

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: Brandi Webber

Pronouns: She/Her/Hers Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/BrandiCityCouncil>

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PRIORITIES

1. What are three transportation projects you want the City to complete during your term?
 - 1.) I would like to see the city help make all of the DART bus stops accessible. If we can find \$42 million for a parking garage we can find money for accessibility updates. With that amount of money we could have invested \$24,575 in each stop to make them accessible. There would be enough to add solar panels to well positioned stops that could generate electricity for the city.
 - 2.) I want to make sure that all city vehicles are switched to electric vehicles and other environmentally friendly options. Prioritizing those that have the highest usage.
 - 3.) I want our bike lanes better protected / kept up throughout the year.
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?
 - a. I think the best way to decide on whether to support any project is to go to that area and ask the residents who live in the neighborhood since they will be the ones most affected by the project. My initial thoughts going in would be that bus /bike only lanes and wide sidewalks are very environmentally friendly and promote pedestrian activity. To me, that means they should be prioritized over a car lane / parking.
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?
 - a. Again, I'll say the best way to decide on whether this project is right / beneficial to the area would be to ask those in the neighborhood. More affordable housing is never a bad thing, but making sure that housing is accessible and close to fresh food sources is of utmost importance. I would say in this case I would advocate for the city to provide accessibility updates (prioritizing that area for sidewalks, transit lines, city bikes, etc.) to that area and incentivize locals to start community gardens and community fridges in the area to ensure that we are doing everything we can to provide safe, affordable, and accessible housing.

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. Our city council has a history of passing things that are not necessarily in the best interest of the City of Des Moines or its residents. I think canvassing the street to see what the businesses / residents of that area think of the current plan and the proposed updates. I am not one to blindly follow a plan if it isn't in the best interest of the people.

WALKING

5. What investments, if any, do you support that would make sidewalks and crosswalks easier and safer to use for people with disabilities?
 - a. We definitely need to invest in accessibility updates to DART bus stops. Many of them are wildly inaccessible and dangerous and a lot of that has to do with the sidewalks / curbs they are placed along.
 - b. We need to prioritize sidewalk accessibility updates in communities that are historically poorer
 - c. Our crosswalks could be improved by investing in curb ramps, tactical warnings before you enter the street, and audio confirmation that it is / isn't time to cross.
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?
 - a. Support a program that provides children supervision while walking / biking home. I know many parents in today's world are very hesitant to send their children off by themselves due to safety concerns.

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?
 - a. Yes! More funding for bike share programs and incentive programs for residents who participate. I think we could go even further and allow certain city jobs the opportunity to ride a bike instead of driving a city car. Meter Police, Patrol Officers, etc.
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?

- a. I have noticed that many of the “bike” lanes around the southside of Des Moines have not been kept up. So, for starters, We need to make sure that we are diligent on the upkeep of the lanes we have. Additionally, Bike lanes could benefit from a small curb bumper or flex posts to better protect bikers. This won’t work everywhere but we can use where it is applicable. In other instances a one way protected bike lane would be appropriate.

TRANSIT

9. How can the City help DART improve its bus system and attract more riders?
 - a. Firstly we could fund accessibility updates and year round up-keep at each stop and the sidewalks leading up to the stops. People can’t ride the bus if they can’t get to the bus stop.
10. We consistently see DART stops blocked by snow and unreachable by sidewalks. How can the City address this?
 - a. This is a priority issue. The city thinks this is DART’s problem, and they are wrong. It is the city’s job to provide proper infrastructure and up-keep. That includes snow and ice removal. That includes accessible sidewalks that lead to bus stops. The money is there to make this happen, our city council’s priorities aren’t.

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.?
 - a. The police should not be involved in traffic enforcement at all. I would support an agency or department outside of the DMPD that would be in charge of monitoring traffic. Their professional capacity would be limited to stopping vehicles for traffic law violations and issuing tickets. They would not have the authority to search, arrest, or detain and would not have the ability to run criminal background checks. They would not be equipped with weapons of any kind but would be trained in verbal de-escalation, violence avoidance, and self-defence. You can hold everyone accountable while also protecting our BIPOC residents who are often stereotyped, profiled, and brutalized by police during traffic stops.
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?

- a. This has a huge impact on the transportation system. The streets become congested with drivers and parked cars. Detached single family homes don't promote or encourage walking, biking, or other pedestrian activities.
 - b. I would support removing exclusionary zoning practices from the city zoning code. I would advocate that the city focus on utilizing inclusionary zoning practices that promote high density residential properties which in turn promotes walking, biking, and other pedestrian activity.
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?
- a. Again, this is a priority issue. Historically, our city council has not prioritized our poorer neighborhoods. This includes accessibility updates and transportation. They passed their sidewalk initiative and then unanimously voted to defund most of it - this disproportionately affected the Disabled, BIPOC, and poorer communities in Des Moines.
 - b. As a council member I would address these inequalities by advocating for those neighborhoods and keeping those communities at the forefront of the conversation. We need to center the voices and communities that have been ignored and abused by our classist, racist system in every conversation the city has and every decision the city makes if we expect to achieve equity.
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?
- a. The city should be at the forefront of the climate crisis. Every single decision the city makes should be taking into account the impact it will have on the environment. In regards to transportation, that is something the city council has direct control over. If we prioritized this project, we could make a huge impact on Des Moines' environmental footprint.

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?
- a. I walk to/from picking my daughter up from school on nice days. I walk when I go door knocking. (I might drive to the neighborhood if it is far away but I walk once I get there.) My local grocery store is within walking distance and on nice days, if my list is short, my kids and I will walk. We also walk to the library every time we go! It is about a 3 mile round trip but we are always up for a trip to the library.
 - b. I haven't been able to bike much, but would love to get back into it.

- c. I have definitely gone a week without driving and would have no problem doing it again. That sounds like a fun challenge to try once a month!
16. What is your favorite street to walk or bike on in Des Moines? Why do you like it?
- a. I love walking on SW 14th street. It's the sidewalk we take to my daughter's school, and it leads us most of the way to the southside library.