

STREET collective

2021 City Council Candidate Questionnaire

INTRODUCTION

Just like in 2017 and 2019, the Street Collective wants to know where Des Moines City Council candidates stand on safe streets and active transportation issues. This questionnaire serves to educate and inform the Collective's members and the public. The Collective is an Iowa non-profit corporation and 501(c)(3) organization, so it does not endorse candidates for office. The Collective will, however, encourage all citizens to vote in the city elections held on November 2, 2021.

After the deadline below, the Collective will post these responses on its website (www.dsmstreetcollective.org), Facebook, Twitter, and other online platforms. All responses should be considered public, including a decision not to respond to a particular question or the questionnaire as a whole. We use the terms "walking" and "walkability" as inclusive of people who use mobility devices.

Thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire. Please submit your responses via email to Mike Armstrong at Mike@dsmstreetcollective.org by September 21, 2021.

CANDIDATE INFORMATION

Name: Josh Mandelbaum

Pronouns: He/Him

Ward or At-Large seat: Ward 3

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PRIORITIES

1. What are three transportation projects you want the City to complete during your term?
 - Full implementation of Connect Downtown
 - Increased funding to fill priority one sidewalk gaps quicker
 - Complete the University Avenue corridor redesign so there is consistency from 63rd St. into downtown
2. Scenario: a proposed street project would add a bike lane, a wider sidewalk, or a bus-only lane, but would remove some on-street parking spaces or a car traffic lane. How would you decide whether to support that project?

I would check what MoveDSM recommends for the street. I would review traffic counts as well. In many likely cases where additional bike, bus or sidewalk infrastructure would be proposed, the traffic lanes and parking are likely already overbuilt providing flexibility to repurpose the street to make it work better for everybody.

3. Scenario: a developer proposes a project with affordable housing, but there are no transit lines, grocery stores, or sidewalks nearby. How would you decide whether to support that project?

I would review DART and city plans to determine if transit, sidewalks and other amenities would be likely to come to the area in the near future. If those additional plans were in the works, then I would evaluate the timing and likelihood of those plans or alternatives. If there was no likelihood of connectivity for the project or alternatives proposed in conjunction with the project, I would oppose it.

4. Scenario: a proposed street project would deviate from the MoveDSM and/or Connect Downtown plans for that street. (Note: both were unanimously approved by the City Council and aim to make Des Moines more walkable and bike-friendly.) How would you decide whether to support that project?

A good example for how I would approach this would be the way that I addressed sidewalks on Fleur Drive. MoveDSM called for sidewalks on both sides of the street as part of our complete street policy. Sidewalks were initially left off the east side of the street. I opposed the sidewalks being left off, and I continued to work to get us to follow our MoveDSM. We ultimately took another vote and added the sidewalks back into the plan.

WALKING

5. What investments, if any, do you support that would make sidewalks and crosswalks easier and safer to use for people with disabilities?

I support implementing our complete streets policy. I have supported funding to fill priority one sidewalk gaps identified in MoveDSM. I support increased investment that will allow us to fill those sidewalk gaps faster. I also support traffic calming measures such as curb extensions/bumpouts that slow down traffic and make it easier for people to cross streets.

6. In 1969, about 50% of American children walked or biked to school. Today, less than 10% do. What should the City do to reverse this trend?

We should accelerate our investment in filling priority one sidewalk gaps so that every child has a safe walking route to school. We should also evaluate other street design changes on identified school walk routes to make those routes safer.

BICYCLING

7. Many cities have significant public funding for bike share programs. Do you support increased City funding for the BCycle system? Why or why not?

I support increased funding for BCycle. BCycle is an important way to make our community more accessible for residents and visitors. It's also an important strategy for making our community more sustainable and reducing vehicle trips. It's critical that we have a robust BCycle program if we are to be a multimodal community.

8. Imagine a 10-year old and a 70-year old bicycling on a busy street. What kinds of infrastructure protections would you want in place to ensure their safety and comfort? If there are budget constraints for a street like the one you described, at what point do finances rise above safety concerns for you?

We need bike infrastructure that connects our entire city. Protected bike lanes work best for riders that need the most protection. In some cases, there may not be enough right of way for a protected lane, but there is still enough space for a bike lane. In some cases, a trail width shared path is a reasonable solution (e.g. University between 56th and 48th). We should be making these investments as we reconstruct streets.

TRANSIT

9. How can the City help DART improve its bus system and attract more riders?

One of the most important things the city can do is encourage development that considers transit. On our major transit corridors, we should be encouraging density and access to housing, jobs, services, and amenities so that someone has everything they need on our transit corridors.

While I have served on the DART Commission, DART has been proactively tackling major issues for our transit system. The Transit Optimization Study currently underway is looking to provide improved service and efficiencies as well as chart a course for what expanded service would like (where increased frequency is needed, where new routes make the most sense, etc.). Implementation of the transit optimization study will be an important for improving transit service over the long run and increasing ridership.

