

Running for Iowa City City Council – Jason Glass

**Why are you running and what are your priorities if elected?**

People ask me why I would possibly want to run for city council in a such divisive and contentious political environment. I believe those dynamics make it even more important that capable people step up and lead.

I believe in service to community, and I love Iowa City. I believe it is a great place with so many wonderful people. That too often gets lost in the discussion of where we fall short and need to improve. I will leverage my diverse experiences and nonpartisan approach to problem solving to help make this an even better place.

I will leverage my experiences, a rational and nonpartisan approach to problem solving and record of success to find solutions to the challenges our city faces. I've had a wide variety of experiences in many sectors of the community; human rights at the city and state level, nonprofits, business, music and theatre, National Guard. I've had a successful career where I've tackled tough issues and tough conversations. I'm not afraid to take on the tough issues and tough conversations that need to happen to move Iowa City forward. I've done so by building positive relationships with a wide spectrum of people. I promise to bring that issue-by-issue approach to city council.

I'm not running because of one issue or cause, but to be a problem solver on all challenges we face. Some of the largest issues facing Iowa City are:

- Public safety- We are seeing increasing gun violence in Iowa City, which the current council is not addressing. We are also debating the proper role of law enforcement in general. I believe we can both make our community safer and be innovative in making law enforcement more equitable and community focused.
- American Rescue Plan funds- We have big decisions to make about how to use \$18M in federal money. I believe the focus should be on directly supporting those most impacted by the pandemic and not included in previous support. We should also look at projects that are sustainable and the whole community can benefit from, such as accelerating climate actions and addressing housing insecurity.
- Back to basics- Assuring our basic city services, which we often take for granted, continue to be a priority. Fire Department staffing hasn't increased in 10 years while our population has increased 10% and development is growing, both out and up. The Downtown District reports a decline in waste disposal and other services from their members. The South District is focused on growth and economic development, which means the city needs to provide infrastructure and an environment that enables investment.

**How would you facilitate a continued favorable economic environment for your community?**

Economic development means always moving forward and constantly growing and innovating. If we are standing still, we are falling behind as new technology and ideas are generated.

It also means being a place where people want to invest, not just their capital, but their time and energy and dedication. City government needs to regularly ask itself how we are meeting that goal. We need to

create a safe, stable, consistent and predictable atmosphere so that people can make long term plans with less risk and more confidence.

It means diversification in economic activity. Large employers, start-ups, and everything in between are needed to have a vibrant community. We are so blessed to be a city with a Big Ten University, which provides employment and vibrancy to our community. We also can't rely solely on that advantage. We can do more to build a more vibrant economic city.

We have innovative and resilient people operating our businesses and they are the best ones to answer the question of how the city can support them. I want to assure that city elected officials and staff are listening to what those needs are and are eager to partner and problem solve.

**How do you feel about the current government regulatory environment and how might you improve what is currently in place?**

I'm disappointed that Iowa City has developed a reputation among many that we are not friendly to development. I'm proud to live in a progressive community with so much passion for so many issues. But you can't spell "progressive" with "progress" and that means growth. I am interested in digging into more specifics about how Iowa City can remove barriers to development in terms of regulations and administrative hurdles.

More critical than regulation, Iowa City needs to provide more clarity and consistency in their direction on development. We have seen far too many projects that are rejected after considerable investment and good faith efforts to work with city staff to meet requirements. We need to get the council and city staff on the same page. If a development is not going to be approved, we should know that and communicate it far earlier in the process, before considerable investment is made.

**What are your thoughts on TIF funding for projects that enhance economic growth and are you favorably disposed as to how this has been utilized by current and past councils?**

I don't see TIF as an absolute good or bad. It's a tool for economic development and it's important that it is used appropriately. It's important that we recognize that Iowa City doesn't exist in a vacuum and that business and developers have choices in our region. Given the competitive environment we are in regionally, and our neighbors more frequent use of TIF, it is essential that it be an option for projects in Iowa City.

