



Candidate Forum Statement

Good evening, and thank you to the Lexington Nonprofit Coalition for bringing us together.

I'm Tina Bryson, a longtime District 6 resident, wife, mother, nonprofit communications leader, and community advocate. My husband and I have called the 6th District home for nearly 20 years, and it's where we chose to raise our four children.

I'm running because District 6 deserves a councilmember who listens, communicates clearly, and follows through, and because every neighbor deserves to feel safe, heard, and able to build a stable life in Lexington.

My career in nonprofit service has shown me that nonprofits are not an extra. They are essential infrastructure. They help parents find childcare so they can work. They prepare people for jobs, keep families housed and fed, they support our young people, strengthen arts and culture, and make our neighborhoods places where people can thrive. They also help prevent today's challenges from becoming tomorrow's more expensive crises.

I've seen those challenges firsthand on the campaign trail. I've talked with a neighbor facing repeated moves because of poor-quality

housing she could barely afford, a Vietnam veteran watching rising utility and gas costs stretch his disability income even further, and seniors concerned about speeding vehicles and their safety as they walk in their own neighborhoods. Those concerns are personal, but they also demonstrate why city policy and nonprofit expertise must work together.

At a time of reduced funding, rising costs, and greater demand, Lexington must invest strategically in programs and partnerships that produce results.

My first step would be a regular city-nonprofit roundtable connected to the city's planning and budget calendar, not simply a listening session after decisions have already been made. Nonprofit leaders and the people receiving services should help identify emerging needs, service gaps, and approaches that are working.

I would also create a regular structure for nonprofit leaders representing areas like housing, hunger relief, youth services, workforce development, health, arts, and neighborhoods to share their expertise with Council and the Administration. Nonprofits are often among the first to recognize emerging challenges because they're working directly with the people affected. I want that expertise at the table early, while policies and solutions are still being developed.

As someone who works in the nonprofit sector, I know how much time organizations can spend on administration instead of on mission. I would look for opportunities to streamline reporting, simplify processes where possible, and eliminate unnecessary duplication so our nonprofit partners can devote more of their resources to serving people.

Finally, if federal or state funding declines, we need to identify early which services prevent the greatest harm and what our neighbors would lose if those programs disappeared.

I would support an early, public review of those risks and coordination of city resources with philanthropy and other community partners to preserve essential services before unmet needs become more costly emergencies.

That includes housing stability, food access, children and youth, seniors, homelessness, mental health, and addiction recovery. We also need to balance what has proven successful with responsible innovation.

Organizations with demonstrated results, sound stewardship, and community trust should have a dependable path to continued support. At the same time, we should make room for promising new approaches to unmet needs that includes clear goals, community input, measurable results, and a willingness to expand what works.

If elected, I would seek assignments to the Social Services and Public Safety Committee and the General Government and Planning Committee. Social Services and Public Safety would allow me to connect housing, homelessness, mental health, addiction response, neighborhood safety, and the organizations already doing this work. General Government and Planning would give me an opportunity to bring nonprofit expertise into long-term planning, improve how city government works with community partners, and ensure that decisions about growth, neighborhoods, and public services reflect the needs of neighbors and the organizations serving them.

My approach is simple:

Bring nonprofits to the table early.

Listen to the people closest to the problem.

Protect what is working.

And make room for responsible innovation.

I've spent my professional career here in Lexington working in the nonprofit sector. I've seen firsthand what these organizations make possible, and how decisions made by government can have an immediate and lasting impact on the communities they serve. I'm ready to bring that experience to City Hall and work toward a city government that treats nonprofits not as an afterthought, but as essential partners in Lexington's future.

Thank you.