

Jenny Stevens (D-District 5) 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?

To strengthen housing security in our community we need to look at our UDP and zoning regulations and ensure that they are able to support mixed-use housing designs. To increase secure housing we need to ensure we are not just building apartments but that we are also building neighborhoods and promoting opportunities for citizens to build equity in their lives through home ownership. We know that after WWII the 900-1200 square foot home provided that bridge to equity. Within our community we have many neighborhoods that offer mixed-use housing options, i.e. include single-family homes with duplexes and condominiums. This mixed-use has created community and built equity for many families. We have seen progress over the years within the Habitat for Humanity organization, and we know that this type of mixed-use house is what local employees are seeking for their families and strengthens housing security in our community in a way that is quite different from high-rise rentals. We have opportunities within the Hopewell development, on the old hospital site; and within the Sudbury development, on the near west side, to strengthen housing security. I will be an advocate for creating these opportunities and supporting mixed housing as a strategy to strengthen housing security.

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

Legislative priorities that would be helpful to low-income housing development that I would support would be to

1) reopen the UDO and make revisions to address concerns regarding development scale, design, and quality issues within the final, finished housing. We also need to strengthen opportunities for low-income housing developments as well and promote them in ways that do not overburden or create inequity in our local schools. Finally, we need to ensure the inclusion of neighborhood input and insights within the planning process of developments near their neighborhoods.

2) We need to build partnerships within the community and advocate for city partnerships such as the one with Centerstone that facilitate land acquisition and then invite developers to collaborate in building affordable housing in partnership with us.

3) We also need to work with the county on their land use plan and the overall housing needs in Monroe county including in areas near employers, and properties in near proximity to Bloomington. We need to collaboratively explore rezoning in targeted areas and ensure that we are building in ways that maximize access to public transportation, city parks, grocery stores, etc.

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

Regarding homelessness, the city needs to work in partnership with local agencies. The root causes of homelessness are varied and this means that in order to make progress in these situations we need to consider the underlying cause of each individual's situation and consider their needs both for housing as well as for gaining access to a path to make progress on the root cause within their individual situation. As a city, we don't provide services to homeless individuals directly but we can support the community organizations that provide services and help ensure we have low-barrier shelters within our community and that we are active partners with the organizations that provide services. We need to work collaboratively with them in regard to successful ways to interact and support homeless individuals as they interact with city services and citizens. As a council member, I am going to advocate for these partnerships and for support through the Jack Hopkins fund for the services they provide. Bloomington has a big heart and offers predictable support and options to those experiencing homelessness as such we have a reputation and some influx of homeless from other communities and this sometimes taxes our support system. For this reason, I think, as a city, we also need to develop partnerships with our county officials as well as other counties and work collaboratively on support across a broader region.