



Livable Neighborhoods, Inc.

www.livable-neighborhoods.org

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

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. Or you may mail it to **Charley Weeth**, 122 17th 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.

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

Name: _____ David Krump _____

Address: _____ 120 11th N. _____

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Candidate for Mayor Candidate for Council Council District Number 6

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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 spent the majority of my career working in the nonprofit sector. I've served as Executive Arts Administrator for the Pump House Regional Arts Center, Business Manager for the Preservation Alliance of La Crosse, an adjunct instructor at Viterbo University, and have recently accepted the Executive Director position at TriQuest Charities.

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?

In my experience, budgeting is a precise and context oriented process, so the council would need to know the sum of a shortfall, the length of the budget shortfall, and the direct causes of the budget shortfall before proposing solutions to maintain a functioning local government. All shortfall scenarios are not equal and neither are the wisest solutions.

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:

The factors listed below are not independent factors, and so I will not rank them in order of importance. If we addressed one of the factors, but neglected the others, then any ranking I assigned would just need to be reassigned. Our neighborhoods face systemic concerns that are mutually linked in importance.

For example, using the factors you've provided below, one could make the argument that "Because our housing stock is aging, we face difficulties attracting middle class residents, although by creating job and business opportunities for people, combined with healthy neighborhood institutions, and by limiting the conversion of owner occupied homes to rentals we might reverse this trend." That's not necessarily how I see it, but here I'm making the point that only shortsighted government sees only one issue and reaches to fix it without concomitantly addressing the other issues that impact successful outcomes for our neighborhoods and residents.

A city, a neighborhood, a community—success depends upon unified visions that take in the breadth and depth of each issue and address all factors—and some you haven't listed here—in order to reach a common goal.

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I've been knocking the doors in my district since December, and I can assure you that dilapidated housing stock and neighborhood deterioration (including safety and structure) ranked among the top three concerns I heard after speaking with more than 100 of my neighbors. Right now, La Crosse faces lack of demand for housing. We are in competition with our neighboring communities who are drawing away potential homeowners from our city.

We need to highlight the benefits to becoming part of our community, to living here rather than elsewhere, rather than "nearby." What we're experiencing has been faced by hundreds of cities: the flight to the suburbs. The good news is that this movement usually reverses, with more folks looking to cities and proximity to downtown and job as a more appealing and intelligent option than lengthy commutes. We have a lot of work to do, including marketing and selling homebuyers on La Crosse. Right now, it's a treasure that's overlooked and most people aren't doing the math when they opt live in a nearby community and commute to work in La Crosse. We can help folks see the entire equation, but we must address our neighborhoods.

- Aging and dilapidated housing stock.

- Attracting middle class residents to La Crosse neighborhoods.

- Developing job and business opportunities for residents.

- Neighborhood institutions (parks, schools, libraries, civic organizations, etc.).

- Licensing landlords, limiting the conversion of owner occupied homes to rentals, etc.

- Please sum up your approach to stabilizing and improving La Crosse's neighborhoods.

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.

- 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?

I would need more information on this to answer more fully, but if we have a comprehensive plan, and we have standards, it would seem that not applying them, without good reason for exemption, might be foolish.

- Should the City create development strategies or growth plans for surrounding towns?

Confusing question. Are you asking if we should help surrounding towns develop their own plans or if we, as a city, should make plans to develop or annex other towns?

- Should the City consider extending sewer or water services without requiring annexation?

La Crosse, while an independent city, is also the seat of the county. I would need to see details on who

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carries the financial responsibility for extending, maintaining, and operating these lines before making a determination. As this question stands now, and with the caveat that I do not have enough information, I would not be in favor of our residents shouldering the funding of services to residents outside our city.

- Do you support continued funding of the bluffland acquisition program?

Yes.

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.

- Do you believe there is a need for new north-south road through the city of La Crosse?

I believe that expediting commuters out of our city is not in the best interest of the city at this point in time. No one in my district favors the corridor. Literally no one who I have spoken with favors a new corridor. Because of this, and for many other reasons, I am opposed to a new north-south corridor.

- 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 & Cass, should be developed as alternatives to a new corridor?

Alternatives. Options. New ideas. Yes. Voters rejected the corridor then and they oppose it now. There are very sound reasons for seeking other solutions.

- 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.).

Parking is a delicate issue. While homeowners might view increased parking regulations as motivating folks to use public transit or lessening the on street parking crowding, many students see the parking situation as painfully ridiculous. La Crosse suffers enough from brain drain (bright students leaving for other cities) without providing them with four years of paying parking tickets as motivation to move elsewhere. Parking is rough, for thousands of students here.

Single occupancy vehicles. That's 90 percent of the traffic I see at 8 am and 5 pm, north-south and east-west. I would be interested in what measures you might have in mind. A car pool lane? I think it comes down to incentives. We can't fee and fine our way to others behaving smartly.

6. How would you promote the safety of pedestrians and bicyclists throughout the City?

Expand and color the biking lanes significantly. The Sharrows (the bike lane chevrons) are already fading and were never bright enough to provide constant driver awareness to the rights and presence of cyclists. The time to address this is before we need to begin compiling data on cyclist fatalities in our city.

