

MIKE GIACOMO  
BACKGROUND

The opportunity to run as a ward councilor excites me because it allows me to focus my efforts on the specific challenges facing the “North-Central” part of the city. We live in a region of the city unique in its architecture, its accessibility, and its balance of urban, suburban, and rural living

A neighbor commented a few weeks ago that if Keene's Ward 3 existed in any other city, it would be the “hot” place to live – the place where young people moving to the area would flock to live, go out, and raise their families. I fully agree. So why isn't that the case in Keene? While the more sparsely settled northern end of the ward can attract younger families looking for houses, areas closer to downtown have shifted away from single-family homes, with many being turned into rentals. While rentals are an important housing option, neighborhoods heavy with renters can sometimes lack a sense of community. Community is about looking out for your neighbor, but it's hard to even get to know your neighbors when they change every 6 months. In addition, since the property owner often doesn't live there, it's easy for these multi-unit buildings to fall into disrepair.

Keene has a storied history, and while we must respect and remember that history to retain the fabric of this community, we must also look to the future. We must ensure the most vulnerable in our community are not abandoned, that we do not fall into the trap of ageism in our decision-making, and that we make Keene, an open, welcoming, and affordable place for all. We must continually strive to attract the next generation of professionals, and to attract a broad spectrum of ideas, of cultures, and of opinions. Most importantly, every decision council makes, every initiative they embark on, must be viewed and voted on through the lens of sustainability and realism – not partisanship.

As your Ward 3 city councilor, I intend to focus on three areas. All three areas will work together towards a central goal – to revitalize Ward 3 and reinvigorate the sense of community in this area.

These areas are as follows:

1. I will work with the mayor and city council on continuing to implement the economic development plan and land use code updates guided by the committees I served on a few years ago. The EDP is an initiative that encourages business growth and development in Keene. The land use code update encourages the city to move towards more progressive zoning. I believe this is how we can enable more business in Ward 3 and create a dynamic environment to live in and shop. Mixed-use zoning has also been shown to improve community character, reduce fossil fuel usage through improved bike and pedestrian access, and increase land-use synergy between business and residential units.

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2. I will work to ensure that the city is keeping up to date on inspections of rental buildings in Ward 3, and that ordinances regarding the upkeep and safety of these buildings are being enforced. Buildings visibly in disrepair contribute negatively to the overall character of a community, discourage investment in an area, and encourage illicit activity. Buildings in disrepair also end up costing more for the owners to heat, wasting energy, and resulting in long-term increases in cost of living in those buildings. I will support any reasonable initiatives to upgrade existing residential and commercial housing to solar and other renewable energy sources, and I will support efforts by council to hold landlords more accountable for their properties.

3. Through the current City Council has made numerous proclamations attesting to its inclusiveness, those proclamations are just grandstanding, or at best, patting ourselves on the back for something we have not yet accomplished. We need to do a better job enacting policies that would encourage people to move into Keene, and more importantly, stay here. As well as supporting sanctuary city proposals, I would also propose and support first-time home-buyer tax incentives for people buying in Keene. Both our housing stock and the average owners are aging, and for a sustainable future, we need a new, younger, and more diverse population to be encouraged to move into Keene. Speaking to residents (and former residents) of Keene, the number one reason for young people moving out, or buying outside Keene's limits, were the property taxes. By creating a mechanism to provide some property tax relief for the first year or two of ownership, we can help young families and young professionals afford to live and stay in Keene. To further help attract and retain young people in Keene, I will donate my entire city councilor salary to community-building organizations with this purpose.

I am a chemical engineer by trade, I am a Keene High graduate, and I have worked in Keene for 14 years. As an engineer, I believe in fact-based decision-making and efficient, cost-effective operations. As a person living in the very heart of this community, I will at the same time strive to ensure Keene is a place where all people will feel safe and comfortable living, working, and playing. I promise to carry this mentality with me to City Hall. I promise that my voting and other actions as a councilor will never be for personal gain, or loyalty to any political party or ideology, but rather because the nature of my vote would be in the best interest of the residents of Ward 3, and of the city of Keene. I love this city, I love my neighborhood, and I look forward to serving you as city councilor.

-Michael "Mike" Giacomo