



**City Council Election November 2007
Written Questions**

1. Affordable housing is a concern that city government and nonprofit groups have sought to address. As a City Councilor, what specific actions would you initiate and/or support to address increase the availability of affordable housing in our community?

I was appointed by the City Council to two different commissions on housing and spent almost five years studying housing issues. This experience showed me that well in excess of 95% of new housing stock comes from the private sector with no public support. As such, to make an impact on affordable housing we must work with the private sector. The biggest factor in the cost of housing is density, and there are specific steps the City of Iowa City can take to incent housing density. Design flexibility and streamlining the development process can also help.

I also note that housing has become a regional workforce issue and requires regional planning.

2. Describe in detail your vision for land use and zoning in Iowa City. What specific types of development are needed? What specific actions would you initiate to foster that development?

I do not think it is realistic to detail a vision for land use and zoning in Iowa City in the context of a questionnaire like this. Our land using and zoning regulations are the product of methodical community input and, at least in theory, should reflect our community mores.

I can also say that our reliance on residential property taxes for the majority of our municipal revenues is dangerous and must be addressed. This source of revenue is not anticipated to keep pace with the ever-rising cost of operating government. Without diversifying our revenue sources, we jeopardize our ability to fund critical services.

One promising solution is to expand our commercial and industrial tax base. These tax bases not only bring new jobs, they are not subject to the rollback limitations of the residential tax base. I believe this approach can help to avert the budget crises plaguing other communities. Attracting the next ACT, the next P&G, and any number of small businesses hold great promise for the community.

Finally, I believe we should encourage regional land use planning. As with many issues facing this community, land use should be planned on a regional basis given the geographic integration of communities in Johnson and Linn counties. The Cities of Iowa City and Cedar Rapids have already engaged in discussion on the issue and I hope this trend continues.

3. Most building and expansion projects of significant size are requesting a TIF (Tax Incremental Financing) from Iowa City. Describe in detail the type of project, if any, that deserves a TIF. What conditions, if any, should the city place on TIFs? How specifically would you address the problems that Iowa City TIFs cause for county and school budgets?

The City of Iowa City can and should consider building/environmental standards, employment/benefits targets, and other conditions that benefit the community and those involved in the project itself. TIFs offer the City an opportunity to control aspects of a project it would not otherwise be able to control.

The type of project that deserves a TIF depends on what the City hopes to accomplish. Traditionally TIFs were used to incent development in blighted areas. The more recent trend seems to be to use them as a development tool in growing areas. This in turn has sparked controversy regarding the appropriateness of TIFs. I would apply a basic test to a TIF application: would this project occur without TIF support? If the answer is “probably,” then probably we should not support the application.

School and county budgets, along with city budgets, are impacted in the short run but benefited in the long run. Effective communication between all entities affected by TIF support, and in addition steps to minimize the impact (e.g. keeping the term of a TIF project as short as possible), can help.

4. Describe in detail what activities you would undertake on the City Council to build a more cohesive public transportation system in and around Iowa City. Include discussion of pedestrian, bicycle, bus and car transportation.

Like many other issues, transportation is increasingly a regional issue. I support steps to engage in regional planning to meet transportation needs. I also support steps to promote bicycle and pedestrian transportation. Dedicated bike lanes on arterial streets, a safer and more efficient bike passage way through the heart of downtown, and other measures can support our bicycling commuters. Promoting downtown (non-student) housing can help workers reach their workplaces on foot.

Transportation planning is one of many ways in which the City of Iowa City can “lead by example” regarding the environment. Given the lack of national leadership on environmental issues, local governments are taking more steps to minimize their environmental footprint.

5. Please list your top five priorities for action by the City Council and your reasoning for each.

1. Expand our tax base and labor force. My rationale is explained in my answer to question no. 2 above.
2. Improve fire and police protection. We need a fourth fire station to serve the north and east parts of town. This is matter of safety – and of economic development as prominent businesses in that part of town have expressed dismay and concern that fire

protection is inadequate and could hamper development. Our police department has the second-lowest staffing level in the state of Iowa. This number excludes the University of Iowa police department, but that department does not to my knowledge send patrols far from campus where many students now live. Crime has changed in our community over the years, we presently face an alarming spike in sexual assaults against (mostly) young women, and our police department needs as much support as we can offer.

3. *Support for arts and culture initiatives.* My work as president of the Englert Theatre board of directors showed me first-hand the important contribution of arts and culture organizations on the community. The recent study showing a \$65 million positive impact to the corridor economy from arts and culture is proof positive that supporting arts and culture is good for business. The City of Iowa City can encourage and champion the unique artistic landscape that makes this such an attractive community.
 4. *Explore environmentally-friendly municipal operations.* The promotion of environmentally-friendly municipal operations will be one of my priorities if elected. Local governments are starting to lead by example to reduce our collective environmental footprint. Iowa City is progressive relative to other municipalities, but we can do more. Making our buildings and facilities more energy efficient, improving our vehicle fleet, and capturing energy from our waste products are but a few of the steps we can take to make our city “greener.” We can also help the community becomes “greener” through improved pedestrian and bicycle commuting, expanded recycling, and the like.
 5. *Promote affordable housing opportunities.* I have explained my rationale in my answer to question no. 1 above.
6. Public Measure C on the November election ballot authorizes only persons 21 years or older to be present in establishments with a liquor license after 10:00 pm. What do you believe are the major problems created by alcohol consumption in the community? What impact would approval of the referendum have on these problems? Describe alternative or additional approaches that you would support as part of a comprehensive plan for addressing alcohol consumption.

The major problems associated with alcohol consumption range from inappropriate behavior to sexual assaults and everything in between. The community is engaged in considerable discussion concerning alcohol consumption and how it can be addressed. I have stated my personal opposition to 21-only in campaign debates. I am not convinced that going 21-only will solve the problem, and I fear that we have not considered the possible unintended consequences, for example safety to (mostly) young women, of going 21-only if it results in greater alcohol consumption in less-supervised locations. Having said that, I do not purport to have all the answers on this difficult issue and welcome input from all corners of the community on the issue. At this point I believe we should consider expanded enforcement with respect to both individuals and bars that violate existing laws, realistic alternative activities like live music and movies, and pushing the University of Iowa to engage students

on campus more (and to expect more of its students). Whether 21-only passes or not, the community needs to press forward on this very important issue.

7. Public Measure D on the November election ballot authorizes a permanent Police Citizen's Review Board that would make recommendations regarding the policies, practices and procedures of the police department, investigate citizen claims of police misconduct and have the authority to subpoena witnesses. Explain your personal position on this issue and describe alternative or additional approaches that you would support as part of a comprehensive solution to overseeing police department functioning.

I will not be supporting Public Measure D as a voter on November 6. I am not convinced that the PCRB needs to be a permanent part of the city charter as opposed to the numerous commissions that presently serve the city well. More importantly, I am not convinced that giving subpoena power to the PCRB will help fulfill its mission. I have consulted with individuals associated with the PCRB, and the message I get is that the power to subpoena would be of help only in the rarest of occasions. One individual told me that he could think of one out of approximately 70 cases over the last seven years in which the power to subpoena would have helped.

Moreover, the PCRB's subpoena power would be meaningless if, for example, the accused police officer asserted a fifth amendment right against self incrimination. In contrast, if the City directs a police officer to testify and the officer refuses, the City can fire him or her. In that sense, the ability of the City to compel testimony is stronger than any subpoena power the PCRB would enjoy if Public Measure D passes.

I fully support steps to improve communication and trust between our police department and the community it serves. I do not think Public Measure D accomplishes this.