

City Council Candidate: Bruce Teague, Mayor Date: 9/20/21

2021 ICDD Questionnaire for City Council Elections / November 2, 2021



## Introduction

The following questions are intended to further explore your understanding of the downtown environment and your willingness to support initiatives important to the downtown while on Council. These documents are available to you for your review and should be cited in your responses where appropriate:

[ICDD Advocacy Statement](#)

[ICDD Strategic Plan Update 2019](#)

[Downtown Recovery Brief](#)

Please share your knowledge and position on the following questions to help inform the community.

## Questions:

1. Please share your general thoughts about your experiences downtown, if/how the downtown functions as a community hub, and what you see as important for the area.

**I absolutely love downtown and people that are in my car know that if we're even near we are "scooping the loop". I've been in Iowa City since 1993 and I continue to adore and get great vibes from just being near downtown. Downtown Iowa City is a vital community hub for community members, students and visitors. It's been said to be the living room of Iowa City and just like many others, I love hanging out in our cities living room. The Iowa City Downtown District has done an awesome and amazing job over the past years cultivating a sense of place and vibrancy for everyone in our community. As we emerge from the worst of this pandemic, I know that downtown will continue to provide the activities, events and culture that make us so different and special.**

2. As one of seven Councilmembers, you will be tasked with representing every neighborhood in Iowa City. How do you plan to balance the needs of the broader city and your personal priorities, while also considering that Downtown is not only one of the

fastest-growing residential neighborhoods in the City, but the job center of the region and the largest contributor of the [general tax base](#).

**This is a role that I take very seriously as a member of council. Each neighborhood has its own unique characteristic and needs for the future. Our job is to set the broader vision for the entire community and then be able to adapt and respond as changes are proposed. We cannot, and do not, favor any one area over another. That said, we realize how important downtown is to the overall health and growth of our community and support any efforts to improve on its ability to provide residential and commercial development in keeping with the needs of the entire community's future. The high density of the downtown residential and businesses bring in a very large tax base especially when compared to the amount of land used downtown and any of our single family areas. So, I am fully aware of the taxes that are generated from the downtown district that we utilize throughout the city. I know the downtown wants us to ensure they have what they need but, I've been so impressed with the collaborations done in supporting all neighborhoods and people from those downtown.**

3. What role do you think downtown plays in the community--economically, socially, and financially as Iowa City strives to recover from the coronavirus pandemic in a manner that makes us better than before? How does this fit in with your ideas for commercial areas and neighborhoods throughout the community?

**I believe what this pandemic has reminded us is how important it is for us to have places where we can (safely) gather to celebrate, worship and connect with each other. What keeps Iowa City so inspiring is our ability to create diverse cultural offerings to bring people together. Downtown, with its proximity to the UI campus is the ideal setting for many of these events. The work being done in the South District has been inspiring and we need to see more activation across our entire city so that we can keep building relationships and trust. I've been impressed with the collaborative efforts with Project Better Together. The shop local efforts initiated by the downtown district idea during the pandemic was shared with our entire community and it was so impactful.**

4. There are several upcoming council considerations and other recent developments that are important to Downtown stakeholders and the larger community. The timing of some of them is uncertain. Help us understand your position on each of these actions and the approach you would take in considering them for approval/disapproval.
  - a. **Support for new development at [21 S. Linn Street \(US Bank parking lot\)](#).** A proposal was submitted by CA Ventures to develop a 13-story mixed use building on this vacant lot. In order for the development to fit on the lot without tearing down other buildings, the developer requested a reduction in parking requirements which was [denied at the Board of Adjustment](#).

ICDD Position: ICDD supported proposal. ICDD advocates for an update of the comprehensive plan to remove an outdated “desired heights map” that was cited as the reason to reject the project.

