

## Isabel Piedmont-Smith (D-District 1) 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?

I believe the Heading Home Plan is an excellent blueprint for change, and I'll cite the plan in my responses to this question, in the format Goal/Strategy/Objective (e.g. Plan 1/3/3). We need to help people stay in the housing they currently have by connecting struggling residents with rental assistance programs (Plan 1/3/3) and legal assistance to prevent eviction (Plan 1/3/4). At the same time, we should advocate for past evictions to be expunged when appropriate, to allow the residents to be more successful in applying for subsequent housing (Plan 1/3/5). We should also support and incentivize the development of more low-income housing. This should include cooperative solutions (Plan 1/1/3). Communal co-ops such as Bloomington Cooperative Living as well as new limited-equity cooperatives that allow some ownership rights and separate apartments are strategies Bloomington should pursue. We should also continue to support the Summit Hill Community Development Corporation land trust and turn over city land for that entity to develop into long-term affordable housing (Plan 1/1/3). The city is in the process of allowing the land trust to develop 45 lots off W. Arlington Dr., and lots in the new Hopewell Neighborhood are being considered. We should also discuss with SHCD the development of land for affordable housing near the current convention center (parcels that won't be needed for expansion).

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

(1) HELP LOW-INCOME HOUSING DEVELOPERS For truly low-income housing, the Council has and should continue to serve as a conduit for low-interest, tax exempt loans like we approved in recent years for Countryside and Basswood apartments. Ongoing collaboration with SHCD, for example approving a transfer of ownership to the land trust for the Kohr Building and lots in Hopewell, is also vital.

(2) FUND NON-CAR TRANSPORTATION OPTIONS It costs an average of \$5,160 per year to own a car in Indiana. We must make it possible to live and

work without a car in Bloomington by continuing to transfer substantial funds to Bloomington Transit and by funding safe bicycling and walking infrastructure.

(3) REVISE THE UDO Currently, Bloomington's Unified Development Ordinance only allows duplexes in the R1, R2, and R3 zoning districts as a conditional use, requiring property owners to go through the Board of Zoning Appeals, and the number of duplexes is limited to 15 per year. We should revise the UDO to allow duplexes and triplexes by right in these zoning districts. More housing generally leads to a decrease in prices (reference here). Another revision to the UDO that could lead to more affordable housing is to allow subdivision of lots and to reduce the minimum lot sizes in traditionally single-family neighborhoods. The smaller lots would be more affordable and, again, allow more people to live close to where they work, reducing the need for a car.

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

I believe the Heading Home Plan is an excellent blueprint for change, and I'll cite the plan in my responses to this question, in the format Goal/Strategy/Objective (e.g. Plan 1/3/3). Homelessness is not a state of being that happens in a vacuum. Most (but not all) people who are unhoused have mental health problems, including substance use disorders. Fentanyl, opioids, and meth are killing people in our community. We must advocate for more treatment options, prevention education, and harm reduction, and we must work with the county government to fund such efforts via our combined opioid settlement funds and grant opportunities. The city must also continue to support low- or no-cost mental health services through its Jack Hopkins Social Services Fund. (Plan 1/4/4) I recognize that many landlords do not accept HCV/Section 8 housing vouchers in Bloomington, and this prevents those lucky enough to receive vouchers from having much choice in housing. As a City Council member, I will look into legal options we have to require property owners who receive city funding or incentives to accept such vouchers. If this is not possible, the city should offer incentives (Plan 1/2/3).