

With the increasing need for infrastructure improvements and community development, traditional funding sources may not always be sufficient. What creative and flexible financing methods would you explore to fund essential projects in Waconia? How would you ensure these methods are sustainable and do not place an undue burden on taxpayers?

Jacob Coleman* - Candidate: Waconia City Council

As the need for infrastructure improvements and community development in Waconia grows, it's crucial to explore creative and flexible financing methods that can supplement traditional funding sources while minimizing the impact on taxpayers. Here are some strategies I would consider:

1. **Public-Private Partnerships (P3s):** Public-private partnerships can be an effective way to finance large-scale projects without relying solely on public funds. By partnering with private entities, the city can leverage private capital and expertise while sharing risks. For example, a P3 could be used to develop a new community center, upgrade infrastructure, or build additional housing. These partnerships can reduce upfront costs for the city and offer innovative solutions that benefit both the public and private sectors.

2. **Grants and Low-Interest Loans:** I would actively seek out state and federal grants/bonding requests, as well as low-interest loans, to fund essential projects. These sources often come with specific requirements, but they can significantly reduce the financial burden on the city. By aligning our projects with grant criteria—such as those for environmental sustainability, infrastructure resilience, or economic development—we can maximize the chances of securing external funding.

3. **Tax Increment Financing (TIF):** Tax Increment Financing is a method that allows the city to finance infrastructure and development projects by capturing the future tax benefits of increased property values within a designated area. TIF can be particularly useful for revitalizing underdeveloped areas or funding infrastructure improvements that will spur economic growth. This method spreads the cost of development over time, ensuring that taxpayers only pay as the area benefits from the improvements.

4. **Crowdfunding and Community Bonds:** In some cases, community-driven funding initiatives such as crowdfunding or community bonds can be effective. Residents and businesses who have a vested interest in a particular project can contribute directly, fostering a sense of ownership and involvement. Community bonds, where residents invest in a project and are repaid over time with interest, offer an innovative way to finance smaller-scale projects while engaging the community.

5. **Phased Development and Incremental Funding:** For large-scale projects, a phased development approach can spread out costs over time, making them more manageable. By completing projects in stages, the city can prioritize the most critical needs first, using incremental funding to avoid large, upfront financial commitments.

Ensuring Sustainability and Minimal Taxpayer Burden: To ensure these methods are sustainable and do not place an undue burden on taxpayers, I would:

- **Conduct thorough cost-benefit analyses** to evaluate the financial and social impacts of each funding method.
- **Engage in transparent budgeting** processes, allowing residents to understand where funds are coming from and how they are being used.
- **Implement strict oversight and accountability measures** to monitor the effectiveness of each funding ap-

proach and ensure that projects are delivered on time and within budget.

By combining traditional funding sources with these creative methods, Waconia can address its infrastructure and development needs in a way that is both fiscally responsible and responsive to the community's aspirations.

Jim Lohan - Candidate: Waconia City Council

To address the challenges and needs the City Council must find ways to increase revenues without incremental taxation and be good stewards of our assets. To successfully accomplish this, we must execute in five focus areas.:

Expansion: Growth is key to maintaining a reasonable taxation level and to optimizing return on investments such as water and sewer services. I would focus our growth in two major areas:

- **Geography:** Unlike communities such as Excelsior, Waconia has the opportunity to expand its city limits and take advantage of currently undeveloped or under-utilized land. As that expansion takes place, the City Council must ensure that the projects undertaken:
 - Improve the standard tax base.
 - Leverage sponsorship where possible.
 - Add viable members of the local workforce to attract new employers or provide viable employment to that workforce
 - Provide for long term family viability to support our long-term vision.
- **Workforce:** Expansion of the workforce is likely to present our biggest challenge. In a state with low unemployment, finding and attracting citizens with a variety of skills who add value to the community is difficult. I am confident that the City Council, Chamber of Commerce and School Board can successfully undertake this challenge by optimizing our resources and supporting family investment.
- **Industrial Development:** We must articulate our value proposition to businesses. What value do we provide that puts us in front of other Minnesota communities? How do we provide a value to businesses that overcomes costs that are inherent with our state cost base when business consider Minnesota and states around us? I have been part of teams that built two factories and understand the needs and requirements of businesses. We must determine how to meet them.