Finally, as long as DART relies solely on property taxes for funding, our system will be limited and unable to respond to the need in the community. We need to work to identify alternative funding sources for DART and to get those options authorized.

10. We consistently see DART stops blocked by snow and unreachable by sidewalks. How can the City address this?

One step that the city can take is to fill in the priority one sidewalk gaps which include gaps to access DART stops. For high traffic stops, we are working with DART to add shelters. When DART adds a shelter, DART removes snow and helps maintain access to the shelter. For the next tier of stops, adding paved waiting platforms in the parkway strip in place of grass will facilitate clearing those stops.

EQUITY

11. What should the role of the police be in traffic enforcement? What is the best way to hold drivers accountable for speeding, blocking bike lanes and crosswalks, failing to stop or yield, etc.?

Speed and traffic cameras are an important way to effectively enforce traffic laws, particularly in high traffic areas where violations are common. I support additional camera enforcement. The mobile traffic cameras have been an effective tool in addressing neighborhood speeding issues and think we should continue to use and rotate mobile speed cameras. For areas where we have ongoing parking enforcement, we should also be enforcing vehicles blocking bike lanes and crosswalks.

12. Much of Des Moines is zoned for low-density uses like detached single-family homes and commercial properties that require many car parking spaces. What impacts, if any, does this have on the transportation system? What policies, if any, do you support to combat those impacts?

Low density development pushes people towards cars and separates where people live from where they work, shop, and recreate. It is significantly more difficult to create a transit system that works in a low-density area.

We should be encouraging density along our transit corridors. We have already made some changes along those lines in our zoning code to allow for greater density by right in existing transit corridors, but we should be looking at additional changes to encourage density. We should also expand areas where accessory dwelling units are allowed and eliminate parking minimums within a quarter of a mile of a transit route.

13. Neighborhoods where fewer people can afford a car (i.e., those that are poorer and have a higher proportion of people of color) are also those lacking good transit, safe walking and biking, and quality streetscapes (e.g., trees, benches, trash cans, public art, etc.). How would you address these inequities?

There are a lot of different strategies that we need to implement to effectively reduce transportation inequalities.

We know that one of the things that we can do to address these inequalities is provide increased funding to fill in our sidewalk gaps. One of the reasons to fill the gaps faster is because it will make our community more equitable.

Another step we can take is continued emphasis on making our corridors safer and more accessible. The 6th Avenue corridor is a good example of what this work can look like. We have made that a safer corridor while enhancing the corridor with streetscape and art shelters. This has also led to some important development proposals along that corridor. We should be replicating that model.

We also need to implement our Urban Forest Master Plan, which calls for significantly increasing the number of street trees that the city plants. Again, we know that by implementing this program, we will reduce inequalities throughout the city because areas in our community that have the greatest gap in the tree canopy are poorer and disproportionately people of color.

I am also engaged in DART's transit optimization study. That study should address areas of need and where increased frequency and/or new routes would have a significant impact on access to transportation in our community. I will work to implement the results of DART's transit optimization study.

14. The largest source of climate change-causing greenhouse gases in America is from transportation. What role should the City have in cutting these pollutants?

The city has a critical role in addressing transportation pollution. The city is developing a comprehensive climate action plan, and transportation must be a major part of that plan. The city has a role in supporting clean vehicles, which includes transitioning city vehicles to electric vehicles and building out a charging infrastructure. However, a comprehensive approach to reducing greenhouse gas emissions in the transportation sector needs to look at how to

reduce vehicle trips and that necessarily includes strategies to make the community more walkable, bikeable and transit accessible. It includes developing the city in a way where it is possible for more people to get to work, shop for groceries, go to the doctor, and go out to dinner without a car. It includes greater support for filling sidewalk gaps, creating safe bike infrastructure, and programs like BCycle.

YOU PERSONALLY

15. How often do you walk, ride a bike, or ride transit for your daily needs? Would you accept the Street Collective's challenge to live without driving for a week?

I walk regularly for things like coffee, going out to eat, and going to a bar. I keep a bike in my office downtown and will frequently walk/bike to meetings and appointments in the downtown area.

I would accept a Street Collective challenge to live without driving for a week. In late 2019, I went without my car for two weeks while it was being repaired and relied on transit/walking for my transportation.

16. What is your favorite street to walk or bike on in Des Moines? Why do you like it?

My favorite street to walk on in Des Moines is Ingersoll. We chose to live near Ingersoll specifically because we would be able to walk to so many different destinations. It is great to be able to walk to a coffee shop, dinner, a drink or desert depending on what you want or need. It's only a couple of blocks from Chamberlain Park. We can also do some basic errands such as stopping by the bank or going to the grocery store walking along Ingersoll. We can walk to the bus, and Ingersoll happens to be served by DART's electric buses that are cleaner and quieter, which is another benefit of the corridor.