

Isak Asare (D-At-Large) Responses to Heading Home Candidate Survey for the May 2, 2023 Bloomington Council Primary Election

1. What do you see as the most effective strategies to strengthen housing security in our community, ensuring that everyone has a safe, stable place to live?

Housing security is directly tied to housing availability. As addressed in question 2 below, the city needs to focus on long-term improvements to the housing stock — including quantity, quality, type and price particularly in workforce housing. In the last 8 years the city has added over 1400 housing units to the stock of homes in the city but more may be required and I will continue to support examining every tool available to the city to build more low-income and affordable housing for residents. I think all of the priorities in question 2 will also address housing security in Bloomington.

One thing I think we often overlook is the intersectionality of housing insecurity. For example, a recent study showed higher housing insecurity among renters with disabilities. As such, the city's anti-discrimination positions as well as our efforts at diversity, equity, and inclusion must also focus on housing security. Funds should be set aside to e.g. subsidize rental payments for those experiencing housing insecurity. It is also worth noting that federal and state resources as well as help through the townships exist for this and the city can do a lot to ensure that residents going through housing insecurity have access to these services and funds as well. The city also needs to create a fund to de-risk federal housing vouchers.

2. What are your top 3 council legislative priorities to address the scarcity of low-income housing in Bloomington?

Firstly, I am for the creation of community land trusts that acquire, own, and steward land for community benefit, making provisions for permanently affordable housing on the land. Secondly, I want the city to maximize city-owned land by developing a complete list of all owned assets, including vacant land and underutilized real estate. Once identified, we can either donate or sell the properties to be allocated specifically for affordable housing or explore using these lands as public housing options. Many of the long-term things that we can do to increase the quantity of workforce and low-income housing in the city (e.g. incentivizing developments through subsidies or tax incentives) will take time. As such we also need to work with the county on thinking strategically about how to meet the housing needs of all of our residents. The same goes for Indiana University and Ivy Tech. Finally there is a slight issue with data disparities within the housing

ecosystem that compound the scarcity of available properties. The city can work to create and maintain a database of all available properties and use technology to share this information with residents.

3. **What actions should the City of Bloomington take to reduce homelessness, and what would you do on council to implement those actions?**

Homelessness is what Zaid Hassan would call a *'complex social challenge'*. Complex social challenges aren't simply about checking the right boxes or implementing the right policy ideas; they're about responding to changing information in real time. It isn't just about how good we can get at providing services or building affordable housing but about how fast we can respond to changing information. As such, a lot of our approach should be focused on creating real-time feedback loops, bolstering our financial support for organizations like Heading Home and the Continuum of Care so that together with the housing authority and other branches of local, state, and federal government we can come together around the shared aim of making homelessness rare, brief, and non-repeating.

As a city councilperson I will continue to work on appropriate ways to create comprehensive, real-time data that can be safely and ethically shared among the continuum of care and other service providers so we can better track the dynamics of homelessness at a population level, understanding inflow, outflow and whether efforts are driving reductions in homelessness. I'll use the convening power of local government to help foster more collaboration among stakeholders to reduce duplications of efforts. And I will support strategic investments in low-income housing through community land trusts for example. Finally, we also need to work at the local level at 'de-risking' housing vouchers for landlords so that the many people who have them can find housing that will accept them.