you would support for Fitchburg?

Until an RTA is established, I am working to start rail development with local, grant, and tax incremental finance funds on the Fitchburg-Oregon line. I am also working to improve Madison Metro service to Fitchburg using the current contracted services model, and to develop sidewalks, bike lanes, and other bicycle and pedestrian facilities. I support the midwest high-speed rail initiative to connect Madison to the Twin Cities, Milwaukee, and points beyond.

Pedestrian and bicycle access. Fitchburg residents experience the conflict between automobile traffic and travel by foot or bicycle on a daily basis.

2.b What will you do to make Fitchburg a more pedestrian and bicycle friendly city and reduce dependency on automobile use?

As per our draft comprehensive plan and adopted Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan, Fitchburg should develop only “complete streets”, designed to serve motorists, pedestrians, cyclists, and transit users, except where prohibited by law. Depending on volume, pedestrians and cyclists should be accommodated on sidewalks, multi-use paths, and bicycle lanes.

I amended the 2007 budget to add funds to update and adopt our Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan, and supported that process throughout. Eight months of the year I commute by bicycle to the UW campus via Fish Hatchery Road. For many years I have managed a special interest mailing list for Fitchburg cyclists who ride for recreation, competition, and transportation.

I have worked to retrofit sidewalks along important pedestrian routes in existing neighborhoods. A successful example is the multi-use path to be added to East Cheryl Parkway in 2009 to connect the Swan Creek subdivision to transit and the rest of the City’s sidewalk/path network.

3. Clean Energy and Climate

3.a. Cool Cities Fitchburg is participating in the Cool Cities program designed to combat global warming by instituting smart energy solutions at the community level.

Are there renewable energy sources for the City that you would support and what opportunities do you see for energy efficiency and conservation in current city buildings?

Yes. I am a member of the Fitchburg Resource Conservation Commission, and have spent countless hours working on our climate protection initiative, including the initial resolution to study sustainability frameworks, the resolution to adopt the U.S. Conference of Mayors Climate Protection Agreement (USCMCPA), compiling initial city staff recommendations, inventorying greenhouse gas emissions, and making recommendations for each of the twelve USCMCPA action items.

I also supported the installation of solar systems on major city buildings.

How else could you envision Fitchburg working to address climate change?

I support re-evaluating the City’s zoning and public safety restrictions on wind towers and developing a zoning overlay district for the City approved for wind power development. I will recommend our zoning code rewrite include the right to install solar collectors in all zoning districts.

In the long term, the USCMCPA is too narrow, and I support adopting a more comprehensive sustainability framework, such as the Natural Step, while continuing to meet our obligations

under the USMCPA. The market economy is naturally led to externalize cost, so considering only climate protection can lead to bad tradeoffs, such as the reduction of green house gas emissions by generating electricity with nuclear power. While nuclear power generation does not emit green house gases, it generates dangerous radioactive wastes, for which effective permanent storage or disposal solutions have eluded us. We need to consider the sustainability of all activities of civilization.

3.b. Green Construction. The US Green Building Council's Leadership in Environment and Energy (LEED) issues standards for "green building." These requirements provide for buildings to be certified as "gold," "platinum," etc. depending on how many benchmarks are met.

Would you support an ordinance requiring new large-scale buildings in Fitchburg be built to a certain level of LEED-certified standards?

Yes. I believe that local LEED-NC (new construction) standards would cause builders and developers to calculate the savings from energy efficiency over the life of the building and embrace green construction. The construction of longer-lived buildings would be another benefit of a local LEED-NC requirement.

I believe LEED certification is important. I support bundling LEED certification with building inspection, hiring or training existing building inspectors with LEED certification, and raising building permit fees to cover the cost of LEED certification.

I support LEED-ND (neighborhood design) certification for all new neighborhoods, and consideration of incentives or requirements for higher levels of achievement (silver, gold).

4. While the questions above will assist us in learning which candidates will be the best stewards of our environment, the list is by no means inclusive.

Please add any other comments or information you would like considered, including aspects of your personal background that show a background in protecting the environment.

My doctorate is in ecology and evolutionary biology, and my masters degree is in environmental engineering. My research was in population dynamics and aquatic ecology. I am an active member of the Sierra Club, the Congress of the New Urbanism, 1000 Friends of Wisconsin, Dane County United, and the Bicycle Federation of Wisconsin. I have made sustainability and New Urbanism ("what works best in the long run") the key policy organizing principles of my four years in office. See my 2007 platform letter to voters, http://www.arnold.us/arnold/alder/campaign_letter_20070319.pdf, in which I laid out three local policy initiatives in response to the two great crises of our time: global warming and peak oil.

I would be honored to have the Sierra Club's support as I continue my work, as I have said on my Web site for many years, "to make Fitchburg ever more beautiful, livable, and sustainable for all residents, now and in the future."

Sincerely,
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