

November 16, 2018

David Horn announces candidacy for Mayor of Decatur

Dr. David J. Horn is pleased to officially announce his candidacy for Mayor of Decatur, Illinois. David currently serves as a City Councilman for Decatur. As a City Councilman he has served as an independent voice that is evidence based and data driven. He has been a strong proponent for fiscal responsibility, community revitalization, and environmental stewardship.

David is a Professor of Biology at Millikin University, where he has been a professor since 2005. During his tenure, he has had the privilege of teaching hundreds of students and was recognized with Millikin's Teaching Excellence Award and Research Excellence Award. David is one of the founders of the university's Institute for Science Entrepreneurship which hosts a speaker series open to the public. Horn has served on the Macon County Regional Planning Commission (2007-2013) and as a Trustee for the Macon County Conservation District (2009-2014).

David Horn moved to Decatur in 2005 and resides in the West End neighborhood. Horn, age 47, grew up in Bethesda, MD. He did his undergraduate work at Hiram College in northeast Ohio, before going to the University of Mississippi and Iowa State University for his graduate studies. He spent five years in Aurora, IL before moving to his new hometown, Decatur, IL. His combination of skills and well-rounded experiences as both a member of the City Council, educator, and scientist, make him well qualified to serve as Mayor and to be effective from day one.

David is running for Mayor in order to address and help solve the significant challenges facing Decatur. These challenges include a population that has declined over 5% since 2010, household income that is less than the state and national average, an unemployment rate that is consistently 20% higher than the national average, and a poverty rate that is 25% and nearly double the national average.

In 2018, the number of city employees was reduced 7%. In 2019, the city faces financial challenges as costs continue to rise. The city must maintain high-quality public services. However, maintaining public services is not enough and the city must move forward on initiatives that create a more livable, vibrant and healthy city to address long-standing issues. These initiatives include:

- 1) Neighborhood revitalization. The City of Decatur needs to implement its neighborhood revitalization priorities. As of Fall 2018, the City of Decatur had over 120 houses on the demolition list and over 300 houses that were unfit for human habitation. These houses are health and safety hazards and must be removed. To encourage population growth, incentivizing property improvements and ownership should be implemented.
- 2) Restoring and enhancing the environment in which we live. Poor environmental conditions cause our physical and mental health to be lessened and our quality of life to be diminished. With the pending purchase of hundreds of vacant lots, Decatur has the opportunity to add significant amounts of greenspace and become a model for environmental sustainability.
- 3) Providing a voice for those that often go unheard. We must remove disparities in our city and create a more equitable community. Each citizen in Decatur has a distinct identity and all of these identities are important for our community. Decatur can become a city that embraces our differences and finds common ground and solutions to our long-standing issues and concerns.
- 4) Removing local government barriers to growth. According to one 2018 survey, Decatur is the slowest growing city in America including both the lowest population growth and job growth. The city should identify and remove barriers that are hindering growth, and work collaboratively with industry, small business, and organizations to identify ways that city government can assist in job growth.

Many of these initiatives will require collaboration with other entities while in some areas the City of Decatur can take the lead. A first step will be the creation of a strategic plan for the Decatur City Council. Working together, David wants to create a more livable, vibrant, and healthy city while preserving Decatur's essence as a kind, caring, and compassionate community.