



## Livable Neighborhoods, Inc.

www.livable-neighborhoods.org

To improve and promote the livability  
of all neighborhoods in the La Crosse area

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### 2013 La Crosse Mayor/Council Candidate Survey

Livable Neighborhoods is a non-profit citizens group established in 1996. Our purpose is to improve and promote the livability of all neighborhoods in the La Crosse area. As part of our mission we encourage citizens to research and discuss important issues facing our community. Certainly one of the most important of those issues is who we should choose to represent us in local government.

The following questions have been developed to help La Crosse residents learn more about the candidates for Mayor and city council prior to the spring election. We are inviting each candidate to answer these questions with a 3- to 5-sentence response. The responses of all candidates will be collated and made available at <http://livable-neighborhoods.org> and in the local media. Your answers will be quoted without summary, editing or editorializing.

Please complete the survey by typing in your best answers to the highlighted questions in the row below. As you type, the row will expand, so you should not need to do any formatting. Or if you prefer, you may hand write your answers (please number) on a separate piece(s) of paper. Your response will be posted online and shared with the media exactly as you return it.

Please return your survey by Monday, March 18 to [president@livable-neighborhoods.org](mailto:president@livable-neighborhoods.org). Or you may mail it to **Charley Weeth**, 122 17<sup>th</sup> St S, La Crosse, WI 54601-4208.

Questions? Please contact **Charley Weeth** at 784-3212 or **Charles Clemence** at 738-1736 or [vp@livable-neighborhoods.org](mailto:vp@livable-neighborhoods.org).

Thank you for your willingness to serve. And good luck in the upcoming elections.

Name: \_\_Nic Breidel\_\_\_\_\_

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Candidate for Mayor       Candidate for Council       Council District Number   3  

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## Questions

1. Political experience is helpful in governing a city, but effective leadership skills may be gained in many different ways. Please list the work, business, civic, or charitable experience that best demonstrates your ability to manage city operations

I have gained the needed leadership skills from many sources, professionally I have project management experience, supervisor experience, and divisional management experience. Through these positions I have learned to successfully lead a team you have to be able to really listen and get a full understanding of the situation before making a decision. Also as a father of 3 I have learned to lead by example, what I say is far less important than what I do. In my personal time I have coached many sports for the local young men, and have learned working with them that you have to build a relationship with them and show you care if you want to get their respect. With the combined experiences I have learned from these experience I know I am the right candidate to be able to step in to the council and earn their respect and be a productive member of the council.

2. The City of La Crosse is facing budgetary problems stemming from increasing costs and stable or decreasing revenue. Assume the city is facing a situation where budgeted expenses are expected to exceed revenue by a significant amount. How would you address this shortfall?

Though the question is very simplistic the answer is extremely involved and multi-faceted. The first step is doing a deep-dive on the budget. Often there are efficiencies that may have been over looked or creative solutions to departmental needs that can cut some from the budget, in a way that makes sense and doesn't leave the city vulnerable. At the same time you have to look at you revenue, both at what is due and what is being paid. First step is going after the past due debt, uncollected fines and the like. If there is still a negative revenue situation then you need to examine the budget again. Look at our most significant expenses and who is utilizing these services, are all the people using the services paying their fair share? If not why, and how do we rectify. For example if our services are being heavily utilized by nonresidents is the county or surrounding cities assisting, are they willing to, or how do we regulate that they do?

3. What do you feel are the greatest problems facing La Crosse neighborhoods? How should the City focus its revitalization resources? Specifically, please discuss and rate the importance of the following factors:

Tax mill rates. We need to bring the value of our housing stock up while controlling our budget to get the mill rate in line with other cities. If we can raise the value of our housing stock proportionately throughout the neighborhoods tax rates can remain flat while mill rate reduces, making our neighborhoods more desirable to invest in our city.

- Aging and dilapidated housing stock.

This is a huge concern, as the housing stock ages and gets run down the values decrease. Our budget and cost to run the cities remain flat at best, this raises our mill rate, and makes building or renovating in our city undesirable as the taxes will be significantly higher than surrounding cities.

- Attracting middle class residents to La Crosse neighborhoods.

