

**Oshkosh Chamber of Commerce
Candidate Questionnaire**

2025 Spring Election – Oshkosh City Council

1. Please provide some personal background information.
 - a. Name – Karl Buelow
 - b. Occupation – Director of Development – The Grand Oshkosh
 - c. List any community activities you are involved with – Currently Serve on Oshkosh MPO Board, Oshkosh Library Board Council Liaison, Oshkosh Diversity Equity and Inclusion Committee, Oshkosh Long Range Finance Committee, Real Oshkosh,

2. What are your background and qualifications for this City Council position, and what value will you bring to the City Council personally?

My background has primarily been in non-profit operations and management. I will continue to bring my connections and knowledge of diverse Oshkosh communities and populations to my council position.

3. Please outline your personal top priorities for the City of Oshkosh and your plan for seeing these priorities realized.

Housing options continue to be the number 1 priority for Oshkosh. I have been a leader in ensuring there are housing projects moving forward, such as the Lake Butte Mortes Red Earth Development, the Commonwealth Corridor project on Main Street, and Tif assistance for the Boatworks development next to Marco’s Pizza. The infill home building catalog is a great tool for establishing possibilities for the redevelopment of underutilized parcels. I will continue to support public/private partnerships for increasing housing.

4. Several geographic locations within the city can benefit from attention to facilitate economic growth and development. Please identify and discuss what you consider to be the top two or three economic development priorities you will champion as a member of the City Council.

Downtown – There continue to be empty commercial options and blighted buildings in our downtown area. I will continue to push for the utilization of partnerships to ensure these get developed into projects that Oshkosh can be proud of, such as the Commonwealth Corridor project with a 2 shift daycare right on main street.

Arena District – The hopeful expansion of retail and commercial possibilities surrounding the Herd Arena has not yet been realized. With new management of

the Arena, I will support investment into the south main street area to create a robust entertainment and retail district surrounding the stadium.

5. Municipalities across the State are moving to Fee for Service approaches to pay for the delivery of municipal services otherwise funded by the annual property tax levy. Do you support a funding approach like this? If so, what current city services would be appropriately funded as a Fee for Service? If a new Fee for Service is imposed, should property taxpayers receive an equal, proportionate tax levy credit?

My opinion has always been – that if a service is optional and additional to basic services, that money should be covered by a fee. If it is a mandatory expense, it should be shared by everyone as a tax.

As an example, I support boat launch usage fees, as that service is only utilized by those who choose to have boats. That should not be covered in a levy tax. Taxes should only be for items that are required for all residents, such as street and sidewalk repair etc.

6. The city established a stormwater utility in 2003 to manage stormwater run-off issues in the community. Residential property owners are assessed for one equivalent runoff unit (ERU). Non-residential property owners are assessed annual fees based on the amount of impervious space (parking lots and rooftops) to determine the amount of ERUs that exist on a parcel. The initial (annual) stormwater utility fee in 2003 was \$19.10 per ERU and grew to \$237.72 per ERU in 2023. While the increase was held flat in 2024, the fee increased another 4% in 2025 to \$243.84. Do you find this rate of increase acceptable? Do you believe that continued increases at that level over the next 20 years are acceptable? Please outline any ideas you might have to curtail the growth in stormwater utility fees.

In short, no we can not continue to “add it to the stormwater utility” instead of finding other ways to balance the municipal budget. With a new city manager and director of finance, it is my direction that we need to aggressively balance current and future spending without continuing to increase fees.

7. There has been considerable confusion and discussion regarding the increase in Oshkosh residents tax bills following the reassessment process last year. Because the City is still out of compliance with the equalized values of commercial properties, the City must conduct another reassessment of all commercial and residential properties this year. In your opinion, what would be the best avenue for you as a city council member to communicate important issues such as this to taxpayers?

I have utilized my personal social media outreach, as well as made a short YouTube video to help explain what happened. I will continue to do so. I will also be taking a leadership role on the council to ensure more communication exists this year with the public through our official city channels. The challenge,

however, is even with all the media and attention we gave to this issue this year, there still existed considerable confusion.

8. With a low unemployment rate and strong local economy, many employers report difficulty attracting and retaining talent. What is the city's role in attracting people to Oshkosh and ensuring that Oshkosh is an attractive place to live and work?

Housing and schools. We cannot attract and retain talented employees if we don't have great places for them to live and great schools for their children to go to.

9. A housing study completed for the City of Oshkosh in March of 2022 noted that Oshkosh is expected to grow by more than 3,200 residents by 2030, meaning the city will need to produce almost 1,700 new housing units. While Oshkosh has made significant progress in this area, there is still much work to be done. What do you see as the primary barriers to increasing the housing stock in Oshkosh? What will you do to address Oshkosh's need for additional workforce housing.

Currently, there is no way for a private developer to produce a single-family home for what the Oshkosh workforce housing salary level would afford. This means that we must continue to utilize public / private partnerships such as the Washington school project to increase housing while controlling costs to the end users. I will also continue to support creating options for infill lots, accessory dwelling units, and other creative solutions. Until we can create enough supply to satisfy demand, prices will remain too high.

This also means that existing property owners must accept that the value of their investment may stagnate or possibly dip some. A commodity, such as housing, can not both be accessible and consistently increasing in value, which is incongruous.

10. If elected, how would you support the business community.

I have worked to ensure that I am available and present at many events and discussions held by the Chamber of Commerce, GOEDC, and Discover Oshkosh. I am open and welcome communication of business needs in our community, while also balancing with the needs of our residents as well. This balance can be seen in the new Homelessness Outreach positions we have created at the city level, to ensure unsheltered individuals have appropriate care and outreach, while also serving our local businesses with questions and situations they have never experienced before.

11. What specific issue, challenge, or concern are you interested in solving while serving on the City Council and why?

Housing. Housing. And ohh..ummm... Housing. We need more housing stock available at every level of the continuum and need to continue to prioritize accessibility. This means duplexes, quads, large and small complexes, large and small single-family homes. We also need more supportive housing for individuals that are transitioning out of homelessness or addiction treatment services.