Public Question Responses:

What role will New Urbanism values play in your administration, as an approach to managing zoning and development in Chattanooga?

Monty Bruell:
There are many aspects of New Urbanism that should be implemented in Chattanooga. We need to make our city more pedestrian friendly and increase housing density in some parts of town. Public transit (CARTA) should be free to ride, and the system should be rerouted to be more useful to riders.

Christopher Dahl:
New Urbanism has become the new trend in Urban planning along with Form-based code. I hope to find a happy medium in our urban development. I and others hope to one day see the infrastructure catch up to the Urban sprawl. We also need to focus on the Ponzi growth scheme that has been created and make sure we work within our boundaries. For far too long have we put things off on the back of our future generations. We have done so through future growth plans and also municipal bonds to fund these projects. It's time we get the development under control to not only protect us but our future. If one was to look at the principles of the Chattanooga and Hamilton County Regional Planning Agency one would see they have failed to uphold them. We need to strive to do better.

How will you will address COVIDs impact on our local economy (businesses closing, evictions/homelessness, job creation, health disparities, etc) and what they believe will be our greatest challenge in a post-covid world?

Monty Bruell:
First, it is unfortunate that the President has failed to develop and execute a comprehensive federal COVID-19 strategy. We have also seen that Gov. Lee has limited the ability of city mayors to exercise local rule to do what's best for city residents. Having said this, as Mayor I would tap into Chattanooga's Rainy Day Fund (about $75 million) to provide relief to small business owners, displaced workers, and families. Our biggest challenge post-COVID will be to get tax revenues back to where they were last year. This will require recovery by small businesses and the full employment of workers. If Joe Biden is President, then there might be additional federal funds to help local governments recover.

Christopher Dahl:
I don't think we can truly ever recover from the market shift that Covid has created. We need to work within our means to support local and create a free economy. Until then we will always have a captive workforce and business that barely make by. Also, we need to look into creating a gifting economy. If elected I would create an "Office of Neighborhood Resources" to link business up with services the city can provide. We also need to look over all the many departments or layers of government that have been created. We need accountability and transparency to make things work.

What experience do you have as a responsible business operator or other professional in the area of sustainability that you can bring to city hall?

Monty Bruell:
I have led a number of organizations that have worked on sustainable, citizen-led development in neighborhoods. I was Chairman of both Chattanooga Venture and Glass House Collective, two organizations that focused on collaborative neighborhood revitalization. In Atlanta, I was also Vice Chair of the Atlanta Beltline Tax Allocation District Advisory Committee (TADAC), a public body charged with using tax increment financing (TIF) to expand affordable housing in Atlanta's urban core.

Christopher Dahl:
I have run and worked in the construction industry. I know first hand what is needed to bring facilities into a green facility. We need to see how each department is run and see if they can be run more efficiently.

What are your thoughts on using the Green New Deal as a template for the City of Chattanooga? What parts of the Green New Deal would you apply to Chattanooga? What parts would you change to better fit our city?

Monty Bruell:
Many elements of the Green New Deal are best suited for implementation by the federal government. However, as a general rule, I favor investment in clean, environmentally friendly businesses that create jobs that pay workers a fair and livable wage. I would make CARTA buses free to ride for all people and would continue the transition to a fully electric bus fleet. Finally, as Mayor I would create a Green Bank to finance clean energy and energy efficiency projects.

Christopher Dahl:
Parts of the green new deal are not feasible like the promise to move to renewable energy by 2030. Also to reduce greenhouse emissions. We can strive to push for more renewable energy utilizing EPB. But first, it needs to have an outside audit. I think it's good to have goals to strive for and a more sustainable economy is well worth it. We also have to understand that there are people who are not keen on the Green New deal and see it as an attack. So I would like to see a more open approach and more input to see how the community feels about this issue as well. It's time for the city to be more data-driven.
Affordable housing is crucial for continued growth and economic stability. How can we help you as Mayor to provide energy-efficient and adorable housing while combating the NIMBYism that plagues nearly every district?