This is also very important and is key in turning our city around, as the middle class moves back in and renovates and builds new houses it raises the value of our homes and helps control mill rate, this can create the snow ball effect as more new homes are built, the lower the mill rate the more economical it becomes to build here and more people invest in La Crosse. Which continues the cycle. This starts with families willing to invest in our communities, tearing down dilapidated houses and building new houses and showing commitment to our city. Which both my family and district 2 candidate Scott Neumieister have done.

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Developing job and business opportunities for residents.</li> </ul>
<p>This is of course also important, but sometimes I believe it becomes the sole focus of development to our detriment. We must have jobs to have a strong economy, however having jobs in La Crosse doesn't exactly equate to those employees living and investing in La Crosse.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Neighborhood institutions (parks, schools, libraries, civic organizations, etc.).</li> </ul>
<p>This is the first step to revitalizing the neighborhood, if you give kids a safe place to play and parents a place to take their kids without fear, you will start to attract families to your neighborhood, but you have to have good homes with affordable taxes to get them to actually move in.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Licensing landlords, limiting the conversion of owner occupied homes to rentals, etc.</li> </ul>
<p>Rental properties are vital to the success of the city with as many transient students we have we need to have quality housing to accommodate. However making sure these places are not a deterrent to our neighborhood is very important and regulations need to be enforced. I think we have the necessary regulations, just need to be a bit more faithful in enforcing them. As far as converted more homes to rentals, we need to make sure we have adequate rental options for our students, but the neighborhoods belong to those that live their long term. I would need to see some serious data to support changing more houses to rentals.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Please sum up your approach to stabilizing and improving La Crosse's neighborhoods.</li> </ul>
<p>We have started the first step with the new school coming to the North Side, and are on the right track looking at redoing Red Cloud park. We are giving middle class families with young children a reason to look at the North Side, now we need to give them options in quality housing that they won't be taxed out of.</p>
<p>4. La Crosse is blessed with a unique and varied natural environment. While this is a great benefit, it can also pose challenges to expanding the tax base.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Should the city strictly apply its development standards within three miles of its border as allowed by law and laid out in the comprehensive plan?</li> </ul>
<p>I think we are in a position we need to look at the possibility and feasibility or expanding our current plans.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Should the City create development strategies or growth plans for surrounding towns?</li> </ul>
<p>Yes, surrounding cities and their residents rely on our city and use our facilities regularly, we need to find ways to work together to strengthen our entire community.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Should the City consider extending sewer or water services without requiring annexation?</li> </ul>
<p>Consider, yes. But would have to have some serious benefits in exchange to warrant it.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do you support continued funding of the bluffland acquisition program?</li> </ul>
<p>I do our natural resources are extremely vital to our city and are a must to be preserved. But at what level we can continue would need to be determined by the budget.</p>
<p>5. The north-south corridor remains part of the La Crosse Area Planning Commission and the Department of Transportation's long-range transportation plan for the La Crosse area. This despite the 1998 referendum turning down the 5B-1 proposal.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do you believe there is a need for new north-south road through the city of La Crosse?</li> </ul>
<p>I believe transportation needs to be looked at urgently. If we want to grow the tax base we need to have a better transportation solution. However getting more cars through the city will not help our parking issues in many parts of the city. We need to look at a comprehensive plan that will allow for</p>

