

The Facts About Save Davidson: A Response

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Recently, a few Davidson residents released a letter maligning Save Davidson. The letter contained logically flawed, misquoted and mischaracterized information.

I'm just a regular citizen volunteer. I'm not an official spokesperson for Save Davidson. I'm not an attorney, a politician, or even especially politically savvy. I didn't go to Davidson College and I've only lived here for five years. But I care deeply about Davidson, and I'm disappointed that a small group of residents would mislead others.

I want to share the real facts about Save Davidson, including sources. Please look through them and decide for yourself where the deficiencies in fairness, ethics and transparency lie.

The Letter Said...

Save Davidson Leadership says: We need a change at Town Hall

In reality: Our incumbent officials have accomplished:

- Infrastructure and community benefits (8M from funding/grants)
- New jobs (Over 1,000)
- Second Fire Station
- A lively, historic downtown
- Improved citizen input (additional public meetings, citizen survey and other community engagement)
- Improved financial status of the Town
- Among many others: American Planning Association awards for Rural Area Plan and Main Street; Sustain Charlotte Land Use award for Rural Area Plan
- 63% of our Rural Area protected from development

The Real Facts, With Sources

Only 51% of Davidson citizens believe that Davidson is headed in a positive direction, according to the 2017 National Citizen Survey. Clearly, it's not just Save Davidson leadership that might welcome a change at Town Hall.

Per the survey, the percentage of citizens rating Town Hall positively on the following governance areas was:

- Overall confidence in Davidson government: 57%
- Generally acting in the best interest of the community: 58%
- Being honest: 63%
- Treating all residents fairly: 64%
- Welcoming citizen involvement: 70%

These numbers are significantly lower than in previous years.

Table 10: Governance - General

Percent rating positively (e.g., excellent/good)	Four Town Zones				Overall
	West Davidson	Central Davidson	East Davidson	P.O. Boxes	
The Town of Davidson	89%	92%	86%	78%	86%
The value of services for the taxes paid to Davidson	73%	72%	60%	66%	68%
The overall direction that Davidson is taking	62%	50%	42%	48%	51%
The job Davidson government does at welcoming citizen involvement	70%	81%	69%	63%	70%
Overall confidence in Davidson government	69%	62%	43%	53%	57%
Generally acting in the best interest of the community	67%	63%	50%	53%	58%
Being honest	69%	71%	56%	55%	63%
Treating all residents fairly	70%	73%	55%	61%	64%
Overall customer service by Davidson employees (police, receptionists, planners, etc.)	91%	92%	90%	86%	90%
The Federal Government	43%	45%	32%	40%	40%

Table 3: Governance General

	Percent rating positively (e.g., excellent/good)				2017 rating compared to 2014	Comparison to benchmark			
	2007	2012	2014	2017		2007	2012	2014	2017
Services provided by Davidson	79%	90%	91%	86%	Similar	Much higher	Much higher	Higher	Similar
Customer service	83%	83%	88%	90%	Similar	Much higher	Much higher	Similar	Higher
Value of services for taxes paid	67%	66%	66%	68%	Similar	Much higher	Much higher	Similar	Similar
Overall direction	57%	73%	77%	51%	Lower	Similar	Much higher	Higher	Similar
Welcoming citizen involvement	69%	75%	78%	70%	Lower	Much higher	Much higher	Higher	Higher
Confidence in Town government	NA	NA	72%	57%	Lower	NA	NA	Higher	Similar
Acting in the best interest of Davidson	NA	NA	76%	58%	Lower	NA	NA	Higher	Similar
Being honest	NA	NA	76%	63%	Lower	NA	NA	Higher	Similar
Treating all residents fairly	NA	NA	75%	64%	Lower	NA	NA	Higher	Similar
Services provided by the Federal Government	43%	36%	43%	40%	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar

Sources:

- [2017 National Citizen Survey Davidson, NC](#)
(Comparison by geographic subgroup)
- [2017 National Citizen Survey Davidson, NC](#)
(Includes complete survey responses)

