

Question: The residents of Farmers Branch are diverse along many dimensions: ethnic background, race, age, religious beliefs, church affiliation, gender, sexual orientation, political beliefs, language, housing preference, family makeup, income and other factors. In your opinion, **how well does the city perform in welcoming and supporting the many different segments of our population? If elected, where, if at all, would you focus efforts to be more inclusive?**

RESPONSE

It is my opinion that inclusive behavior begins at the city municipality level during the planning and decision making processes and should be strongly supported and encouraged by the City Council.

I believe that our City staff works very diligently to promote Farmers Branch as a desirable place to live, work and play to all persons and businesses. All City service areas have a mission to strive to provide first rate support to all the residents regardless of differences and work to assist those residents and businesses who face issues or challenges. Examples of departments that live this mission include City services such as our Police Department, Fire Department and Parks and Recreation. These groups provide general services and emergency support services, as well as offering diverse and varied recreational programming to all segments of the population.

If elected to City Council, I would strive to encourage participation in planning and decision making to all the residents and businesses via the existing City processes to ensure that our diverse population is appropriately considered and included. I would look for new and meaningful ways to engage and obtain input from residents and businesses with multiple approaches such as specialized focus and discussion groups, targeted communications (both mail and telephone) and seeking input through some manner of social media (such as online surveys or polls). This would be a major contributing effort toward the action plans for the City's **2015 Strategic Plan Guiding Principle 9: Stakeholders deserve to know what is happening in the community and should have the opportunity to participate in its governance.**

I would also commit my personal willingness to listen and discuss both the positives and negatives of these decisions and then use a systematic approach to identifying the risks, rewards and impacts of the decisions. With constituent support, I would recommend that the City adopt a stated goal of sustaining a welcoming and inclusive City and work with Council and the City staff to evaluate progress against the goal. In doing all of these things, I believe that the prevailing perception of a lack of inclusiveness would be changed and the actual level of inclusiveness would be increased.

I appreciate the opportunity to address this question from the Branch Forum and kindly ask the City's residents for their vote in District 5.

Sincerely

David Merritt

Farmers Branch City Council Candidate District 5

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