

2009 Voters Guide



The League of Women Voters of Greater Hartford

www.lwvgh.org

Responses by Question:

3. What are the biggest challenges and opportunities of our changing demographics?

Steve Adler

Challenges

- Identify affordable housing solutions for our growing baby boomer generation and middle class families who want to have a long term living relationship in West Hartford.

Opportunities

- An increased diverse population amongst our residents improves our public perception of social inclusion while supporting the human rights of everyone.

Denise Berard Hall

A town's changing demographic makeup is something that can't be controlled, but must be forecast, implications assessed, and possible outcomes projected. Comprehensive plans to react when there are shifts that cause a greater demand for services from any segment, such as senior citizens or returning veterans, or create a change in school populations, will ensure that the Town is prepared to react accordingly, without disrupting services or school systems.

Tim Brennan

Challenges: West Hartford continues to be viewed by the State and others as a wealthy town. While that perception is not true, West Hartford has continued to receive reduced state aid compared to other municipalities.

Opportunities: Because of West Hartford's ever changing demographics and the quality of our Town, we have had an outpouring of volunteerism in the schools, sports, human services and in countless other areas. We need to continue to utilize and promote volunteerism, not only to save money, but also to further improve the Town through new ideas and community involvement.

Shari Cantor

We are an economically and culturally diverse community. These demographics mirror those of our country. The needs of our residents vary dramatically. These varied cultures make us richer as a community but the economic situation has increased the need for assistance in fuel, food pantry, transportation, education and health and wellness education. We continue to balance the needs of the community and while maintaining our AAA bond rating keeping West Hartford financial secure.

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Judy Casperson

The challenge is affordability. West Hartford draws young families for our schools, young professionals for our services and growing social scene, and seniors for our safety and town services. Maintaining quality services is important but I want to ensure that West Hartford remains affordable through thoughtful planning.

Justin Clark

West Hartford's diversity is one of our biggest assets. Having people of all different ages, races, colors and creeds makes this town great. I want to make sure that every child, regardless of background, has the same opportunities as I did growing up. Making sure our kids have these opportunities in the future is our biggest challenge. That is why I want to keep our taxes low, preserve town services and protect our system of neighborhood schools.

Leon Davidoff

Our biggest challenge is: "to keep West Hartford a top-notch, affordable, and terrific place to live, work and raise a family". I will continue to be fiscally responsible with our limited financial resources. Further, I will explore opportunities that will enhance our quality of life so that all residents will be proud to call West Hartford home. A strong commitment to public safety, excellent schools, and quality infrastructure are keystones of our community that I will continue to strongly support.

Rob Durbin

West Hartford must continue its tradition of providing one of the best public school systems in the country. We should also continue to support our veterans and to explore tax relief for our seniors. The state's property tax structure disproportionately impacts seniors and residents with fixed incomes. We need to work with the state to get our fair share of state funding and to obtain relief from unfunded state mandates.

Scott Slifka

West Hartford is one of the most successful inner-ring suburbs in the country. We have become more diverse - ethnically, racially and economically - while maintaining our excellence in education, our wonderful neighborhoods and growing into a regional entertainment destination. This has provided us with a great marketing opportunity in terms of attracting homeowners and businesses. The great challenge in coming years is affordability - whether we can continue to provide the same level of services that are largely responsible for our success.

Rob Sisk

Our community is unique in that we have almost 50% more "Over 65's" and over 100% more "18-24's" than peer communities. These low and fixed income demographics represent 30% of our adult population, are the most economically vulnerable and have been seriously hurt by the >50% increase in property taxes since 2001. Adding to their burden are the indirect taxes recently enacted (leaf pick-up, user fees) In 2008, I presented a five-year Town budget forecast and discussed the very real concern over Tiebout Sorting - a vicious cycle in which high taxes cause non-school households to relocate, to be replaced by school households, increasing demand for services without a corresponding increase in revenue, resulting in yet higher taxes (for more information visit www.siskforwesthartford.com). In order to preserve the unique demographic make-

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up, and improve the affordability, of West Hartford, we must protect these most vulnerable residents by controlling spending at sustainable levels.

Joe Verrengia

West Hartford's demographics have changed. I am proud to live in a town that is rich in diversity. I believe our town has done an excellent job in identifying the changing demographics. Like anything else with change I think there is room for improvement when it comes to meeting the challenges of our diverse community but I also believe as a community we can work together to meet those challenges and opportunities.

Joe Visconti

Changing demographics is West Hartford. As we have in the past, we will continue into the future, representing all residents equally. Our challenge is to hold the State of Connecticut and the Federal Government responsible and accountable for funding their mandates and revoking those which are unsustainable.