

Tucson Metro Chamber
City Council Candidate Questionnaire

Candidate: Miranda Schubert

Party Affiliation: Democratic

Ward: 6

Current Occupation: Academic Advisor in the Department of Physiology at the University of Arizona

Education: Bachelor of Arts in Mandarin Chinese

What relevant experience, knowledge or perspective would you bring to the City Council that prepares you for this position?

1. I have fifteen years (and counting) of serving as an academic advisor in higher ed. My experiences have taught me that bureaucracies are intimidating. Many of the people I work with are depending on a system that intimidates them and, in many cases, wasn't designed with their needs in mind. I help people navigate a massive bureaucracy to get the resources they need every day, and am someone who can be trusted to respond to phone calls and emails from constituents with empathy and understanding.

2. My strong background in grassroots, community, and labor organizing is also a significant part of the perspective I would bring to the role. I have been Operations Head on the Board of Directors of the non-profit, volunteer-driven Tucson Roller Derby for the past five years. I also started actively organizing with the Coalition for Academic Justice at the UA (CAJUA) throughout last summer and then helped to launch UCW AZ Local 7065, the union at the UA, this past fall. I am also the creator, producer, and host of local feminist talk/ variety show, Ladytowne, which started as a radio show in 2015 and evolved into a live show in 2017.

What is your vision for Tucson?

Overall, it comes down to making Tucson an easier place for people from all walks of life to thrive-- to have access to good jobs with benefits, decent housing in neighborhoods that are comfortable and welcoming, with lots of parks and public green space, and viable transportation options that are easy and convenient for people who don't own a car. I love the things that make our city unique-- our artists, food, local businesses. We need to make it easier for the people who make Tucson special to get by. It's hard to see legacy businesses closing, and people having to move to the peripheries due to getting priced out of housing.

What are your policy priorities and how do you see yourself partnering with the Chamber on these issues?

One of the first things that comes to mind is workforce development. I know that there are some great programs already out there, but I believe that we would see so many benefits if we invested more time and resources. Part of our infrastructure for economic development are workers. I know the construction/ trade industries have been suffering from a labor shortage for many years-- important community partners like Pima County One Stop and other workforce

development programs are important and can help us to boost the number of people who are prepared to enter the trades and address this shortage. Leveraging partnerships with local training providers like Pima Community College and local trade schools or other organizations is heading in the right direction.

Another major priority is moving away from autocentric transportation design, which hurts local businesses, people's health and their finances-- not to mention that it's also harmful to the environment. Everything we can do to shift away from that model is going to help our local economy. As we recover from COVID, this type of infrastructure investment can really help people who have been struggling during the pandemic. I love thinking about ways to ensure that the way businesses operate, grow and develop locally are supporting alternative modes of transportation, like providing better bicycle and pedestrian connectivity, and expanding the standards for ADA compliance so that we can make Tucson truly accessible for people with all levels of mobility needs.

Finally, I think there are opportunities to make our local economy more diverse and inclusive of business owners and entrepreneurs of all income levels and backgrounds. I would be interested in partnering with the Chamber to see how we can make this a reality. I believe that we should be looking to spread economic opportunities throughout the ward and look into neighborhood-based small business development, rather than disproportionately concentrating on the center of the city and downtown. These areas are now thriving, and I have heard many Ward 6 residents express that they would love to see similar placemaking and access to small local businesses in their own areas of town.

In your opinion, what are the top three most important issues small businesses in Tucson face today?

As mentioned previously, it's been sad to see so many small local businesses have to close their doors in the past year or so. Although the pandemic exacerbated it, things had already been heading in that direction for years. The ability of property owners to drastically increase the rent they are charging to these businesses seems to be the top contributor, so I would look into figuring out how to stop that dynamic.

In addition to the ever rising cost of doing business, I also think there could be more intentional supports in place for businesses of different sizes and income levels, so that there are resources to access if different situations come up (such as expensive repairs or upgrades), or weathering difficulties due to construction restricting accessibility (we saw the negative impacts on 4th Ave businesses during the street car construction).

Finally, I think that upgrading and improving our transportation options so that Tucson is an easier place to walk, roll, bike, or take public transportation is essential to helping businesses thrive. Keeping more money in people's wallets will make them more likely to spend dollars locally, and other transportation modes are more encouraging of people actually stopping in to local businesses, since they aren't just driving past.

What is the relationship between the business community and government and how can they work together to promote a business-friendly climate?

The way I see it, these are two entities with shared interests and different goals. The business community's objective is to ensure that businesses thrive, which of course is something that the city also wants to see. The difference is that the government's primary objective is to protect the health, safety, and well-being of its citizens-- business development is an important component of this, but profit should not come at the expense of public health (and by extension, the environment). It's essential that the relationship between government and business centers the needs of the communities we both serve. I would certainly take a coalition-building approach to this, and look for our common goals and how we can strengthen our ability to meet them.

What is the City's role in economic development and business growth?

The City should be working with businesses to ensure that economic development supports the well-being of our citizens, and the business community helps the government ensure economic health by providing subject matter expertise as essential stakeholders. This takes elected leaders who are adept at coalition building, communication, and coming up with smart, innovative ideas that lead to broad benefits across the board for all Tucsonans.

What role should local government play in ensuring an adequate workforce is available to meet employers' needs?

This starts with ensuring that general funds are being allocated to accurately meet our needs as a community. When we don't adequately fund services and resources that help the working families of this city thrive, we are also depleting our workforce. This runs the gambit from early childhood education and after school programs to mental and behavioral health, to increasing access to attainable housing. Local government should look not only for ways to tangibly improve material conditions for constituents, but also leverage partnerships with local education and training providers, and nurturing clear pipelines to industry. Our local employers, the government, and the business community should be working in tandem to ensure there are workers who are well-prepared and employable, and that the jobs they are stepping into are well paying, provide benefits, and have good working conditions.

What specific efforts do you propose the City can implement to reduce the current level of poverty and homelessness?

I am an enthusiastic supporter of the Tucson Fight for \$15 initiative to raise the minimum wage to \$15/ hour and establish a local office of worker protections. I definitely see lifting up workers and providing opportunities for better jobs as an essential part of reducing poverty. Like my previous response, I also see investing adequately in community services and resources as an important component of this. There are also a range of strategies we need to explore in order to provide increased access to housing for folks of different income levels and needs. Finally, shifting away from autocentric transportation will also help enormously when it comes to alleviating poverty. I support the idea of looking for ways to make public transportation free on a permanent basis, as well as expanding our public transportation options beyond what we currently have.

What unmet needs do you see in the area of infrastructure (roads, internet and transportation)?

The Move Tucson master transportation plan, which includes implementation of Complete Streets, does a great job of addressing what many have seen as unmet needs in the area of roads and transportation. We know that we need to do more to implement traffic calming in some of our residential areas, as well as put in more measures for bicycle and pedestrian safety and connectivity. We also know that over 75% of Tucson's roads are failing, as well as underutilized. A comprehensive and strategic approach to building infrastructure so that it can help us meet the challenges we face and the demands of the future is necessary, especially in light of the climate emergency in which we find ourselves.

Do you support a dedicated City tax for infrastructure?

Yes

Do you support a dedicated City tax for education?

Yes

Do you support the City's participation in RTA Next?

Yes

Do you support the expansion of the Central Business District and the use of the GPLET?

No

Would you support the City of Tucson becoming a designated Sanctuary City?

Yes

Would you vocalize support for the F-35 to be stationed in Tucson?

No

Do you support policies that shift infrastructure improvements to developers and the private sector?

No