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less traffic and better parking options.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Do you believe other projects, such as the proposed extension of 12th Avenue S in Onalaska to State Hwy 16 or the proposed traffic roundabout at 7th &amp; Cass, should be developed as alternatives to a new corridor?</li> </ul>
I don't think there is one solution that will fix it all, it is finding the right combination of solutions, to make this city's traffic smother. Expanded mass transit, expanding existing roads the extension listed above could certainly play a role.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Do you believe the city should pursue measures to curb use of single occupancy vehicles as alternatives to a new road? For example, regulation of neighborhood parking, special fees and assessments for parking, and encouraging alternatives (walking, biking, car pools, mass transit etc.).</li> </ul>
I think it is great to encourage these practices, but am not for special fees for residents to park. I would like to explore parking passes in some areas for non-residents. Again this goes back to having those who use our city pay their fair share. Many of highest wage earners working in La Crosse live in surrounding cities, yet share the same advantages while in our city as the ones funding it. I am for sharing the load with all that utilize this great city.
6. How would you promote the safety of pedestrians and bicyclists throughout the City?
As a cyclist, I would really like to see more bike lanes.
7. Recently La Crosse has seen a disturbing increase of accidental deaths and other serious problems related to alcohol abuse. What do you think the city's role is in stopping and reversing this trend?
Educating people of the effect of energy drinks and alcohol.
8. There has also been a recent series of violent deaths, assaults, and drug related crimes in the city. Does La Crosse have a problem with the growth of serious crime? What measures would you take to improve public safety in this area?
Yes, we definitely do. I think getting our officers out of the squad cars and walking our neighborhoods is a great start. It gets them more plugged in to what is going on in the neighborhood. This also is a great deterrent for criminals, as they don't tend to stay where officers are walking around.
9. Historic preservation has become a popular method for neighborhood revitalization in La Crosse. The city currently has several historic districts and dozens of designated properties. However, all requests to demolish historic buildings have been approved by the city council.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Should the historic status of a building have an impact on whether it is demolished?</li> </ul>
Yes it should definitely weigh in on the decision.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What criteria should the city use to evaluate the impact of a development on historic properties?</li> </ul>
You have to look at what you are losing knowing it can never be replaced. Do a cost benefit analysis on the merits of the proposed action.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Should the city provide funding and/or technical help for property owners to maintain and renovate historic buildings?</li> </ul>
Ideally yes, but not at the cost of running core functions of the city
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Should the city's ordinance be changed to give the Heritage Preservation Commission more than just advisory authority over designated properties?</li> </ul>
No, I think the purse strings should be controlled by the citizens of the city through their elected officials.
10. Do you think the City has assisted or thwarted attempts at regional cooperation? What direction would you give department heads to encourage such cooperation?
Both, I would like to see department heads collaborate with other regions, I have no doubt this is where we can find many more efficiencies to help reduce our budget.

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11. Public opinion polls show that most people want to cut the size and cost of government, but there is no consensus on where to cut and how much. What is your approach to spending and taxes? Would your goal be to decrease taxes, hold them steady, or allow for some increase?

Of course I would love to cut taxes and control spending.

12. A large part of the cost for providing city services is currently borne by property taxpayers. The city has the ability under state statutes to establish utility districts and user fees so all property owners pay for the services provided and received.

- Would you support creation of a utility for fire protection? A fire protection utility would charge to all property owners based on the level of fire protection needed.

Not at this time, I would like to explore our budget and other options prior to considering this.

- Should the city look to fees and fines as a source of revenue or as a cost recovery device only?

I would go to cost recovery before I would be for fees as a source of revenue.

- Currently there is a controversial plan to raise fees relating for all types of city services. Do you think current fees are adequate or should they be raised?

I would not like to raise the fees at all.

13. La Crosse voters soundly defeated a proposal to hire a city administrator. However we are in a shrinking group of cities without professional administrative expertise. Do you think the referendum settled the issue of a city administrator or should the discussion continue?

I think this is clearly settled.

14. The Joint City-County Housing Task Force identified a number of actions aimed at that it felt would help the revitalize neighborhoods and expand the tax base. The number one recommendation was "Better education and enforcement of existing codes and standards". Do you agree? If so, how what changes would you suggest be made at City Hall?

Yes, I am a part of the Neighborhood Revitalization Committee and have been involved with these discussions for the last couple years. I think the NRC and others are doing a great job at bring awareness and really my focus would be to continue on the track we have set. Push to increase some of the paint and fix up programs, and continue to work on some creative ways to reward those who do improve their properties. While the city improves parks and helps get revenue flow in positive.

15. Finally, what do you want voters to know that haven't been brought out by our questions? What experience, ideas, qualities, etc. do you have that make you the better choice?

I think it is culmination of my experience and commitment to our neighborhood that makes me the correct choice. My mother grew up just a few blocks away from here, I grew up six blocks away and now my children are growing up here. My family is tied to this area and genuinely care about it. I have been active in our community since 2007 and have been working to revitalize this city since 2008. Most important I have a career, my aspirations aren't to be in politics this isn't a stepping stone for me, I just want to help rebuild our neighborhood.