

2017 League of Women Voters/Bike BloNo Bloomington Candidate Questionnaire - Joni Painter (candidate for Ward 5)

1. U.S. Census figures show that more than 10,000 of Bloomington-Normal's 97,000 workers 16 years or older did not use a car as their primary mode of transportation to work from 2011 to 2015. Which of the following methods have you or a member of your immediate family regularly used in the last six months to get to work or school? *(select all that apply)*

Car, truck, or van	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> I do	Family member does
Public transportation	<input type="checkbox"/> I do	Family member does
Taxicab	<input type="checkbox"/> I do	Family member does
Motorcycle	<input type="checkbox"/> I do	Family member does
Bicycle	<input type="checkbox"/> I do	Family member does
Walked	<input type="checkbox"/> I do	Family member does
Other means	<input type="checkbox"/> I do	Family member does
Worked at home	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> I do	Family member does

Comments: My husband and I are both retired, so the only work I really do is volunteering and being an alderman.

2. Both Bloomington and Normal voted in 2016 to adopt Complete Streets policies. These policies instruct engineering staff to consider all modes of transportation (i.e., ensuring that pedestrians, cyclists, and transit users of all ages and abilities feel safe and comfortable using the facility) when reconstructing or resurfacing streets. Would you have voted/did you vote to adopt a Complete Streets policy?

- Yes
 No

Comments: Yes, I am a strong supporter of Complete Streets. I'm all for public safety, and Complete Streets has many innovative ideas for achieving this goal.

3. Both Bloomington and Normal voted in 2016 to send a portion of revenue from a 1-percentage point increase in the sales tax to Connect Transit. From both communities that new funding totals \$1 million, which allowed Connect Transit to begin offering service on Sundays. In FY 2016, Connect Transit provided more than 2.5 million rides to passengers and about 75,000 rides on paratransit service for people with special needs. Would you have voted/did you vote to fund Connect Transit?

Yes

No

Comments: I voted to send a portion of our sales tax revenue to Connect Transit because I am impressed with the improvements they have recently made and I encourage more and better transit service. I think we've been behind other communities in this regard for quite some time.

4. The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, in a report cited by the 2016 McLean County Community Health Needs Assessment, found that "Among other issues, use of cars contributes to low levels of physical activity in the US. In the last several decades car-reliance has increased. The percent of US workers driving to work rose from 64 to 88 percent from 1960 to 2000, while the share walking to work declined."

The report went on: "There is an increasing recognition of the need to focus on environmental factors—including the 'built environment'—that may help promote activity. The 'built environment' describes physical or man-made features such as sidewalks, bicycle trails, streetlights, traffic, safety from crime and parks that may promote or discourage activity."

In our community - and many others across the United States - the built environment took a dramatic shift starting in the 1960s away from compact, walkable, bikeable communities in favor of suburban sprawl. Do you think revitalizing our urban cores - specifically Downtown Bloomington and Uptown Normal - can help provide citizens with an option to live, work, and play in communities that enable healthy active transportation and recreation?

Yes

No

Comments: I think revitalizing our urban cores is necessary for several reasons. The 2.5 mile radius around Downtown Bloomington is losing \$343.00 per acre in net taxable fiscal impact, so from a financial point of view shoring up that area is necessary. As we move forward on this, it's important to consider all modes of transportation because we live in a rapidly changing world and the younger generation isn't nearly as auto-centric as their parents and grandparents were. As a member of the older generation, I realize I have neglected my health by relying too much on my automobile. Come spring, I promise to get on my bike and ride it more. I promise...

5. In addition to the impact of the built environment on public health, sprawl tends to cost municipalities more than compact development; each additional foot of roadway, sewer, water main, and other infrastructure to serve large properties costs the municipality more, typically without an increase in tax revenue large enough to account for that increase in infrastructure costs. Large properties also mean it takes longer to walk or bike places, leading more people to choose other modes more often. Do you think it's important, all else being equal, to promote investment in our urban cores instead of encouraging more suburban sprawl?

Yes

No

Comments: Yes, the Grove and Fox Creek both cost the taxpayers over \$450.00 in net taxable fiscal impact per acre. Although those areas aren't as large as our City core, the losses from those areas will take a lot longer to recover. They are residential and it will take decades of property taxes to make up the loss. The City core can be recovered more quickly through sales and entertainment taxes. Bloomington City Council has resolved to take care of the older parts of our community before allowing money to be spent expanding the outlying areas.

6. Bloomington's Public Works Department created an award-winning Sidewalk Master Plan, which was adopted by the City Council in October 2015. The plan outlines a few key investments to dramatically improve the walkability of the community, such as:

- \$7.4 million to make the entire network compliant with the 1990 Americans with Disabilities Act
- \$4.1 million to bring the most dangerous sidewalks up to a minimum pavement quality
- \$261,000 to fill in connectivity gaps in the sidewalk network, which are often very short segments that prevent people from walking at all or - even worse - end up in a collision because they walk in the street.

If elected, would you prioritize making all of these improvements over ten years, as the plan calls for?

Yes

No

Comments: I certainly would prioritize making these improvements over the next ten years. As a matter of fact, I pushed for filling a connectivity gap in my ward where people were forced to walk on the street when lots of snow was on the ground. That was completed last fall. I also requested that a section of sidewalk get repaired that had heaved up and cracked because of a parkway tree.

7. Streets are expensive. Bigger streets are more expensive. Standard engineering doctrine over the last several decades has encouraged engineers to build streets to accommodate “peak hour traffic” - essentially building roads that are big enough to move the most cars that might be seen at the busiest time of day, with almost zero delay. That’s why we’ve seen Towanda Barnes Road balloon from two lanes to five; 95% of the time, a two-lane road in this location would be perfectly sufficient, but engineering doctrine requires that they build it wide enough to eliminate congestion for the busiest few minutes a day - even though it more than doubles the cost.

Not every community does it this way. Policymakers are free to instruct their engineers to allow congestion at certain times of day if it’ll save money. These decisions allow communities to repair more streets with the same amount of money, and they usually end up creating safer, more vibrant communities. The drawback, of course, is that commuters may experience some amount of congestion.

As part of the discussion surrounding Complete Streets, proponents argued that policies promoting sustainable transportation could save the community money in the long run by allowing people the choice to commute by bike, transit, or on foot - reducing the number of cars on the street and the associated congestion.

If elected, would you instruct engineers to focus on eliminating congestion or building safer, smaller, more efficient streets?

- Eliminate congestion with bigger streets
- Allow peak-hour congestion so more streets can be repaired

Comments: I would focus on safer, smaller, more efficient streets. I’ve already done that. Hershey Rd. is a case in point. I have also come to realize that paradigm shifts such as this are often met with stiff resistance, even when public safety is the goal and saving taxpayer dollars is the result.