



Matt Zone COUNCIL MEMBER, WARD 15

COMMITTEES: Safety - *Chair* • Finance - *Vice Chair*
Health & Human Services • Operations

Sept. 26, 2020

Dear Ward 15 Resident,

In 2001, I made one of the most difficult and invigorating decisions of my life as I declared my candidacy for Cleveland City Council representing the neighborhood where I was born and raised. I decided to run because I knew improvements were needed in our community. Nearly two decades later, I am writing to inform you that after 19 years on council, I will transition off by mid-November. This was a difficult decision to make; I love serving this community and particularly, the passionate members who call her home, but I'm excited about the next chapter – more about that later.

It has been my privilege and honor to serve you as a member of council. It's the job of a lifetime and I'm thankful every day I was able to do it. I have always approached the work with full dedication and truly believe that my time on council will be the toughest, most rewarding job I will ever have. During my tenure, I've advocated for a more thoughtful, creative and responsible approach for city government. To accomplish this locally, I have always engaged our city's residents with an inspiring plan and made informed decisions that are based on evidence, community consultation and the merits of arguments - rather than a particular ideology.

Together, we have tackled many important issues and initiatives to make our community stronger and more inclusive. We've created a culture where acceptance and appreciation of everyone is the norm in Ward 15, and each individual is comfortable bringing their full selves to every initiative or problem we have tackled. Our community has led the efforts on creating a better city.

Ward 15 is one of the neighborhoods in the city to witness population growth over the past decade. The success of our community offers a model for how a neighborhood can come together in the city and reinvent itself. By energizing our residents and stakeholders, we have managed to create a dynamic community that has been adding new jobs and housing, improving safety, and building more sustainably. By focusing on economic development, we leveraged over a billion dollars in new commercial, housing and infrastructure investments.

Looking back, I am proud of what we accomplished in Ward 15. But now, I am looking forward.

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And it is with pride and honor that I will be succeeding Jim Rokakis as the Executive Director of the Thriving Communities Institute (TCI) and will also serve as Senior Vice President of Western Reserve Land Conservancy (the Land Conservancy).

For those that may not be aware, the Land Conservancy's service area includes about 18 counties in northern Ohio, and they serve a great diversity of communities including rural, exurban, and urban. They have preserved more than 60,000 acres and have created more than 175 public parks and preserves. The organization's Thriving Communities Institute (TCI) – leads all of their urban work and is a leader in the transformation of vacant and unproductive properties in urban areas into new opportunities to attract economic growth and support safe, beautiful neighborhoods. My primary focus will concentrate on leading efforts to optimize policy related to these and other areas (by way of example and not by limitation): urban land use, land banking, demolition and redevelopment, parks and preserves, urban reforestation, trails and greenways, and economic development efforts.

I look forward to remaining an active participant in the ongoing work of making Cleveland a just and equitable city, and I encourage all of you to continue to serve and stay involved. I thank each and every one of you for your ideas, support and civic participation. A personal joy throughout my time in office has been the people I have met who, every single day, make this community a better place to live, work and play.

As a long-held council tradition, I will be recommending Jenny Spencer as my successor. She is a long-standing Detroit Shoreway resident and has served as Managing Director of Detroit Shoreway Community Development Organization since 2014. Jenny and I share the same passion and love for the Cudell, Detroit Shoreway and Edgewater neighborhoods.

As I leave this position, I'll be carrying with me a wonderful feeling about the successes we have had together. It has been my sincere pleasure and honor to serve you and our city. Thank you for the trust you have placed in me for all of these years.

With gratitude,

Matt Zone