

## Joe Lee (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?**

Housing like so many of the issues our community is dealing with is much wider than Bloomington, but we have a very specific complicating factor – housing the increasing Indiana University student population that the University seems uninterested in dealing with. We have seen the accelerating growth of “big box” apartment complexes taking land that might have been developed for workforce and affordable housing, but even more complicating is the rental market in the core neighborhoods that becomes more and more expensive squeezing out families of modest income in favor of student renters. Bloomington must become intentional when creating and dealing with safe, affordable housing. The Hopewell development represents a real model for actively coming up with solutions that do not rely on the open market to set prices. We, as a city, can and must learn from this development as a template for the future of truly affordable housing in Bloomington.

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

I. The city of Bloomington must get the Hopewell neighborhood development right. It can serve as a model for future large, and even smaller, developments on city owned land. It can with intention be built with a congenial, planned use of different housing types – single family and small plex – with the infrastructure to support the development.

II. Ideas already put forward like “land trusts” that the city could ensure that builders must build with affordability as the primary goal on city-controlled land. I would work on expanding this proposal as a form of “urban homesteading” allowing families to invest in available city land.

III. Investing directly in affordable housing by taking funds received from the Federal government as part of the “American Rescue Plan” and other recent

financial legislation as loans or grants for low-income families to purchase existing properties or to build new ones within very discrete guidelines.

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

Our current homeless and unhoused situation in Bloomington is once again an issue that almost all of America is facing in one way or another. Ours is particularly magnified by our compassionate outlook – we care and we are a city of both private and governmental agencies take that caring and put it to work! We provide a wealth of services that we are fortunate to embrace, but unfortunately are not available in the surrounding area. It is important for Bloomington to work with the surrounding region, both municipal and county, to help in working to secure that most basic of necessities – housing. I would also look at other forms of housing that might transition individuals more gently than moving directly from the “street/shelter to apartment” model. Dormitories or the traditional British “bed-sitting room” with private bedrooms and shared bathroom and kitchen facilities which could afford a greater number of individuals the dignity and safety of a private space. Areas within the boundaries of the city set aside for “tiny homes” that could be completely contained or function in the same way as the dormitory model. These are just a couple of schemes that I would work on with the intention of refinement and eventual legislation. Bloomington is a city filled with a creativity as well as compassion and we can use this creativity to mold new solutions that could be models for the other communities instead of trying to adopt and adapt notions that are already failing in other locales.