



The Greater Bloomington  
Chamber of Commerce

**Election Initiative 2023**  
**Questions for City of Bloomington (COB) Mayoral Candidates**

Please submit your responses to the Chamber's Advocacy Director, Christopher Emge, at [cemge@chamberbloomington.org](mailto:cemge@chamberbloomington.org) by Friday, March 8<sup>th</sup>, 2023.

**1. If elected, what are your top 3 priorities as Mayor? (200 words)**

1. How we do government. I'll end the "my way or the highway" approach that currently characterizes City Hall. The government offered by our mayor and city council is not working. I'll listen to people and bring their ideas into any solutions we create to solve challenges and take advantage of opportunities. We must be intentional, balanced, and equitable, and we must seek to hear the voices which are so often left out because they can't come where the table is set. It's also about partnerships — with the county, university, nonprofits and business community.

2. Attainable housing. We need housing at all levels here, from "affordable" to workforce to executive — and we need to find pathways to treasure our neighborhoods. I opposed upzoning. In fact, my city council testimony was quoted in anti-upzoning materials. I support density when done well, but the way it was done in the UDO has already proven to increase the cost of housing in neighborhoods walkable to campus.

3. Public safety, especially as it pertains to our substance use and mental health crisis. We need dignified solutions for people in crisis so that they and the rest of our public can be safe.

**2. What is your plan for revitalizing the downtown district as a place where businesses, residents, and visitors can meet? (150 words)**

Downtown is everyone's neighborhood. Revitalization should focus on retail business, non-retail employment, and residential living. Efforts to increase downtown density have worked — perhaps too well. We're in danger of losing Downtown character to what are essentially dorms without adult supervision. The emphasis has to shift from IU student housing to young professionals, empty nesters, tech workers, and other demographics — all with an eye toward providing pricing at all levels. And it's important to stimulate the redevelopment of buildings to allow for new capital investment and job creation. Basic services such as beautification, parking, security, and amenities are critically important to fostering and protecting a vital downtown. Additionally, looking at east-west connectors and improved public transportation to get people easily into, around, and out of downtown is a priority. Common sense has to prevail over confusion when it comes to downtown infrastructure projects like the 7<sup>th</sup> Street project called the "7-Line."

**3. The working relationship between the Office of the Mayor and the BOC is broken. This has stopped any expansion of the Convention Center and impeded the development of a Community Justice Center, including an acceptable jail. How will you work to repair it? (150 words)**

I appreciate the question but believe the relationship with the community, not just the BOC, is broken. In fact, city government is broken. As the only candidate who's not been part of the dysfunction, my life experience uniquely fits this city's needs. I have many years of the kind of executive leadership necessary to turn organizations around. In my 20 years as Monroe County Habitat for Humanity CEO, I transformed an organization running a \$40,000 deficit when I arrived to one with a \$6 million surplus when I left for another opportunity. I currently direct the Indiana University Center for Rural Engagement. The Center had had a difficult startup when I was brought in but is now regarded as a national model for how universities can support the needs and futures of rural residents and communities. I intend to bring that same kind of leadership to turn city government around.

**4. Chamber members have continued to share concerns about difficulties they face in working with local government on issues such as permitting and utilities, citing inconsistencies and lack of predictability. What role does the mayor play in creating a more efficient and predictable process for developers? (150 words)**

The mayor sets the tone and leads the way. If bureaucracy is omnipresent, the problem is at the top. As noted in Q3, I have a proven record of taking on complex organizations not running as efficiently and effectively as needed to fulfill their mission. City government's regulatory environment should protect residents and businesses alike and should be aimed at improving and preserving an outstanding quality of life for all citizens. We need to review rules & regs impacting economic vitality to ensure a proper balance between public safety, health, environmental integrity and encouraging businesses to grow wealth for all community members. In an era when the world is moving faster and competition is fiercer, government has to be responsive and responsible to all. It's difficult to understand how a city government that's added so many City Hall staff members hasn't made more effort to solve this problem. I will.

**5. Over the last city administration, what initiative or priority:**

**a. benefited the community and why? (100 words)**

City government should be applauded for the completion of the B-line and Switchyard projects, continuing the success of the last three city administrations. And while I support the extension of the trail, the city should demonstrate a similar commitment to protecting public safety on the existing trail and surrounding area. A dedication of resources toward the welfare of trail users and our significant taxpayer investment should be highly prioritized.

The City also deserves credit for improving the city's website portal – although much public information is not being made readily available, and specific data, especially finance-related accountability, appears questionable at best.

**b. were you against or would you have changed and why? (words)**

Many, many things –including publishing of overdose victims' home addresses, Convention Center stalemate, uncooperative approach to the Community Justice Center, clumsy annexation plan, up-zoning tactics, ham-handed Showers Building space purchase, veto of the Capital Improvement Board over objections by everyone else in city and county government as well as the Chamber, and other cases. Opportunities to unite our community around common strategies to improve our city have been repeatedly squandered. In each instance, I would have listened, learned, and led – not the other way around. The other mayoral candidates didn't stop those kinds of things. I will.