

Dr. Sharma for Carson Daily Breeze Interview Responses 2021

- What do you do for a living?

I am a nonprofit executive director. I serve as the President and CEO of CO-OP, a Carson-based human and social services agency providing wrap-around case management and educational outreach services to students and their families. I also serve as the interim Executive Director for the Carson Coordinating Council, a community organization that has provided the most vulnerable residents in Carson with academic, basic needs, and mental health support services for over 60 years.

- How long have you lived in Carson?

I have lived in the City of Carson for over 15 years and have been serving the community by way of my nonprofit work, community service, and volunteer activities since day one.

- What experience do you have to qualify you for the position?

I possess over 25 years of experience in the nonprofit, small business, and government sectors. I possess a fully accredited Doctorate in Organizational Leadership as well as three additional degrees from USC, two of which are in the areas of Administration and Psychology. In addition, I hold certificates in Leadership, Grant Writing, Goal Attainment and several other areas of relevance to success in public service. I have been a professional Consultant for a multitude of nonprofit, educational, small business, and government agencies since 1998.

I am the President of the Carson Accountability and Transparency (Carson CAT) Board of Directors, publisher of The Carson Observer - the only publication exclusively dedicated to educating and informing local residents about Carson municipal and community activities. I am also President and Co-Founder of the Carson Stroke Center Volunteer Association and a member of the Carson Sheriff's Station Support Foundation's Board of Directors. I am actively involved in over a dozen other Carson community organizations and local initiatives as a Board Member, Founder, and/or volunteer as well.

I am experienced with multimillion-dollar budgets, evaluation of federal and other government projects, and have specialized training in handling change processes, strategic planning, and resolving interpersonal conflicts. As a grant writer and fundraiser, I have secured over \$40 million in contributions to groups and organizations supporting people in need. I regularly watch and attend Carson City Council meetings and am on the record as a regular contributor of Oral Comments about both agendaized and non-agendaized items.

My record and experience is well known and recognized by many throughout the community. I am an actively sought advocate and volunteer for my fellow Carson community leaders and for city staff. I have a positive relationship and rapport with city employees and am respected throughout the Carson business community. I am also one of a select group of individuals to have been honored as a member of the esteemed "Leaves of Carson" volunteer recognition program, which is the City's highest award reserved for its most dedicated volunteers and community contributors.

- What are the biggest issues facing Carson, and what are your proposed solutions?

The biggest issues facing Carson are poor government operations, public safety, housing and homelessness, and an ongoing budget deficit.

Government Operations: My primary initial focus will be to develop and implement various policy improvements that will restore accountability and transparency to City Hall. Disruptive and antagonistic behavior amongst certain members of our City Council has been detrimental to the leadership process. As a result, they have not been able to implement good and effective governance practices. By addressing gaps in policy, identifying our shared values and priorities by way of a comprehensive city-wide strategic plan, increasing resident and stakeholder engagement, and directly addressing the lack of decorum, ethics, and transparency, the City Council will be better equipped to handle and resolve the many key issues that it faces in an open, focused, and solution-building way.

Public Safety: Another major concern throughout our entire city, regardless of the socio-economic status of individual neighborhoods, is the safety and well-being of our residents. However, it is no secret that certain parts of our city suffer from exponentially higher rates and incidences of violence than some of the others. I live in the Avalon-Greens II complex, which is near Fosia (formerly Scott) Park. Our neighborhood is in dire need of increased patrols, gang-diversion programs, and technology to assist in the prevention and solving of major and moderate level crimes.

While I wholeheartedly appreciate and support our local law enforcement agency, their services as it stands is not enough. We need more funding, more assigned Deputies, and far more attention and support than our current contract provides for. This issue can be addressed by regularly applying for and securing grant funds and donations directly targeted towards our most crime-ridden areas as well as implementing more neighborhood-based programs for our young people to keep them engaged and away from the streets. Also, by introducing job training programs, more employment opportunities, and addressing gaps in educational attainment, we can offer those who are choosing a life of crime better alternatives for their future than what currently exists.

Housing and Homelessness: This City has a wealth of untapped resources and access to a number of already existing solutions beyond Tent Cities and Homeless Shelters. Tiny

homes and shipping container conversions are viable options and could easily be constructed by our existing skilled labor force and located on the vacated and underdeveloped land that Carson is already known for. We can repurpose dilapidated and abandoned properties while identifying underused public spaces and abandoned private spaces to provide localized social service support for this population as well. The real estate industry could be a great partner in planning and building these types of housing programs and assisting working-class and lower-income buyers in qualifying for the various new homeownership and rental options. It is a win for the City, a win for those in need of housing, and a win for the real estate market.

The recent controversies surrounding mobile home park closures in Carson indicate the need for increased protection and support for senior citizens and other low/fixed income earners in Carson. Currently, there are no effective affordable housing ordinances, zoning laws, or fair housing work being done in our City. I would implore my Council colleagues to consider creating a more robust housing department to address this gap. Change will not take place overnight. However, change is possible and balance is necessary. With the abundance of new developments in Carson, there is a missed opportunity to ensure access to affordable housing for our city's most vulnerable residents.

Budget Deficit: The City has presented a "structurally balanced" budget to the residents for the first time in recent years. Despite the seemingly balanced bottom line they present, there are several glaring oversights. One major concern is that the budget fails to include a large number of unfilled critical staff positions, in addition to having overly modest line items for various delayed programs, events, and services affected by Covid but still expected to take place in some form. There are also other additional anticipated but excluded expenses, such as annual supplemental legal and settlement fees that are expended every year. Having a budget that is misleadingly balanced serves no one.

By failing to properly partner with the Carson Community Foundation, and by way of inconsistent data collection and nonexistent program evaluation, the city continues to miss out on the opportunity to secure grant and other donated funds and resources that could supplement and/or supplant the cost of its many community programs. These funds would alleviate some of its financial burdens, leaving more funds in the budget to meet the City's true expense tally as well as giving it the ability to enhance, restore, or provide services that have been removed or are lacking. By leveraging access to this community charity, and utilizing my 25 years of grant writing and fundraising expertise, I could lead the City in securing the resources it needs. Combined with fiscal best practices and a truly balanced City budget, we could increase and improve City programs and services with confidence and ease.

Ultimately, I want what every Carson resident wants, a better quality of life for myself and for my neighbors. My experience, record, skills, and platform will bring Carson the

change it needs to elevate our city into a regional model for municipal transformation into a thriving and successful city for all who call this wonderful city home.