



## Mayoral Forum Questions

1. Assume you take office in January 2020. What will you do in your first 100 days to address flooding?

I will continue to implement my administrations Flooding and Sea-Level Rise Plan, the most comprehensive plan ever to address flooding and sea-level rise in Charleston. Some of those first steps in 2020 will be in partnership with the Army Corps of Engineers. We will be unveiling the largest infrastructure project in city history -- a plan to protect the peninsula from flooding for the next generation and beyond. In addition, with the passage of new stormwater rules before year's end, we will be implementing new anti-flooding development regulations throughout the city.

2. Charleston's flood map, flood hazard and rainfall data are severely outdated or missing entirely. How will you ensure the latest science is incorporated into the city's planning efforts?

Despite persistent criticism, including from some in this mayor's race, under my leadership, the city made significant investments in precisely the kinds of studies we need to produce this data. And, as your question suggests, we're not just doing this for fun. Every dollar we put into high-quality science is many dollars saved in the future from unnecessary flooding for our residents and neighborhoods.

We must remember that the latest science changes often, it's a journey, not a destination. We must never stop pursuing the latest science. Under my leadership, the City has partnered with numerous organizations to ensure the latest science is incorporated into our planning efforts, such as NOAA, College of Charleston, Army Corps of Engineers, and The Dutch — the world's premier flooding experts. In addition, we've contacted numerous engineering companies, along with the County of Charleston, to study numerous basins such as Church Creek, DuWap, all of James Island and Johns Island. Because of our various partnerships, and our staff's diligent work, we now have the most comprehensive understanding of Charleston's flooding and rising sea-level. We will continue to use our partnerships and increased understanding to implement that latest science into our planning efforts.

3. Across the region, plans to address flooding vary differently and there is a lack of communication across municipal lines on this issue. As mayor, how will you address this problem and increase the City's collaboration with neighboring jurisdictions and the Council of Governments (COG)?

There are three critical steps we need to take as a region to ensure the proper level of cooperation across the area. First, we need to harmonize our laws up to the highest standard currently in place; that's why I have been so disappointed by City Council's unwillingness to raise freeboard requirements to "FEMA plus two," which would have brought us up to the current Charleston County standard. Second, we need to build regional support for projects and policies that provide real and measurable benefits across jurisdictions.



Finally, longer-term, we need to ask the state to consider a Dutch “water boards” approach to governance, which would place a single authority in charge of these issues and thereby guarantee that decisions were being made in the interests of all our citizens, and not just those of any particular municipality or unincorporated area.

Moreover, as Mayor, I’ve worked to increase regional collaboration by recommending the creation of the Council of Government’s Stormwater Task Force. I also serve on the South Carolina Floodwater Commission, which pulls together relevant state agencies and other stakeholders to combat flooding and stormwater. I also serve as the Chair of the SC Floodwater Commission’s Stakeholder Engagement Taskforce.

4. Residents on the Westside and Eastside are some of the most affected by flooding and waves of new infill development. How will you ensure all the interests of all residents are included in the city's planning for a growing city and a changing climate?

That kind of broad, deep inclusion has been and remains absolutely critical, which is why we’ve made it a point to include the entire peninsula in both the Army Corps and the Dutch Dialogues processes. It’s also why we’ve made peninsula-wide flooding concerns a central component of all our affordable housing, zoning and drainage plans for the city. Moreover, my administration has included the Eastside and Westside neighborhoods in our efforts to stop sunny-day flooding by installing check valves in these neighborhoods. Put simply, fixing flooding is an existential problem that can only be solved with the help and guidance of all our citizens, not a single neighborhood’s voice or concerns can or will be ignored.

5. Planners and scientists believe it will cost more than \$2 billion to solve all the city’s flooding problems. How will you prioritize spending on projects in the short and long term? Give one project example of what you will do in your tenure and where the money will come from.

Right now, the city is working with an independent firm on a vulnerability analysis of the entire city, which will prioritize all of the projects needed to protect Charleston early next year. Therefore, with the exception of projects we’re already committed to completing, such as the Battery Wall and certain drainage projects in Church Creek and on the peninsula, I believe it’s important for us as leaders to ensure fairness by not pre-judging that prioritization process. That said, I do look forward to completing several major projects over the next four years.

6. Regulations and building practices in place now ignore the realities of a changing climate and encourage development in flood prone places. Unless we revise zoning and land use ordinances this city will continue in the pattern of building and flooding. What are your specific plans for updates to zoning and land use practices and how will you garner the political support to transform current practices?

The first and most important change will be a rewrite of our citywide stormwater rules, which will come to Council later this year. This will finally give us the legal basis we need to ensure that new development does not harm existing residents, and even more, can be designed in such a way as to actually improve current conditions. Moreover, I continue to believe that changes to our zoning laws are essential, which is why I was so disappointed earlier this year when Council, including some of my



opponents in this race, voted against my proposal to remove heavy residential density from our industrial zoning categories. This was, in many ways, the easiest anti-flooding zoning change we will have to make, and to see Council punt on it was truly a shame. However, we are currently planning to bring that change and more back to Council in the next session, after the voters have spoken, when I suspect they will be more open to real reform.

7. Buyouts for homes that flood severely and repeatedly are becoming a growing trend nationally to mitigate the impacts of worsening flooding. We saw this recently in the Bridgepointe subdivision of the Shadowmoss neighborhood. What are your thoughts on this mitigation strategy and do you plan to help people whose homes are repeatedly flooded relocate to higher ground?

Buyouts are an important piece of the puzzle, particularly in areas where we now know the homes shouldn't have been built in the first place. In addition, large-scale buyouts such as Bridge Pointe provide new opportunities for water retention that can have a beneficial impact on the entire drainage basin. In short, I've pursued buyouts because they're a powerful tool in the toolbox, and will continue to do so for the same reason in the future.

Moreover, I must note that it's not always prudent to tear something down if there's another solution, such as elevation. That's why the City has sought out, and received, FEMA grants to elevate homes, rather than demolition them. We will continue to apply for more elevation grants in the future, and as always, we will continue to seek every funding opportunity for our multi-faceted approach to combat flooding and sea-level rise.

8. We all know there are limited dollars to address worsening flooding in Charleston, and some projects must take a backseat to others. Still, the current administration has endorsed Charleston County's plans to use money from the 2016 half cent sales tax to build the I-526 extension. Do you agree we should fund the I-526 extension, and, if so, how do you justify spending those hundreds of millions of dollars rather than immediately funding action on flooding?

As I've said before, flooding is my top priority, and anytime there's an actual choice between funding for flood relief and something else, I'll choose flooding. However, that's just not the case with 526. This isn't an either/or proposition, it's a both/and proposition.

Neither the SIB nor the County nor SCDOT -- the parties to the 526 contract -- have shown any interest whatsoever in moving those funds into other sorts of projects here in Charleston. In fact, SIB seems to be more interested in moving the money completely out of the area, leaving us with the worst of both worlds -- no flooding relief and no traffic relief. That would be the height of irresponsibility when we have thousands of residents sitting in traffic jams each and every day -- residents whose lives would be dramatically better with 526. And the way you know that's true is that no one who claims to support moving the money has actually asked the bodies in question to consider it -- because they already know the answer.