



Street Collective 2024 Des Moines City Council Candidate Survey

CANDIDATE INFORMATION

Name: Justyn Lewis

At-Large seat: Des Moines City Council At-Large

Pronouns: He/Him/His

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Walkability:

The current budget plan aims to fill 180 miles of existing sidewalk gaps by 2040. Do you believe this timeline adequately prioritizes pedestrian safety on key streets? If not, what strategies would you propose to expedite this process?

Answer: I believe there is room for more ambitious and expedited strategies to prioritize pedestrian safety on key streets. We can use a multi-faceted approach to reassess the current budget allocation to determine if additional funds can be allocated to fast-track sidewalk projects without compromising quality. Streamline bureaucratic processes and implementing more efficient permitting procedures can expedite construction timelines. I also see room for forming strategic partnerships with local communities, businesses, and non-profit organizations that can leverage resources and community engagement, ensuring a more rapid and collective effort to enhance pedestrian safety. By combining these approaches, we can work towards a more aggressive timeline that aligns with the urgency of prioritizing pedestrian safety on our key streets.

Public Transit:

Given the recent proposal by the City to allocate additional funding of 3.5 million in the next two years to aid DART, alongside the consideration of a 2.5% franchise fee for future transit expenses, what steps would you take to address DART's financial challenges and ensure its long-term? Do you support a fully funded franchise fee in conjunction with the general funds?

Answer: Addressing DART's financial challenges and making sure its long-term sustainability is important for the community's well-being. While I support additional funding for DART, the approach should be carefully considered. I would prioritize a comprehensive review of DART's budget to identify areas for efficiency and potential cost-saving measures that are equitable across the board. Collaborating with stakeholders, including city officials, DART leadership, and community representatives, is essential to understand the specific financial challenges and explore viable solutions. As for the proposed franchise fee, I would approach it differently. While it can be a potential revenue source, it should be implemented judiciously to avoid disproportionately burdening residents. I would advocate for a thorough analysis of the potential impact on businesses and residents, considering



alternative funding mechanisms and exploring a phased implementation if deemed necessary. The goal is to strike a balance between adequately funding DART for its operational needs and making sure that

the financial burden is distributed fairly across the community. Open communication, transparency, and a collaborative approach will be key to making informed decisions that benefit both DART and the residents it serves.

Transportation Spending Priorities:

There was significant interest at this week's budget hearings regarding increasing spending on building more sidewalks and implementing local traffic calming projects. How do you propose to capitalize on this momentum to enhance pedestrian safety and improve traffic conditions in our city? What specific strategies would you prioritize to ensure that these additional funds are effectively utilized to address the needs of our community?

Answer: To harness the momentum generated during this week's budget hearings for increased spending on sidewalks and traffic calming projects, I would propose a more comprehensive equitable approach. Community input and collaboration will be prioritized through town hall meetings and partnerships with local organizations. Data-driven approaches will guide our decisions, emphasizing high-risk areas and evidence-based solutions. We'll ensure an equitable distribution of resources, focusing on neighborhoods with historical infrastructure disparities. By integrating sidewalks and traffic calming measures into multi-modal transportation plans, we aim to create a more accessible city. Public awareness campaigns and educational initiatives will promote responsible behavior, while collaboration with local businesses aligns these projects with economic development goals. Regular evaluation and adjustments, based on real-time data and community feedback, will ensure continuous improvement in our efforts to enhance pedestrian safety and improve traffic conditions throughout the city.

Denser Development and Mixed-Use Areas:

Encouraging denser development and mixed-use areas can enhance community walkability. Do you support initiatives to repurpose car-oriented infrastructure, like surface parking lots, in favor of mixed-use and multi-family developments along major streets?

Answer: Yes. I strongly support initiatives to encourage denser development and the transformation of car-oriented infrastructure, such as surface parking lots. Repurposing these spaces in favor of mixed-use and multi-family developments along major streets is a key strategy to enhance community walkability and promote sustainable urban living. By prioritizing mixed-use areas, we can create vibrant, pedestrian-friendly neighborhoods that offer a mix of residential, commercial, and recreational spaces. This not only improves walkability but also contributes to a more dynamic and interconnected community. I would work collaboratively with stakeholders, including local businesses, residents, and urban planners, to identify suitable locations for repurposing car-oriented infrastructure and ensure that the process is inclusive and beneficial for the entire community.

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Safety Measures for Bicyclists:

To enhance bicyclist safety, do you endorse the installation of physical separators such as bollards, planters and curbs between street lanes and buffered bike lanes? How would you prioritize implementing such measures?

Answer: Yes, I do. Prioritizing the implementation of these measures is crucial. I would advocate for a comprehensive approach, starting with areas where high bicycle traffic and potential risks exist. Collaborating with community members, traffic safety experts, and city planners would be essential in identifying priority zones. I would work to ensure that neighborhoods with limited resources are not overlooked, striving for equitable distribution of these safety enhancements across the city. This approach aligns with our commitment to creating a safer and more sustainable urban environment for everyone.

Vision Zero:

Improving safety on our most hazardous roads may involve reallocating space and resources. Do you support redesigning our most dangerous roadways if this means eliminating some travel lanes and parking spaces for cars? For example, do you support the lane reductions and other traffic calming measures of Euclid Ave, Douglas Ave, and similar future similar projects?

Answer: I support the redesign and implementation of traffic calming measures on our most hazardous roads, even if it means reallocating space and resources. Enhancing safety and prioritizing alternative modes of transportation, such as walking and cycling, is crucial for creating a more inclusive and sustainable city.

For roads like Euclid Ave, Douglas Ave, and similar projects, I endorse measures such as lane reductions and other traffic calming initiatives. These adjustments not only contribute to increased safety for all road users but also promote a more walkable and bike-friendly urban environment. I would work collaboratively with traffic experts, community members, and relevant stakeholders to ensure that these changes are implemented thoughtfully and consider the diverse needs of our residents.

Personal Travel Habits

How do you typically commute to work? Describe your experience traveling in and around Des Moines and what you would do to improve it.

Answer: Prior to working from home due to COVID, I would ride my bike to work at least once per week (from NW Des Moines to the capital). As a small business owner of a professional landscaping company specializing in urban ecosystems, I embrace being outside, and traveling around Greater Des Moines to service the community. My experience traveling in and around Des Moines has provided valuable insights into the city's transportation challenges. To improve the commuting experience, I advocate for the expansion and enhancement of public transit services, ensuring they are efficient, affordable, and accessible to all residents. I also support the development of safe and connected bicycle lanes and pedestrian pathways, promoting alternative modes of transportation. By investing in comprehensive multimodal infrastructure, fostering community engagement, and prioritizing environmentally friendly options, I do believe we can create a more sustainable and inclusive transportation system for the benefit of all Des Moines residents.