The Letter Said...	The Real Facts, With Sources
<p>Save Davidson Leadership says: Their candidates bring experience</p> <p>In reality: Four of their five non-incumbent recommended candidates have never voted locally.</p>	<p>MOST people in Davidson DO NOT VOTE in municipal elections. Only ~15% of registered voters voted in the 2015 municipal election!</p> <p>Professional experience and competency are completely unrelated to voting frequency, fortunately. Save Davidson-recommended candidates are professionals experienced in law, finance, real estate, marketing, governance, education, conservation, planning/zoning, etc.</p> <p>Sources:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mecklenburg County Voter Data File Details <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This is a very large file. The stats: In 2015, there were 7,975 registered voters in Davidson. 6,688 of them did not vote in the municipal election.
<p>Save Davidson Leadership says: Transparency is a Core Value</p> <p>In reality: According to a recent article in the Charlotte Observer, the State Board of Elections is considering a complaint that the Save Davidson organization has been representing itself as an ethical, transparent community group when in fact it has been collecting money to back certain candidates without complying with the law.</p>	<p>The mere existence of a complaint means...absolutely nothing. Save Davidson hasn't even received a copy of the administrative complaint!</p> <p>ANY registered voter in NC can file a written complaint with the State Board of Elections & Ethics Enforcement (BOE). Someone could easily file an anonymous complaint against your group!</p> <p>Very simplified, the complaint says Save Davidson should have registered as a "political committee." In NC, a political committee is, among other criteria, a group that supports or opposes political candidates AS ITS MAJOR PURPOSE. Save Davidson is, has been, and always will be about so much more than any election.</p> <p>Transparency <i>is</i> a core value of Save Davidson. The current administration's lack of transparency regarding the Beaty St. property is what inspired a group of average citizens in a cul de sac to join together as "Save West Davidson's Tree Canopy" last February. When people all over Davidson started sharing their own negative experiences with Town Hall, that group evolved into Save Davidson - a social welfare group that educates and empowers citizens, and encourages them to participate in Town governance.</p> <p>Sources:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NC State Board of Elections & Ethics Enforcement • G.S Chapter 163, Article 22 (Regulating Contributions and Expenditures in Political Campaigns) • Definition of Political Committee • About Save Davidson
<p>Save Davidson Leadership says: 4 projects are listed as "Conflicts" on their website</p> <p>In reality: These projects are already zoned for those developments and their recommended candidates would not have the legal power to stop them. Three of the four have been zoned for decades and the Town Board does not vote on those projects because they involve site design and not zoning changes that require a Town Board decision.</p>	<p>A map on the Save Davidson website shows approved and pending projects. The four noted as "Conflicts" are those for which Commissioner Brian Jenest's company, Cole Jenest & Stone, was compensated for site/land planning. (The projects are noted as Summer's Walk Phase 6, West Branch, Washam, and Potts/Crescent on the map.)</p> <p>Sources:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Town Project Maps • Summers Walk Phase 6 Site Plan • West Branch Master Plan • Washam Neighborhood Plan • Potts Street Master Plan

The Letter Said...	The Real Facts, With Sources
<p>Save Davidson Leadership says: Their mission is fairness</p> <p>In reality: While many of them live in highly developed and fairly new neighborhoods, their "Conflicts" page suggests that they object to the same, or even less dense, development on other private property.</p> <p>We will state the obvious by saying that all property owners should be treated fairly and also that Davidson is the way it is because of the healthy balance of rural, commercial and diverse housing types.</p>	<p>Fairness and the age or location of one's home are unrelated concepts. And as noted above, the "Conflicts" have nothing to do with any characteristic of the developments other than the business involvement of a sitting Commissioner.</p> <p>Save Davidson's FULL Mission Statement: "To ensure fairness, ethics and transparency in official Town of Davidson decision-making through citizen education, empowerment and participation."</p> <p>I will state the obvious: Davidson will become less recognizably "Davidson" as rural areas and greenery disappear in favor of huge housing developments, apartment buildings are squeezed into existing neighborhoods throughout town, and roads plow through historic homes, 100-year-old trees, and our neighbors' yards.</p> <p>Sources:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Save Davidson Mission Statement • Multi Unit Housing Maps and Text Amendments (start on page 14)
<p>Save Davidson Leadership says: Town officials are responsible for traffic coming through Davidson</p> <p>In reality: Our Town Board has done more than any past Board to begin improving traffic by adopting stringent traffic requirements on developments to address traffic impacts.</p> <p>They have also obtained over 7 million dollars since 2014 in federal/state/county funding and grants for road improvements that will alleviate traffic while not raising taxes and an additional 1M in funding and grants for arts and community benefits.</p>	<p>This doesn't sound familiar. Save Davidson questions massive population increases with Davidson's current and even potential infrastructure, given our geographic limitations. The group also questions why Mayor John Woods visited Raleigh to express his support of the toll roads despite overwhelming citizen opposition.</p> <p>Towns supporting the tolls received a "bonus allocation" (Davidson's share: \$5.4 Million - "free" money, so no new taxes). This money will build new roads through historic buildings, 100-year-old-trees, and the homes or yards of Potts neighborhood residents; and a huge traffic circle on Main St. near the Davidson/Cornelius border.</p> <p>Note: No/minimal traffic impacts were predicted by the Town's consultants for either the West Branch subdivision (306 residences) or the proposed Davidson Commons East hotel on top of the parking lot used by the Community School of Davidson. Despite Davidson's expected rapid growth due to approved and planned developments, both analyses used a growth rate of just 2% in their calculations.</p> <p>Sources:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NCDOT Maps for Potts St., Main St., and Sloan St. Changes • 10 things you didn't know about the toll lanes planned for I-77 North • Everything to know about the I-77 toll lane project - WCCB Charlotte • NCDOT I-77 Express Lanes • Davidson Cornelius Mayors Visit Raleigh in Support of I-77 Toll Project • West Branch Traffic Impact Analysis • Davidson Commons East Hotel Traffic Impact Analysis
<p>Save Davidson Leadership says: Respect/ communication are key concepts</p> <p>In reality: One of Save Davidson's founders said, in a recent Save Davidson Facebook post: "For those who are against the mission, or are looking for a fight, they should go elsewhere."</p>	<p>This quote was taken out of context; the full quote is below. The Facebook post is remarkably respectful for having been made after days of trolling and hostility by Save Davidson foes.</p> <p>"No one is forcing anyone to stay on the Save Davidson group. If you like it, stay. If you don't like it, you may leave and start your own group. This group is for citizens who support the Save Davidson mission and is intended to be a safe place for all of us to coalesce around our ideals without being worn down by naysayers or those who continually seek to tell us why we are wrong. The Town of Davidson has a Facebook page that may be a better place for those who disagree with Save Davidson because nothing about negativity is empowering or educational. For those who are against the mission, or are looking for a fight, they should go elsewhere."</p> <p>Source: Facebook Post</p>