



**URBANA CITY COUNCIL  
APPLICATION FOR VACANCY IN WARD 2**

Name: Steve Drake

Address: [REDACTED]

Telephone: [REDACTED]

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Employer: Univ of Illinois, Beckman Institute

Occupation: Video Producer

How long have you lived in Ward 2? 15 years

**1. Why do you wish to serve on the Urbana City Council?**

Given the current state of politics and local government across the U.S., it's increasingly clear that more people need to get out of their comfort zones and try to help their local communities. So that's what I'm trying to do here. I have lived in the same single-family home in the state street area of Urbana since moving to Illinois in 2005. I have only been actively involved in matters that have come before the City Council a handful of times, which have involved opposing new apartment construction projects near historically listed buildings in my ward. It recently came to my attention that Ward 2 currently has a vacant seat due to the departure of Julie Laut last month. The opportunity to serve the remainder of Alderman Laut's term seems like a great opportunity to become more involved in the other issues facing the Council, while helping to serve my local community.

One of the things I value most about being a resident in Urbana is the 'small town America' character of the city. As more and more new construction has sprung up across the city in recent years, I have begun to take a more active interest in how we can preserve our small town feel, while acknowledging the need for continued development and infrastructure improvements.

**2. Please list education, training, work experience, community involvement, service on municipal boards and commissions, or any other experience which has prepared you to serve on the Urbana City Council. Attach CV, if desired.**

I have a bachelor of science degree in political science from the University of California at Irvine. I also received professional film and video training from the BBC and Network of the World while living in London. I have worked for the past 15 years at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, as a video producer and editor at Illinois Public Media (PBS station WILL-TV) and the Beckman Institute for Advanced Science and Technology. I've produced local television programs featuring life in central Illinois, as well as creating educational science videos for the general public. I've also worked with the campus public access channel (UI-7) and Urbana Public Television (UPTV) to broadcast some of my productions and have won four Mid-America Emmy Awards. My work requires that I not only do my own research, learn new topics quickly, and communicate openly and clearly, but also to be an active listener and able to change directions based on new information or circumstances.

I successfully completed the Citizen's Police Academy a few years ago. A collaboration between the Champaign County Sheriff's Office and local police departments in central Illinois, the program was an invaluable opportunity to learn about the issues that face law enforcement in Champaign County. The experience has given me a deeper appreciation of the complexity of the issues that need to be overcome to successfully reform and improve policing.

**3. What do you believe are the most important issues facing Urbana?**

I think the increasing amount of new construction, largely apartment buildings, is a vital concern to many Urbana residents. Many of these apartments have had longstanding vacancy issues due to a lack of demand. And the pandemic has only made matters worse, with the vast majority of apartments in our area currently having vacancies. This over-supply of rental units, and an apparent desire by developers to create new rental housing rather than restoring existing units, needs to be addressed. And responsible businesses that meet specific needs and take into account the character of the neighborhood should be encouraged whenever possible. Establishing a balance between sustainability, fiscal responsibility, and the overall environment is important for the continued prosperity of the city.

Recovering from the negative human and financial impacts of COVID-19 will also be a challenge for the City. It is a sad reality that the pandemic will impact all of the decisions the Council will make for the foreseeable future. Having council members who appreciate the human cost caused by the pandemic will be important.

Lastly, beginning a meaningful dialog between the community, local-government, and law enforcement on matters of policing and how best to proceed with meaningful police reform is clearly needed.

**4. What do you believe are the most important issues facing Ward 2?**

Ward 2 offers a unique combination of tree-lined residential streets and a mixed-office residential district. My wife and I deeply appreciate the quintessential small town feel and historic character the area offers and want to protect it. In recent years, there seems to be increasing pressure from developers to acquire single-family homes and demolish them to build new apartment buildings or other large scale construction projects that fundamentally change the character of the neighborhood. This trend goes against the idea of restoration or re-purposing existing construction for new uses that lies at the heart of the MOR. Urbana is different than Champaign. And that is a good thing. The residents of Urbana do not want unchecked development or to live in a city that is indistinguishable from Champaign. The City Council should strive to move the city forward in its zoning and permitting decisions. But it should always keep preserving the character of the district and the values of its residents foremost in mind.

Please list three personal references:

Name

Occupation

Address

Phone

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Occupation

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Signed:

Date: 11/19/2020

Please return completed application via email to [CityClerk@urbanaininois.us](mailto:CityClerk@urbanaininois.us) or by mail to:

Urbana City Clerk 400 S Vine St  
Urbana, IL 61801