Securing Sponsorship of Municipal Projects: As the tidal wave of growth moves West, we have the fleeting opportunity to optimize our city's infrastructure. My plan is to work with investors to identify and fund projects that are mutually beneficial to the investor and the residents. The expansion of businesses along Hwy 5 and the request for multifamily housing permits illustrate the significant return on investment in Waconia is expected to provide. As request for permits are reviewed, the Council and Waconia, should find ways to share in this return by asking investors to take on significant sponsorships of municipal and community project needs. For example, if granting a permit for projects like the new apartment complex, perhaps the investors should be asked to sponsor water and sewer projects.

Maintaining and prioritizing Independence: The last several decades have seen the birth of socially "required" community projects and investments. Other cities have spent significant time, treasure and talent implementing projects like public transit, progressive firearm and law enforcement restrictions, and sanctuary status. These initiatives can have a detrimental impact on Waconia's fiscal, social, and cultural foundation. I would work to ensure that ONLY those projects that have a direct positive impact on Waconia, be allowed to

be implemented.

Optimizing the value of Waconia through redevelopment and gentrification: I personally demonstrated the value of Waconia by choosing to move here with my large family. As a City Council, we must find ways to optimize the tax base of our city by taking advantage of the development opportunities in front of us. As fundamentally a libertarian, this challenge is significant one to undertake. We must encourage the development of unused city land to meet the expansion goals above without overreach. In addition, we must encourage and support the gentrification opportunities available in our beautiful town. Finding ways to support redevelopment of lots with obsolete structures is a great opportunity. Can we achieve a significant return on investment through tax revenue by supporting single family development of these lots? One idea is to subsidize interest rates on construction for families in return for a 5-7-year commitment to physical residence. I am not sure of the solution, but a significant opportunity is upon us.

Remaining Fiscally Responsibility: I have reviewed Waconia's financial statements. In my opinion, our city runs lean with around 10% of our budget on spent on administrative functions. We must maintain this fiscal rigor. When we grow, we must maintain the same administrative (dollar spend, not percentage) spend, thereby ensuring the benefits of that growth make it to the city instead of being chewed up in administration. In addition, I believe we should manage the water and sewer business independently. Using that approach we can evaluate its efficiency, capacity and profitability, much like any of us would do with our businesses. Additionally, we should review the water works project list to ensure it meets the spirit of Waconia independence. In other words, the department should only undertake critical projects, not those suggested by outside guidelines or socially driven ideals.

Simon Malinski - Candidate: Waconia City Council

There are ways to raise funding for essential use items. Ways to explore funding beyond public finance can be fundraisers, private donations, tax exempt lending and bonding. Taxpayers have the right to know where their dollars are being allocated, furthermore taxpayers have the right to voice their opinions on how those dollars are spent. A healthy debate and open dialogue with the community is essential in achieving workable solutions for financing. Essential projects are that, essential, and we must do our best to ensure we are prudent in spending.

Derek Siddons - Candidate: Waconia City Council

As we evolve, the collaboration between businesses in the public and private sector will continue to increase. Additionally, outside resources who want to tap into our market are available. There are state bonding projects that fund infrastructure and municipal facilities, for example, Waconia Regional Park. I would start there for financing and again, my strength is in creative networking to bring people together for a greater cause.

Tim Litfin - Candidate: Waconia Mayor

I do not have all the answers to this question, but I am willing to work hard to get results. My past record proves that my work ethic is unmatched, and I will bring that same work ethic to the mayor's office. Anyone who says they have all the answers regarding funding is not being truthful.

