

https://starlocalmedia.com/celinarecord/news/place-1-candidates-discuss-present-future-of-celina/article_d9e66a82-b462-4ada-86e1-d5d0d7a54c3c.html

FEATURED

Place 1 candidates discuss present, future of Celina

By Mike Albanese | Star Local Media

Apr 18, 2025



ELECTION 2025

★ PREVIEW ★

CELINA CITY COUNCIL



Dorothy Allan



Philip Ferguson

The lone contested race for the Celina City Council will see incumbent Philip Ferguson take on Dorothy Allan for the Place 1 seat.

Ferguson began serving on the council in 2022 and became involved in the community when he started serving on his HOA board in 2016. In 2017, he served as the Republican precinct chairman in Celina, representing Precinct 22.

Allan's professional career spans more than 30 years as a retail strategist for some of America's most prominent brands, including Walmart, Target, CVS and Hewlett-Packard, where she developed innovative marketing and growth strategies.



ADVERTISEMENT

Only in Kentucky: 9 Experiences You Won't Find Anywhere Else

When nothing but exceptional will do, Kentucky is where you'll find it.

By Kentucky Tourism

|

She has also worked as a commercial real estate professional specializing in Celina's rapidly growing Downtown Square and surrounding areas.

How does the city handle continued growth, while providing quality services to customers?

Allan: Living in the fastest-growing city in the county, we must break free from planning models and processes rooted in decades past. With the introduction of advanced analytics and simulation tools, we can elevate our strategic planning to a new level. These tools enable us to anticipate future service demands, model the impact of different development scenarios, and prioritize projects that will have the most meaningful impact on residents' daily lives.

It's not just about reacting to growth; it's about staying ahead of it with precision and purpose. Deploying modern technology doesn't just help the city plan better; it also attracts top talent, empowers staff, and increases productivity. Our teams can accomplish more in less time and end each day with confidence in their recommendations.

Back in 1995, there were only a handful of "levers" to pull when planning a city. Today, there are too many variables and interconnected systems to rely on instinct alone. We must embrace tools that can process millions of scenarios, because the decisions we make now will shape the Celina of tomorrow.

Ferguson: About 200 people move to Celina every single week. With that type of growth, older infrastructures become stressed. Keeping our roads, water systems, sewer, and other vital systems working properly for our residents is extremely important. I'm proud of all the work we've done related to infrastructure projects so far. Although there is still a lot of work that needs to be done to keep up with our growth and rebuild outdated roads, we are making significant and sustained progress. The Annual Street Maintenance Program, small street projects, repaving older roads, miles of new roads, installing school flashers, adding traffic signals, neighborhood drainage projects, resident technology improvements, and numerous traffic warning signs have all helped make life better and safer. Plus, the Public Works team has expanded with a second full-time maintenance crew, an asphalt paving machine, crack sealer, bucket truck, compact street sweeper, and more, so road issues can be addressed faster, allowing the city to be proactive in dealing with problematic areas.

Having the right mix of housing options is also important for handling growth. The demographics of Celina are changing, and so are the associated housing trends. Therefore, it's essential to have a balanced blend of housing projects to accommodate varied needs while ensuring our community has quality living options that are safe and appealing. I believe we have enough multi-family housing options, such as apartments, approved by prior city councils, so I've resisted approving more during my term. I will continue to do so. With the right infrastructure to keep up with demand and the right mix of housing, our community will become even more attractive.

Once folks become new residents, they should expect high levels of service from our city. The leadership team we have in place is highly competent and operates very lean, meaning there isn't waste from unnecessary positions. We're making investments in technology to be more responsive, as evidenced by the new website and Life Connected app. We hired a third party to advise us on ways to improve the permit process, and those changes are being implemented. We have added significant resources to police and fire services to keep residents safe. We review the annual resident surveys to identify areas that residents believe are being executed well and those that need attention, and we implement a process for improvement. Finally, the city is proactive with communications via email and social media regarding items that affect our lives in Celina, such as street closures, traffic advisories, construction updates, event news, and more.

The totality of these and other actions allows our city to manage growth effectively while still delivering quality services to our residents.

Are there any downsides to growing so fast? And if so, how should the city handle those challenges?