Thought I can't speak to every instance of TIF use by the current and past councils, I believe that Iowa City has been prudent with its use. I also believe this question is linked to the previous one. I would like to see Iowa City reduce the barriers and uncertainty in development that drives up costs.

**How do you plan to address the issue of affordable housing in your community?**

We are a growing city that people want to live in, and demand for housing has outpaced supply. We have denied good projects that would increase that supply. That is to our detriment. Still, there are many projects that will be adding additional housing units in Iowa City and I'm hopeful that this will put downward pressure on rents. As more student focused units are added to the downtown area, I also see an opportunity for development of the older homes in neighborhoods close to downtown to be converted into affordable options.

The city needs to continue the millions in spending that take advantage of Low Income Housing Tax Credits (LIHTC), which is then multiplied by other sources. I have publicly supported using American Rescue Plan funds for direct payments to Excluded Workers that will help them with rent. I hope Johnson County continues to bolster their rent assistance program as well.

From my experience with the Affordable Housing Network in Cedar Rapids, I've also learned that housing insecurity is often about more than just affordability. We also need a holistic approach, surrounding people with mental health and substance abuse treatment, childcare and family support, and removing barriers to employment. I have done this work. I will bring this experience to council.

Home building generates substantial local economic activity, including new income and jobs for residents, and additional revenue for local governments. According to an NAHB study, the estimated one-year impacts of building 100 single-family homes in a typical local area include: \$28.7 million in local income, \$3.6 million in taxes and other revenue for local governments, and 394 local jobs. The additional, annually recurring impacts of building 100 single-family homes in a typical local area include: \$4.1 million in local income, \$1.0 million in taxes and other revenue for local governments, and 69 local jobs.

**How do you plan to engage our membership to further enhance our area?**

I'm very interested in hearing your suggestions and concerns. I will be open to meeting with you collectively or individually to better understand your work and how the city can partner with you. I have been very transparent with my thoughts and positions on many issues throughout this campaign. You can trust that I will do the same in any discussions with you. We may not always agree, but I will be clear about my positions and thought process. I am open to changing my positions based on new information or a more compelling argument. If I do so, I will always be proactive about saying so and explaining my rationale. I have done that consistently in my professional career. I believe those practices are a matter of integrity. I'm proud of my reputation in that area and am determined to maintain it.

Running for Iowa City City Council – Bruce Teague

1) Why are you running and what are your priorities if elected?

In Iowa City, over the last two years we have experienced tremendous challenges together. I have faced many difficult decisions as Mayor. I've been on council since 2018, I'm energized to continue the ambitious work together. We have much more to accomplish on social justice, policing, COVID recovery, sustainability, climate action, and zoning codes.

My Legislative Priorities I'm considering are:

- Economic Development Tax Credit Programs: This program could be ways to attract a workforce to Iowa and grow its population.
- Protecting Local Control/Home Rule: Mask mandates, and housing regulations especially when it comes to rentals housing. Things such as a check-in list would provide documentation that would help tenants get their deposit returns.
- Advocate for the continued funding of commercial & industrial property tax replacement.
- The loss of these funds negatively effects our city and would make it a challenge for us to provide our current level of services without raising property taxes.
- COVID recovery funds to help individuals and businesses to recover from the effects of COVID
- Child Care solutions to ensure we have adequate, qualified, and highly trained staff in childcare centers. We also have a deficit of centers that at this point requires the state intervention.
- There are several LGBTQ+ bills I believe we could support, especially those that attempts to erase Trans folk rights.
- Decriminalize small amounts of marijuana – an offense which contributes to the racial disparity in our criminal justice system.

1. How would you facilitate a continued favorable economic environment for your community?

Collaborating with all cross-sections of our community is key to ensure we all thrive together. This starts by listening to community members and dreaming BIG with them. I believe we begin with the end in mind and then we can figure out our steppingstones to achieve.

2. How do you feel about the current government regulatory environment and how might you improve what is currently in place?

Things move slow and often outcomes vary from person to person. Predictability in the process and clarity of outcomes is something I will continue to work towards. On October 5<sup>th</sup>, City Council unanimously adopted a form-based code in the south district. This allows a clear framework for neighbors, developers, city staff, planning & zoning commissioners, and the city council members. Also, it allows flexibility for creativity without all the controversy.

