

Yes! Weekly Endorsements – November 2, 2011

Mayor — *Robbie Perkins*

Two issues symbolize the fork in the road that will determine Greensboro's future: the White Street Landfill and the Downtown Greenway. The landfill separates us; the greenway unites us. We conceive our endorsement slate as a "dream team" comprised of members who will represent all constituencies, work across differences for the common good and demonstrate cooperation and creativity to move our city in a progressive direction.

We enthusiastically recommend Robbie Perkins for mayor. As a seasoned and smart public servant who is plugged in to a wide array of constituencies in Greensboro, he credibly pledges to build a shared vision for the city.

As an at-large councilman seeking reelection two years ago, Perkins accurately predicted that reopening the landfill would tear the city apart. It was a bold position to take at the time; other candidates sat on the fence or signaled their interest in dumping on east Greensboro, never mind the message to the black citizens who predominantly inhabit the neighborhoods that would bear the burden of rodents, odors and uncertainty about possible adverse health effects.

As a result of the ill-considered effort to reopen the landfill, trust has eroded between citizens, confidence in our city's growth and vitality has diminished, and our best minds have been distracted from addressing staggering economic challenges. Incumbent Mayor Bill Knight has been a consistent vote to reopen the landfill, although it would be charitable to credit him with leadership on the issue.

The greenway will literally link four of the five districts and provide a pedestrian hub connecting downtown to surrounding neighborhoods. It will build community, encourage fitness and spur investment in housing that, in turn, will support bars, art galleries, retail stores and a long awaited downtown grocery.

"We need to move it forward soon as possible because that will create economic development and jobs in center city," Perkins said during a recent debate. Knight, in turn, said the greenway will "will have to stand in line" with other needs.

On balance, Perkins' background in commercial real estate is an asset. He understands how economic development is interconnected with transportation and infrastructure. He maintains relationships with lawmakers in Washington and Raleigh, with state transportation officials and with elected leaders in neighboring jurisdictions. In short, he holds the expertise and relationships to make things happen. Progress is risky, but we can't afford to squander the opportunity to grow and provide opportunities for our citizens.