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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?

This is the question. How can the city save human lives without imposing Draconian laws? My answer would be an equivocal and detailed 5,000 word essay on the matter, but I am reluctant to make a reader endure such an essay and I am cautious to summarize very complicated and conflicting arguments on this matter within a candidate questionnaire.

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?

Looking at this year's budget, the department will be operating with 61 patrol officers, 7 investigators, and 4 detectives. 61 patrol officers might appear a large number, but not when we consider that the department is functioning 24 hours per day every day of the year. Spread that number around to cover shifts and we'll have between 15 and 19 patrol officers on duty at any time, in a city with 50,000 residents (and roughly 15,000 students). That's 15-19 patrol officers charged with protecting 65,000 people (give or take duplication of students as residents within the census data).

We need to encourage our chief as he works to implement a policing strategy that is specific to the crimes we're facing. And to be honest in our understanding of our public safety, we must acknowledge that this issue is systemic and any accurate portrayal of it must include our courts and rehabilitation programs and incarceration effectiveness and recidivism rates.

I applaud the great and incredibly timely work our police department has accomplished over the past year, but we need to be honest with ourselves about the work the police department can accomplish and the work that we need to do as neighborhoods, as communities, as a city of residents. The police are doing their jobs. What are we willing to do? What is the role of city council and residents in public safety?

Crime doesn't happen in a vacuum. It happens in our neighborhoods. Everything is on the table in terms of improving our neighborhoods.

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.

- Should the historic status of a building have an impact on whether it is demolished?

Yes. When we destroy our history, we lose as a city. The old Post Office was razed before I was born. I've only known it through photographs, and its demise is upsetting

- What criteria should the city use to evaluate the impact of a development on historic properties?

Extensive criteria that take into account the property owner's rights, the historic value of the property, and potential negative and positive impact within our city.

- Should the city provide funding and/or technical help for property owners to maintain and renovate historic buildings?

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This question is too broad. How much funding? Are we discussing writing checks or reducing tax burdens? Technical help is broad too. Are we talking about salaried engineers and architects working on private property or are we discussing a free seminar on weatherproofing?

- Should the city's ordinance be changed to give the Heritage Preservation Commission more than just advisory authority over designated properties?

Is the Heritage Preservation Commission actively seeking more authority and to what extent would their ideal authority reach? An advisory role is an important role, so long as the advisors' opinions are weighed carefully and the proper individuals ask appropriate questions and provide strong, and expert, opinion.

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?

I would like to see more cooperation between the neighboring cities and levels of government to reduce duplication of services and increase efficient service to our citizens.

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?

There is no consensus on where to cut and how much to cut because the notion of "cutting the size and cost of government" is easily appealing because it doesn't actually demand a method. It's an abstract ideal that meets concrete realities whenever someone proposes achieving it.

It's like asking a teenage boy if he wants a kiss from a supermodel. He sure does, but no one will tell him how to get that kiss without getting a black eye. We need concrete solutions and understandings of reality and the actual costs and enormous benefits of living in a society.

Depending on the reason for doing so and its over all ROI to our city, I would like to decrease taxes, hold them steady, and allow for some increase.

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.

This sounds problematic in many ways and looks like a hill covered in butter, by which I mean... a slippery slope.

I would need far more information before answering this question. What is the impact on homeowners? On business owners? On Fire Department funding? On property taxes and home insurance cost based on the increase/decrease in coverage?

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Does a large house pay more and a small house pay less? Would an all brick house with no flammable contents pay nothing at all?

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

The voters I'm speaking with are notably concerned about fees. On the one hand, everyone is discussing neighborhood and property improvement. On the other hand, the city is handing out fees like a favorite grandmother hands out Halloween candy.

- 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?

Need more information.

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?

The referendum was nonbinding. I expect the discussion will continue. As I see it, the debate leading up to the referendum veered far afield from whether or not La Crosse would benefit from a professional administrator and became a referendum on whether or not to usurp authority from the office of the mayor. Many voters in my district support an administrator, though inevitably others do not. I would like to see the issue brought forth without divisive tensions, and sans the language concerning the mayor's salary which conflated having an administrator with lessening the citizen voice in leadership. What would the city gain and at what expense to taxpayers? What is the authority of the administrator in relation to the elected mayor? Those were questions that voters wanted to know answers to before agreeing to an administrator. T

he issue was clouded when first introduced by the cut to the mayoral salary, and the referendum's results were further clouded because the vote took place on the date of a partisan presidential primary. We can do better than cloudy issues and partisan voting dates for important local matters.

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?

Agree. Task the responsible departments with enforcing the codes that we have. Once this has been accomplished we may gauge the metric of the current codes before blindly moving forward to create more codes we won't actively enforce.

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?

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I'm hesitant to compare myself to my opponent because I do not know her and any comparison would be inherently biased. My experience is myriad and my level of achievement for a person my age is rare in any city. I hold national fellowships and have received significant awards for my work as a writer, thinker, and editor. I'm offering to serve this city and I'm proving my dedication to that offer by knocking doors and meeting voters and making their priorities my priorities.