

City/Town Council Candidate Survey

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What is your name? *

Tom Crumpler

Are you running for City or Town Council? *

Bloomington City Council ▼

What are your top three priorities if you are elected to the (Bloomington City/ Normal Town) council? *

If elected, my three priorities will be to

- ensure families have access to dependable core services, public, safety, and a healthy infrastructure;
- ensure that our City listens to local businesses and community organizations, brings stakeholders to the table, develops concrete and workable solutions to problems, and holds ourselves accountable; and,
- help build a community where all our families feel safe, respected, and comfortable.

In your opinion, what is the largest strength of (Bloomington/Normal), and how would you promote it? Conversely, what is the greatest challenge (Bloomington/Normal) faces not withstanding COVID-19 and how will you address it? *

enjoy a high level of educational attainment, relatively low unemployment, a large share of residents at management or white-collar positions, and above average wages. We are a diverse community with four institutions of higher education and an active arts and cultural community. We have strategic access to three major interstates, rail service, and a regional airport. Bloomington City Council should highlight and market these strengths.

Challenges: We have fiscally pragmatic challenges and opportunities in Bloomington that will help ensure long-term sustainability of core services to our neighborhoods. Three examples:

The largest portion of Bloomington's operating expenses are devoted to public safety services: police, fire, and EMS. To provide services most efficiently to all neighborhoods, we should seek out partnership opportunities with the Town of Normal.

Our Downtown, main corridors, West Side, and other areas of our city, have experienced benign neglect. Bloomington should prioritize incentives and seek out public and private resources that would bring new businesses and support existing businesses that bring jobs or otherwise revitalize these areas.

Like many mid-sized towns, we've deferred maintenance and improvements to our infrastructure systems. We need to prioritize and address these ongoing problems.

As an alderman, I will communicate these efforts with constituents in Ward 9, meet with Department heads to understand the issues and priorities in each department, help build consensus on the Council for necessary improvements, and support partnerships with the Town of Normal.

If elected to the (Bloomington City/Normal Town) Council, how would you work with (the opposite community) to enhance and ensure collaboration? *

A coordinated effort between Bloomington and Normal can result in more efficient, more reliable, and more sustainable core services and infrastructure for our community. We should examine every opportunity to seek out working partnerships for our two municipalities.

Effective collaboration begins with building relationships and earning trust. In my time as alderman—as in every other aspect of my life—I will listen to understand different perspectives, work to find common ground, and treat everyone with respect. Collaboration and understanding is a foundation of my character.

How do you plan on making yourself available to not only your immediate constituents but to community groups and leaders, organizations, non-profits, etc.? *

My first job as an alderman will be to reach out to community leaders. Our community is enriched through civic organizations and community groups led by community leaders who care about Bloomington/Normal. They bring experiences, expertise, and diverse perspectives. Talking about issues and ideas always makes a community healthier and stronger. The first step is developing relationships and open communication.

Staying in touch with the families throughout the seven precincts in Ward 9 will be one of the most rewarding parts of my term as alderman. People want to communicate in different ways and we have to allow for that. I plan to continue to post City Council meetings and other helpful city information on my alderman Facebook page. I will continue to make my cell phone available and continue to schedule virtual town hall meetings. An occasional newsletter email can also provide updates and context, when necessary. Nothing takes the place of face-to-face meetings, however. When the time is right, I will welcome those opportunities.

What are the top three (3) small business needs/issues and how would you support local business sustainability, growth, and opportunity? *

When I began my campaign for alderman, I reached out to several small business owners to hear various perspectives on their most pressing needs at this time. I heard concerns from businesses impacted by the pandemic, concerns about qualifications necessary to apply for the State relief grants, concerns about shutting down bars and restaurants, and even concerns about the garbage pickup in certain blocks of downtown. There was also good news: our city leaders and city employees are, by and large, responsive to small business owners, providing support and information with a shared purpose.

Four main threads were repeated from the small business owners with whom I spoke. Small business owners want:

- clear and consistent communication from the City;
- the opportunity to bring workable solutions to the table;
- an openness from the City to do things differently, pilot new ideas, remove barriers, and make changes; and
- more efficiency.

Consistently, I heard that things take too long, or that there's no follow-through on recommendations from committees. I heard that the City can be inefficient. One goal I will have as an alderman will be to keep communications open with small business owners, helping increase efficiencies whenever possible. Overall, we need City Council members who will listen to business owners and eliminate the barriers to doing business. At the same time, we need to 1) reach consensus on a plan to redevelop our historic Downtown, 2) support and expand new businesses, diversity ownership of businesses, and businesses operating in underdeveloped areas of Bloomington.

How should local government play a role in economic development and diversification of the local economy? *

Local government must play a role in economic development in building a prosperous sustainable community, especially in an economy impacted by COVID-19.

Currently, the Office of Economic Development in our city provides small business loans, tax incentives, heritage grants, and other economic tools to support businesses and individuals in this community. Our City should be encouraging diverse business owners and individuals to apply for these or other opportunities.

Given our strategic location in the State, the City of Bloomington, in partnership with the Town of Normal and McLean County, can use a regional approach to attracting and diversifying our local economy.

How do you plan to overcome difficulties presented to the municipality by the unstable financial situation in the State of Illinois? *

Fiscal responsibility is paramount. With a proposed budget of over \$230 million for next fiscal year, and an uncertain economic period due to impact of the pandemic, we must be cautious with spending and how projects are funded in this next fiscal year and beyond. I am committed to being a good steward of our city's financial resources.

Second, the City of Bloomington should commit to working together with the Town of Normal and McLean County to attract and retain small businesses.

Are there any municipal services you feel are missing from the (Town of Normal/ City of Bloomington) and need to be added? Alternatively, are there any that you view as non-essential and could be eliminated to cut costs? *

In 2015, the City of Bloomington conducted a self-evaluation of the accessibility of its current facilities and programs. We fall short. We need to prioritize the accessibility of our City parks, sidewalks, and website.

The McLean County Chamber of Commerce works with the Political Action Committee to help its membership understand who you are as a candidate and what your policies will be if elected. We achieve this by sharing your responses with the membership to help increase the turnout of educated voters. I agree that the McLean County Chamber of Commerce may share and publish my responses as submitted and as presented, on the McLean County Chamber of Commerce website www.mcleancochamber.org. *

☒ Yes

☐ No

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