Monty Bruell: There are many, many things that need to be done to create more affordable housing units. It should be noted that affordable does not mean low income. Currently 40% of Chattanooga residents are considered to be housing burdened (meaning that they spend more than 30% of monthly income on housing expenses). Among the tools that should be utilized in Chattanooga are mixed use development (commercial and residential), urban land trusts, and incentives tied to the achievement of specific affordable housing units.

Christopher Dahl: Well, NIMBYism is a good aspect, we have to listen to the good and the bad. And most of the time we hear affordable housing is being built but only a small portion of the said project is truly dedicated to affordable housing. It is time we stop helping developers with housing or land stock and grants to provide something that rarely gets furnished. We need policies in place that will hold people accountable. The wording in many tax breaks has been spotty. Its time we reevaluate what is going in internally.

What are your plans to improve the neighborhoods where African Americans primarily live regarding the demolition of long-standing boarded up houses, overgrowth in grass, trees and bushes, putting sidewalks and lights in neighborhoods where needed to provide safety and repairing badly needed roads and streets throughout the primarily African American Neighborhoods?

Monty Bruell: First, I will create a Citizen Advisory Council that will include residents from all across our city. I will make sure that every community has a voice that reaches directly to the Mayor. Next, as Mayor I will implement participatory budgeting that will give citizens and neighborhoods direct control over how some city budget funds are allocated. Finally, I will focus on recruiting and supporting businesses in these underserved areas so that more livable wage jobs can be created where they're needed most.

Christopher Dahl: All neighborhoods suffer from this, it is sad to see that our inner city is hit the hardest. It's time we come up with a strategic plan to address our infrastructure needs. Also, it's time for the city to stop meddling in property and to not sit on properties for years only to hand them off to a developer for free. And if we are going to cite people for code violations we need to ensure that the person isn't in a position where they can't maintain the property without assistance. The city should not be in the business of panic peddling people from their homes. We also need to focus on and address the absentee landlords and section 8 slumlords. And the failure of the city to properly inspect section 8 housing.

What are your thoughts on food waste diversion from landfills and composting? If you are elected will you work with local companies to make it easier for residents and businesses to participate in food waste diversion and composting programs?

Monty Bruell: Absolutely. I will appoint a citizen led committee to study best practices from across the US and make recommendations for how Chattanooga's program should be developed and managed.

Christopher Dahl: I feel it's time for the city to take back over its recycling plants and stop outsourcing. It would allow the city to strengthen the program and reinvest and money that is made back into the program to expand it. The recycling program needs a reboot and to bring back rocky the raccoon. There is no reason the city cant works to reduce its waste.

What is your position on the city's lack of regulations about development on steep slopes?

Monty Bruell: This is a huge oversight on our part. If we had fewer developers and more community leaders on the Regional Planning Commission, then I believe that this and other issues could be more thoroughly addressed. As mayor, my appointments to all boards and commissions will better reflect the broad diversity of Chattanooga's residents and neighborhoods.

Christopher Dahl: I was one of the only people to speak out against steep slope and flood plain developments. I asked the city on public record to adopt the standards the EPA has in place and was laughed at by our own city council for that suggestion. The steep slope guidelines come from Pittsburgh Pennsylvania. Which talks about using green infrastructure projects to contain water runoff. And I would make sure the City complies with the up to date EPA stormwater management practices. It seems like time and time again the issues with water pollution and runoff get placed on the back of taxpayers through fees. We can not keep spending our money frivolously if we want our infrastructure needs to be addressed.
How do you plan to complete Moccasin Bend Park?

Monty Bruell:
If it hasn’t already been done, I will work with the county to relocate the law enforcement firing range from Moccasin Bend to a more suitable site. Next, I will lobby Congress and the US Park Service to develop a national park on Moccasin Bend. It is estimated that a Moccasin Bend National Park would bring an additional 300,000 visitors to Chattanooga each year.

Christopher Dahl:
From my understanding, the moccasin bend park is a federally owned park. The farmland was given to the Federal government to stop development from occurring on moccasin bend. I would make sure this project is carried out under the public eye and ask questions as to what has occurred with the funding raised in the construction of the park. We at times get promises that never get fulfilled.