3. What are your thoughts on TIF funding for projects that enhance economic growth and are you favorably disposed as to how this has been utilized by current and past councils?

The City of Iowa City is a member of Iowa's Metropolitan Coalition. As Mayor, I proudly signed onto our 2022 legislative priorities which states: we believe tax increment financing (TIF) should remain as-is and is opposed to any changes.

Tax Increment Financing (TIF). Tax Increment Financing is a financing mechanism for Urban Renewal. It involves dividing the property taxes paid from property within a designated area between the traditional taxing authorities (counties, cities, schools, etc.) and the taxing authority that created the TIF area.

4. How do you plan to address the issue of affordable housing in your community?  
As a current member of council, I have adored the partnership we've had with Greater Iowa City Area Home Builders Association with our South District Homeownership Program. The city purchased the properties and through partnership with HBA you all rehabbed the homes. This collaboration has impacted this area in so many ways. Besides some climate action effects and providing true affordable home ownership, this program gives hope to those in the neighbor. It creates joy when someone who's been a renter for years becomes a homeowner in the very neighborhood or property that they've rented for years. Thanks, HBA for making our community dreams of enhancing the neighborhoods and creating a beautiful home a reality for this community.

In recent years, the City has committed \$1 million for Affordable Housing. I look forward to the outreach work of the new steering committee tasked with recommending an updated Affordable Housing Action Plan to council. Recently, we made progress in increasing affordable units in the downtown with 6 units at the Augusta Place apartments and the acquisition of five units for public housing at The Chauncey. The South District form-based zoning code being adopted provide opportunities to create affordable housing within the 900 acres of land that will soon be developed. Council is also talking about other incentives that would be in addition to other existing

programs at the city, state, and federal programs like Low-Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) and Community Development Block Grant (CDBG)/Homes Funds.

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5. How do you plan to engage our membership to further enhance our area?

I've been in Iowa City since 1993 and I have built relationships with many realtors and those on your Board of Directors and committee members.

I know many of your members because every now and then I need them for my personal needs. I personally own 2 commercial properties, 7 rental properties and my personal home so, I have had various experiences with your members from buying the properties to getting them serviced.

As a property owner, I experienced the operations of our city when it comes to property rules and regulations. This first-hand experience gives me real life situations. So the challenges shared with me I have experienced some and I will continue to work hard to remove barriers.

Since I've been here for 28 years, I have lots of friends within the HBA that I absolutely admire. Relationships matter and when it comes to city policies, I have been welcoming and inviting.

As Mayor, I've had conversations with your staff and board leadership, which I found to be very fruitful and collaborative.

On Tuesday, it was an honor for me to proclaim the month of October to be "Careers in Construction Month". It was important to me to help raise awareness and increase the public awareness of the opportunities available in construction. I was also pleased that the Greater Iowa City Area Home Builders Association was present to receive the proclamation.

## Running for Iowa City City Council - Megan Alter

### 1. Why are you running and what are your priorities if elected?

I want to make a better normal for our community. We've all heard, read, and even felt that we "want to get back to normal," but the truth is we shouldn't go back. We need to move forward in terms of equity, the local economy, and creating a stronger community that more people can enjoy. We have a tremendous moment to effect real change through more access and opportunities to help people's daily lives: things like making childcare a municipal consideration, to increase much needed retail in the South District and throughout Iowa City; to increase affordable housing programs throughout the City for renters and home owners alike. While Iowa City has so much to offer, we simply must make essentials more accessible to people so we all have the opportunity to enjoy Iowa City. I have extensive local experience and I believe in the power of local effort, collaboration, and action. Because of the activities and people I've been involved with over the years I know firsthand the way to get things done is with passion, collaboration, flexibility, and persistence. I am a proactive candidate who will bring issues from the community onto the agenda, not just react to them. I am eager to bring my experience to City Council to make a better normal for more people.