Your Position:

**I understand the concerns raised about this project, but ultimately hope we at council are presented with a plan that can move this forward. I do understand the parking issues whereas the developer would build down to create parking but, not able because it’s hindered by underground structures. I also understand the challenge we would face should the developer tear down the historic structures adjacent to the building to seek compliance. I also know the council and the cities will to have more affordable rental housing options, and right sized business spaces. I will continue to listen to those in our community and I am optimistic that we will have the best solution that meet the values and needs of our community.**

- b. **Support Historic Preservation through “Opt In” Program.** The Historic Preservation Commission and ICDD both agree that support for incentivizing historic preservation downtown would be a powerful and collaborative tool to reach multiple community-wide goals, including building preservation, sustainability, reduction of tax burden on key properties, and cultural opportunities. (See ICDD [Advocacy Statement 2.7](#))

ICDD Position: ICDD supports “opt in” program versus a local ordinance mandate and advocates for staff time to be devoted to developing the program.

Your Position:

**I am a big fan of the historic character of our downtown. I’m not against the “opt in” concept but I believe we need city staff to dedicate time to research and let us know how this would benefit our community and those that have properties in the downtown area. I can envision benefits for allowing property owners to have some flexibility. Coupling opt in with incentives I believe will entice the desire to preserve properties, which will allow them to remain competitive against newer projects which may have other advantages so that we are keeping as many historic properties in top shape for the generations to come.**

- c. As a Self Supported Municipal Improvement District, the ICDD has a partially sustainable revenue stream from a voluntary assessment on downtown property owners. The ICDD believes SSMIDs can benefit other areas of the community and support improved collaboration city-wide. As a City Council member, a South District SSMID may be brought to City Council for approval. While this is not a political vote, rather an obligation of Council to approve the SSMID if the requirements of [Iowa Chapter 386](#) governing SSMIDs are met. What are your general opinions related to additional SSMIDs in Iowa City.

ICDD Position: The ICDD supports and has been collaborating with South District partners to set up this improvement district. We advocate for the South District SSMID and a collaborative relationship between the two.

Your Position:

**This is the kind of collaboration and sharing that warms my heart. I fully support leveraging the experience and understanding of how to operate a successful SSMID the Downtown District has with the passion and connection to the neighborhood that the South District Partners have in that dynamic neighborhood. Combining these forces will truly benefit the future of this area of our city.**

- d. This year, City staff [removed a line item from the Capitol Improvement Plan \(CIP\)](#) that was voted on by previous Council members without alerting them or stakeholders like the ICDD to its removal. The project, a change of the one-way street to two-way of Market Street that would benefit safety in the Northside Marketplace, was first discussed in the [2013 Downtown Streetscape](#). At that time, the two-way conversion was lauded as beneficial to the community and was estimated at \$500k. Since then, costs have changed and staff came to the conclusion that Jefferson and Market Street corridors are lined with 1970s vintage traffic signals that have been deferred replacement among other issues and so removed the project from the CIP for other critical priorities.

The CIP is something that stakeholders rely on once they are voted on by Council and changes to it are important to communicate. The ICDD is a strong supporter of the Market Street two-way conversion that downtown stakeholders have been waiting on for what will now be almost a decade.

ICDD Position: We advocate for Council to vote the Market Street two-way conversion back on the CIP when it comes up for Council vote and for City Council to advocate for its immediate prioritization to keep confidence in the City's processes.

Your Position:

**Keep the advocacy coming to council. I understand the importance of traffic flow for various reasons which includes business impacts. This item staff removed from the CIP and the council has instructed that anything prior approved from council should be noted in a section that states removed so that council could see it and ask questions or direct to have it back on the CIP. I believe Market street should be converted and if we continue to wait the price for this change will continue to rise.**

5. One of the biggest challenges facing the City and downtown today is dwindling service levels in spite of rising service needs with an increased residential and visitor base. Downtown has a growing number of people experiencing homelessness with severe mental illness on most corners and no agency to specifically support the challenges of harassment of downtown patrons and lack of basic code enforcement. The ICPD has not re-assigned a downtown liaison - a proven solution - to address working with this population and to support education on basic code enforcement (parking on the pedestrian mall, riding bikes on sidewalks, etc). As a Council member, does prioritizing an officer or another type of staff with code enforcement authority to this role align with your philosophy on supporting community safety? What else should the City be doing to increase service levels and basic code enforcement?

