

## CODI Mayoral Forum – Indya Kincannon

Most people aren't born with disabilities, but as we age, we tend to develop disabilities which can be temporary or permanent and can change over time. In fact, people with disabilities and seniors make up almost half of the population in the United States. The Americans with Disabilities Act was signed into law in 1990 and is about to reach its 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary, yet there is still a long way to go to ensure accessibility for and inclusion of people with disabilities.

1. Describe your experience with individuals with disabilities in Knoxville. How have you included individuals with disabilities in your campaign efforts? How do you plan to include this population during your tenure as Mayor?

I have neighbors, friends and family members with disabilities. My friend Otis Stephens was an incredibly accomplished professor at UT and an advocate for visually impaired people. He helped me understand some challenges facing visually impaired people, such as knowing the denomination of paper currency.

My neighbors with mobility issues help me understand the critical need to have well-maintained sidewalks.

I have worked with many Knoxville organizations that serve people with disabilities, including SPARK (formerly ETTAC), the DisABILITY Resource Center and Sertoma Center. I have brought my kids to play at Ashley Nicole Dream Playground, Knoxville's first accessible playground.

During my 10 years on the School Board I did my best to make sure students with disabilities had access to the same opportunities as their typical peers. Two achievements I'm proud of are getting a grant to put in an accessible swing at Christenberry Elementary School, and installing an elevator at Belle Morris Elementary school, a building that was 100 years old.

My campaign headquarters is one-level and has accessible parking. We have volunteer opportunities that accommodate people's abilities, so if a volunteer has a hearing impairment, for example, she can write postcards instead of phone-banking.

As Mayor I will listen and learn from people with disabilities to inform our decision-making and I will also rely on CODI to help me understand the needs of people with disabilities and how the city can best serve accommodate those needs.

2. The City of Knoxville has aging and outdated recreational facilities and park spaces that are included in an ADA study to identify what needs to be done to make these areas inclusive, and able to promote healthy lifestyles for people of all ages and abilities. We have received 1.4 million dollars to date to remediate 21 facilities. While this is a good start toward making these facilities ADA compliant, more funding is needed to complete additional improvements. What is your plan to ensure that accessibility and ADA compliance is a necessity when it comes to providing resources and funding?

Universal design should be the default approach for all new construction and renovations. When you make accessibility an integral part of the planning and design process, it can save money and time and serve more people. The accessible picnic tables at Suttree Landing is a great example of this.

I support retro-fitting public buildings and spaces following the strategic plan adopted by CODI and as the budget allows. As Mayor I would seek outside grants to supplement city funds.

3. How will your leadership as Mayor encourage other departments and local businesses to support greater civic participation by residents of all ages and abilities?

As Mayor I will underscore that inclusion and accessibility benefit all members of our city and that accommodations and investments in this area have a universal benefit. I will work to make sure that our ADA accommodation efforts are truly about meeting the needs of our residents to participate, be included and belong, and not just compliance exercises.

4. For years, the City of Knoxville has supported the meaningful employment of individuals with disabilities by participating in National Disability Employment Awareness Month activities, hosting several job seekers with disabilities throughout the city, as well as regular engagement with the Knoxville Area Employment Consortium. Describe your past participation in these efforts, and how you would improve them.

I have not participated in this effort yet, but look forward to doing so as Mayor. As Mayor I would be in a position to raise awareness that people with disabilities have many talents and can be amazing assets to employers.

5. Knoxville's Disability Services Office serves over 300 residents and visitors with disabilities each year, and is comprised of one full-time, and one part-time employee. This office is responsible for providing information, addressing ADA complaints, guiding the City's ADA compliance efforts, and providing City employee accommodation requests. CODI has long supported the expansion of this office in order to provide additional supports and services to individuals with disabilities who live and visit Knoxville. How are you going to ensure that our City makes more headway in supporting persons with disabilities through an expansion of disability services?

From working with schools and with the city, I realize that resources, including staff and time are always in short supply. One way I would address that is to make sure accessibility and inclusion are part of the mission and culture of every city department, with training and support from the Disability Services Office. I would consider expanding the resources in this area, depending on the available funds.

6. Active leadership by persons with disabilities is necessary to ensure that any decisions made are made with these voices being present to identify how those decisions may impact our community. How will you engage individuals with disabilities to be included in key City leadership posts?

One of my jobs while working with Mayor Rogero was to help make sure her appointments to boards and commissions reflected our entire community. As Mayor I would continue this work, both with board and commission appointments, as well as staff leadership positions, and make sure that people with disabilities are well-represented. We make better decisions as a community when everyone has a seat and a voice at the decision-making table.

7. Living with a disability is very expensive, and the lack of accessible housing and aging compounds the problem. This can force individuals to live in institutional settings vs. independent living within their communities. As Mayor, how will you increase the percentage of accessible housing units required to address this systemic issue?

Demand for accessible housing already exceeds supply and the shortage is getting more acute as Baby Boomers age. KCDC has 8 facilities that are designed for the elderly and people with disabilities, including two that are relatively new.

I support the development of more accessible and affordable housing, by KCDC and private developers. I support the affordable housing trust fund and think we can use that as a tool to encourage accessibility in new construction. I also support the city and community efforts that help landlords make existing rental units accessible and visitable.

8. Transportation options are a critical concern for thousands of individuals with disabilities and those aging in the Knoxville area. How will you address the lack of accessible cabs/Uber, lack of and compliance with accessible street parking, accessible sidewalks, bus stops and crosswalks, and the lack of accountability for access in emerging transit technologies?

I support Complete Streets and making KAT fully accessible. I appreciate the 1:1 customer care KAT provides, helping individuals learn the KAT routes and how KAT accommodates riders with disabilities.

As for ensuring that private entities, such as taxis, are accessible, I would work with the Knoxville Transportation Authority Board, who oversees taxi services, and also seek advice from CODI.

9. Homelessness is a term that goes a lot deeper than what is actually seen on the surface and is greater than just mental illness and addiction—veterans, persons with disabilities, victims of domestic violence, individuals with job loss, individuals not qualifying for services, opioid addiction, etc. How do you perceive homelessness in Knoxville and how are going to combat this issue during your term as Mayor?

I support the Housing First strategy to prevent and end homelessness. I support the need for more Permanent Supportive Housing, like Minvilla Manor and Flenniken Landing. The street outreach workers sponsored by the City in partnership with VMC have been very effective at helping people who need a lot of support and trust before they'll even consider accessing services. These strategies need to continue and be scaled up when possible, and work best in collaboration with many public and private partners.