Allan: Absolutely. Rapid growth brings real risks: overburdened infrastructure, overlooked quality-of-life issues, and poorly aligned development. That's why I'm committed to introducing predictive simulations and refined planning tools that help us identify blind spots before they become costly problems.

These tools will empower both city staff and council members to see around corners, understand the long-term ripple effects of our decisions, and ensure that we're building a community that improves the lives of every resident—not just now, but for generations to come.

The definition of experience is knowing what not to do. And when cities get it wrong, those mistakes come with a cost—financial, environmental, and community trust. The right tools give us the foresight to avoid those costly missteps and guide Celina with confidence, clarity, and care.

Ferguson: Growing pains are inevitable and can often feel acute in Celina because the growth is happening so fast. But it also creates opportunity not found anywhere else and that's what gets me excited about serving on City Council for three more years.

Celina is growing every day and will continue to do so for years to come. The strong economy in North Texas is driving thousands of new residents to DFW. When those folks are deciding where to call home, Celina is very high on the list because of everything we offer. That includes great schools, housing options, traditions, public safety, shopping conveniences and unique events just to name a few. Those sets us apart from our neighboring cities and makes people want to be a part of our community. People love Celina and the word is out! My goal is for Celina to be unique compared to other cities, and not just be another "cookie cutter" boom town. Therefore, I intend to continue to focus on those things that make us special and different, thus keeping our small-town charm. However, this won't happen by chance. It happens because quality decisions are made with a clear vision focused on what's best for the city overall, building for the future while respecting our past, unencumbered by personal interests or financial gain.

For me, handling the growth challenges means staying focused on my six key priorities that I've had since 2022. Those are fiscal responsibility, infrastructure, public safety, unique events, hiring the best and partners with Celina ISD. When these are done right, everything else will be awesome! We've seen that put in action over the past three years I've served on city council.

What are your thoughts on the city's economic development plan, as it continues to attract national brands?

Allan: Celina's current economic development plan is working—but we must recognize that many of the national brands we're attracting already use the very tools I'm proposing. In fact, they've been using them for over a decade. They'll likely take an active interest in how we use these insights—and in some cases, even help us refine our approach. By using modern planning models, we can better determine which businesses align with Celina's infrastructure capacity, growth trajectory, and community goals. This ensures that national brands are strategically placed, without compromising the success of small businesses, overloading our infrastructure, or eroding the local character we all cherish. This isn't just about growing fast—it's about growing smart.

Ferguson: New business is crucial to the future of Celina. Today, our city budget is far too dependent on fees from development. That places the city budget in a precarious situation should development slow substantially - the city simply would not have the money to provide all the services our residents need. The solution is to diversify the budget with more predictable sales tax dollars.

We've already adopted strategies to attract big box retailers (Costco, Lowes, Home Depot, Wal-Mart, etc.) and they will start to open in about 18 months. Those same strategies will help us attract even more business, perhaps hotels, entertainment venues, destination shopping, etc. Once that happens, our residents can shop locally in almost every way imaginable and keep their sales tax dollars here to help Celina vs. spending those dollars in neighboring communities. In turn, that creates more jobs here, more income here and eases the burden of city finances. We can begin to make the switch from being reliant on development fees and residential property tax to local sales tax dollars instead.

We have a very capable and exceptionally strong Economic Development Corporation (EDC) team in place now. They have a clear understanding and are aligned with the goals of the city council, and that will reap big financial rewards for our residents going forward. Residents want and need a diverse array of services from a diverse array of businesses, and the plan put together by our EDC earlier this year will deliver this and much more for Celina. So, my thoughts on the economic development plan are extremely positive and optimistic for our future

How should the city handle the expansion and development along the Dallas North Tollway?

Allan: The Tollway corridor is one of the most critical areas of opportunity for Celina, and it requires long-range thinking supported by smart tools. Predictive modeling gives us the ability to visualize future outcomes—from traffic congestion and emergency response times to infrastructure strain and land-use efficiency.

By simulating different development scenarios, we can make informed decisions that optimize land use, preserve mobility, and minimize unintended consequences. These insights will ensure our growth is both sustainable and aligned with what our community needs and values.