**I think the history of the downtown liaison has demonstrated its effectiveness at keeping the area safe and welcoming for all while assisting those individuals who might be unhoused or dealing with other issues are supported and offered access to the services provided in our community. As part of our larger efforts to reform public safety having individuals who can build nurturing relationships at the neighborhood level is a critical aspect and certainly downtown has its own unique needs for this type of direct involvement.**

6. The ICDD supports a complex urban environment through tailored programs, clean and safe initiatives, events and “placemaking.” The City often financially supports our programs that fill a specific need upon request (examples include power washing, placemaking pilot funds, partnerships on retail studies, among others).

We believe that with increased visitation to and tax generation off of downtown properties, it will be more and more important to put additional resources towards improving cleanliness (bio matter, littered alley ways, etc.) to support stronger first impressions. As a council candidate, would you support providing additional resources towards downtown cleanliness and/or placemaking?

**I am open to considering how best to align our comprehensive budget to the unique needs of each neighborhood as they develop and encourage the ICDD to continue advocating and educating the council on these specific needs as we go through our budgeting process.**

7. Downtown Iowa City is the economic center of the City and a front door to the University of Iowa. In the current economic recovery climate, for many Downtown businesses, the margins are increasingly strained by limited labor, limited supply of space driving up property valuations and taxes, paying living wages, and competition. The retail industry in particular is facing difficult challenges and flat or decreasing revenues in recent years. How should the City best support local retailers?

**This is an incredibly difficult time for retailers. The efforts of the ICDD and its economic development partners to encourage local shopping and take it upon yourselves to become a delivery service for downtown retailers last holiday season has been invaluable. We can work to ensure that property taxes remain as competitive as possible and are open to other ideas to help the local retail industry compete in this larger move to online shopping that has become so prevalent.**

8. Are there City advocacy priorities at the State level that the ICDD can or should support? If so, what are they?

I’ve attached the city 2021 Legislative Priorities because the council hasn’t finalized our 2022 Priorities. I will be sure to make the ICDD aware when this topic is on council agenda. I will also reach out to Nancy Bird to learn of any suggestions for priorities and get the ICDD on any staff suggested priorities before the council meets to vote on these

items. I anticipate it will be on one of the following council formal meeting agenda's: November 16, 30th or December 14<sup>th</sup> .

I don't want to speculate what priorities will be for the city but, I have attached our 2021 priorities as a resource. Note that at the end of the city legislative priorities we state that the city support the legislative efforts of the Iowa League of Cities and The Metro Coalition.

The city is apart of the Iowa League of Cities and the Metro Coalition and I was in person this September and represented our city and voted in favor of the 2022 Legislative Priorities for both of these groups. Forgive me for only having the draft but, there wasn't substantive changes that I recall.

I would like to point out a few priorities from the Iowa Metro Coalition group that I'm certain is of interest to ICDD:

Metro Coalition:

- **Economic Development Tax Credit Programs:** The Metro Coalition sees these programs as ways to attract a workforce to Iowa and grow its population.
- **Protecting Local Control/Home Rule:** The Metropolitan Coalition believes tax increment financing (TIF) should remain as-is and is opposed to any changes.
- **Protecting Local Control/Home Rule** The Metro Coalition is opposed to banning the use of Automatic Traffic Enforcement Systems devices as these devices are extremely beneficial to ensure officer safety, as well as drivers' safety on roadways.
- **On Premise Alcohol Licensing:** The Alcohol Beverage Division shall work with local cities to better control nuisance establishments leaving the decision to remove a liquor license for the courts (as opposed to the ABD).

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Are there any other comments would you like to provide or suggestions for the ICDD?

**Current and future council members, I believe sees the ICDD as a fantastic partner. You have all been so good at educating and informing council of the needs of the district and positively advocate for your positions. I have been a listening ear to the district leaders, property owners, business owners, patrons, staff, residence, students and community members. While the council has not always meet every request, I appreciate the respectful and creative ways ICDD go about building our downtown every day. I would also like to share how impressed I am with the Executive Director Nancy Bird and our Nighttime Mayor Joe. We are blessed to have them because they really do ensure I've maintained a good understanding of the priorities of the ICDD.**

Thank you for your responses!