### 2. How would you facilitate a continued favorable economic environment for your community?

I am a strong advocate for creating much needed retail businesses and restaurants in the South District and also on the adjacent Eastside (including, but not limited to IC Marketplace). In these neighborhoods, there is also new residential construction under way and planned for the future. Having a robust and right-sized retail district will enhance these neighborhoods. While much of the Westside is zoned for residential there is also lot of unused commercial space along Hwy 1. A retail refresh is needed to anticipate and keep up with growth in Iowa City as well as provide the development that creates and sustains jobs. One size does not fit all, however. I am equally a proponent of making sure the development fits the needs and desire of and for the area. I also want to ensure as best I can that using incentives for these projects should be reserved for those cases where workers brought into the area for the jobs can actually afford to buy a home here locally.

### 3. How do you feel about the current government regulatory environment and how might you improve what is currently in place?

At the same time regulations are in place to maintain standards all must follow to maintain fair practices, procedures, and even consistent components in building practices, I also

remember very well talking with members of the HBA during its open house in 2019. I heard a lot of frustration about regulations. As a councilor, I would very much like to sit down with members to find out the specific pain points that Iowa City has in place. I promise to listen, do my homework to see why a regulation exists, and to help where we agree. At the same time I am proud of how much development Iowa City has fostered since 2016 (the most in its history), I also understand that work has been frustrating along the way. I would like to better understand and make the relationship between the City and HBA more transparent and collaborative if possible.

4. What are your thoughts on TIF funding for projects that enhance economic growth and are you favorably disposed as to how this has been utilized by current and past councils?

If TIF is used primarily to enhance economic growth, then I do not feel the City is getting enough value for funding the project in this way. Especially since TIF has been used primarily in the Downtown District, where the market is driving need and appetite for new project, I am concerned about fairness. There are other areas of the city that could use attention. To me, any project that uses some public financing options, including TIF, needs to provide proportional added value back to the community. I do like the ways Iowa City has judiciously used TIF (except for the Lucky's fiasco, where the issue was in the details). Most recently, the agreement between Tailwind and the City to keep the historic fronts of the buildings on College Street is an example of enhancing economic growth and working to maintain an important focal part of the Ped Mall. While the specific TIF agreement between Sycamore Mall and the City was problematic, I am not opposed to considering TIF for development if the community gains stability, needed and desired enhancements that people can actually tangibly experience or appreciate in exchange.

5. How do you plan to address the issue of affordable housing in your community?

I have talked with a few members of the HBA regarding the “flow” of affordable housing from a developer’s point of view: that new construction is necessary to appeal to current homeowners to buy, which enables existing homes to enter the market at better price points than new construction. I certainly understand that, but also know that residential property prices in Iowa City are causing some people who work in Iowa City to live (and spend their dollars) in Coralville and North Liberty. I would love to work with developers on creating a true “missing middle” for homeowners, where starter homes are not 250K. (And here might be where talking through regulations that drive developer costs up would be an important conversation to have.) In terms of rental units, as Iowa City grows, it is true we will need to continue to look at density and height as a way to reduce carbon footprints and create savings for developers and for renters. However, I also believe that creative combinations of smaller homes, duplexes, triplexes, and commercial properties as zoned for in form-based codes will also allow for new construction and provide rental and smaller residential properties. There is no single solution. Full disclosure: I also strongly support rehabbing older homes and

expanding the South District Home Ownership Program. To provide affordable housing that is right for all residents, we must have multiple options.

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6. How do you plan to engage our membership to further enhance our area?

I genuinely believe that the form-based code under consideration by the Council for the South District/Sycamore-Trueblood area will be a great place for mutual engagement. There will be a lot of development opportunities in that area. And as Iowa City grows, Downtown--though still the heart of the City in many ways--will no longer be or need to be the only major tax base. There is room for additional substantial property taxes by growing Iowa City sensibly, filling in gaps (like on the South, East, and West sides), and providing new construction that can accommodate a range of incomes. I also believe that the opportunities afforded by commercial development throughout the city could be a fruitful way for the HBA and the City to work together. Commercial districts in a city the size of Iowa City means that residential neighborhoods are near by or on their way.