Funding sources are scarce and are never enough, and the list of needs always outweighs the funding for any city. Waconia is no different. Funding sources are ever-changing for cities as are the years in which funding may have been promised.

Waconia is beholden to the state in many funding types. Municipal State Aid Street System, MSAS, is a system

Waconia City Council & Mayor - Candidate Questionnaire

that exists for some funding, not all, for cities over 5,000 in population for many types of infrastructure improvements from streets to retaining walls. There is a newer and more fragile fund called the Larger Cities Assistance Account. That was new in 2023 and what it could yield for Waconia is not yet known as it is depending on sales tax collected on motor vehicle parts.

Other funding sources are tax-exempt bonds, tax-credit bonds, State revolving funds, and our own budget. We need to work with city administration to maximize the use of our budget while investigating all funding sources.

Sustainable funding sources for projects is a challenging question for anyone running for office to answer. The need always outweighs reality. We must work with our trusted city administrator, and our state representatives to maximize all funding sources.

I hear repeatedly from citizens that taxpayers in Waconia already carry a heavy burden. We need to always make sure that the trust is there with our citizens, and that we as a city will use every one of their precious tax dollars wisely and efficiently.

Mayor Nicole Waldron*- Candidate: Waconia Mayor

Balance is the key when there is insufficient funding. Using the Highway 5 Phase 2 project as an example, the City of Waconia has been able to secure \$13.4M of the 18.1M needed to complete the project. The \$4.7M gap was brought forward last session and is back on the table. I have invested time lobbying at the Capitol and meeting with state and federal lawmakers. If the final amount can be secured this year, this project will then be set to proceed.

For all projects a variety of financial models and options are used to give the most effective cost to our residents. In addition, we as a Council are always encouraging staff to reach out for nontraditional funding opportunities as well as bonding dollars.

CONTACT THE CANDIDATES

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How Can I Vote in Waconia?

City of Waconia residents have multiple options for voting:

1. Vote by mail.
2. Vote at City Hall, 201 South Vine Street (City of Waconia Residents Only).
3. Go to the Taxpayer Services Department at Carver County Government Center, 600 E. 4th Street, Chaska, (ALL Carver County Residents).
4. Vote in person on Election Day on November 5, 2024.



Early and Absentee Voting at City Hall (Waconia residents only)

Early and absentee voting starts September 20 and goes through November 4. Waconia residents can vote at City Hall Monday - Thursday from 7:30 am - 4:30 pm, and Fridays from 7:30 am - 11:30 am. Extended hours include:

- Saturday, October 26 - 9:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.
- Tuesday, October 29 - 7:30 a.m. - 7:00 p.m.
- Saturday, November 2 - 9:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.
- Sunday, November 3 - 9:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.
- Monday, November 4 - 7:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

If you are not a City of Waconia resident (but reside in Carver County) you can absentee vote at the Carver County Government Center in Chaska. Their hours are different than the hours listed above.

How Do I Vote by Mail?

To request a mail ballot, please visit the [Secretary of State's Website](#) or www.waconia.org/votebymail.

City of Waconia Polling Locations

The City of Waconia is no longer part of a Ward Boundary System. Your polling place may have changed in 2022. The City of Waconia is divided into three precincts, please view the polling places listed below. If you are unsure of the precinct in which you reside, please consult the [City of Waconia Precinct map](#) (link).
www.waconia.org/DocumentCenter/View/3042/WaconiaPrecincts

Precinct 1

Faith Lutheran Church
800 Waconia Parkway North
Waconia, MN 55387

Precinct 2

Trinity Lutheran Church
601 E. 2nd St.
Waconia, MN 55387

Precinct 3

Waconia Ice Arena
1250 Oak Avenue
Waconia, MN 55387

Questions? Call City Hall at 952-442-2184

Current Elected Officials

For a full listing of current city, county, state, and federal elected officials, visit www.DestinationWaconia.org/live/#government.