Ferguson: DNT, the Outer Loop and Preston Rd will be prime commercial corridors in Celina. We only have one chance to get this development right, so it's important to be intentional about what we should, and shouldn't, have in these prime locations.

Specific to DNT, Celina is one of only two cities to have a 10-mile stretch of Tollway to develop. The other city is Dallas. So, that's 20 miles on either side of some of the most prime real estate in all north Texas. My vision for development of this area is to stay focused on "highest and best" use. That includes corporate campuses, high-end office space, specialty event venues and more. If you consider the type of high-end development near 121 & DNT in Plano/Frisco, that's potentially what could be here. That may include unique shopping destinations, entertainment options, luxury condo living, corporate headquarters and so much more.

Today, there are plenty of developers who want to get in early to build apartments, uninteresting strip shopping centers and other lesser-quality projects. But those are all non-starters for me. If a developer has a project not worthy of this prime location, then I'll vote no. I've said before that if we're talking about Celina, then I want it to be the best. And that's how I'll continue to handle development along DNT.

What are your thoughts on the city's vision for the redevelopment of the downtown square?

Allan: Celina's downtown square is sacred. It's the soul of our community—and any redevelopment must be guided by thoughtful, deliberate planning. With the help of simulation tools, we can model real-world factors like foot traffic, event impact, parking dynamics, and long-term economic benefits.

These insights allow us to protect the authenticity of the square while ensuring it thrives alongside our population and tourism growth. Smart planning ensures that we're not sacrificing what makes our square special—we're enhancing it.

Ferguson: Many folks don't realize that it's unusual for Celina to even have a downtown square. Typically to have a square, a city is a county seat such as McKinney for Collin County and Denton for Denton County. The fact that we have a great one is extremely fortunate. Otherwise, we could just have a simple "Main St" like most of our neighboring cities – that's boring if you ask me.

The master plan for downtown calls for expansion about two blocks in all directions. You can see this beginning with the new Downtown Center currently under construction. It will offer parking for 400 vehicles, a library 10x the size of the current one, offices for city staff to improve resident services and an awesome rooftop space for special events. You'll have the best sunset views in all of Collin County from that rooftop.

I'm highly committed to downtown, and it is the heartbeat of our city. I've never met anyone who has visited Celina for an event downtown and not fallen in love with its charm. Most of the hundreds, if not thousands, of hours I have volunteered over the years have been for downtown events. I put my sweat equity where my mouth is and do the physical work for events. I often say I'm all about things being unique in Celina, and our downtown is a physical manifestation of that belief. In that vein, I'll stay 110% committed to ensuring the history and tradition of downtown Celina remains vibrant, interesting and always worth visiting. For me, there are no other options.

Are there any services or facilities not currently offered by the city (recreation center, gyms, etc.) that you would like to see the city offer?

Dorothy Allan: I'm absolutely open to expanding city services—but we must invest with intention. By applying modern analytics, we can analyze usage patterns, shifting demographics, and the return on investment of various amenities.

Whether it's a recreation center, wellness facility, or additional green space, I want to make sure our city is offering what residents truly need—not just what sounds good in theory. With the right tools, we can plan with purpose and deliver facilities that genuinely improve quality of life in Celina.

Ferguson: As Celina continues to grow, there will obviously be the need for a wide variety of services and facilities that are not currently available. The private sector will meet many of those needs as more retail capacity is built throughout the city. After all, these businesses need a place to set up.

There are several city projects that are already in the works. Fire Station No. 4 near Bluewood and Carter Ranch is currently under construction; we're in the early stages of building Ousley Park by Bobcat Field and building Wilson Creek Park near The Outer Loop and Roseland Parkway. We're building an emergency dispatch center, constructing miles of new concrete roads throughout Celina, and increasing our water and sewer capacity for all residents.

There are many families in Celina, so family-friendly venues are something I would like to see. That may include resorts like Great Wole Lodge, a water park, a family fun center such as Main Event, learning museums, ice skating rink, nature Discovery, hiking trails, etc.

In addition, a venue to host specialty events, such as rodeos and concerts, would be unique and keep making Celina better and better.

Mike Albanese is the Managing Editor of Star Local Media and covers Celina and Frisco. He can be found on X at @NewsyMike_SLM.

[Learn more about your privacy options](#)