



# 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](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: \_\_\_\_\_ Andrea Richmond \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_ 1312 Cunningham St. La Crosse, WI 54603 \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ 781-4174 \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_ richmonda@cityoflacrosse.org \_\_\_\_\_

Candidate for Mayor  Candidate for Council  Council District Number   1

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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 served as City Council member since 1989 representing my district and as County Board Supervisor since 2002. My background includes 27 years in a management position at La Crosse Footwear. I also served on the Boys & Girl Club Board of Directors and United Way and Harry J. Olson Senior Center Board.

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?

We should not be facing a shortfall. We need to control unnecessary spending, we currently have over 19 million in our Surplus fund and this increases over 1.2 million a year. I currently serve on the committee that is looking into hiring of an consultant to look at the efficiencies of all departments at City Hall.

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:

I believe the city should help the aging stock and this is a priority but we must make sure resources are exempt for rental property. We have an Inspection Dept. that works to make sure Inspections are done on a regular basis to rental property.

- Aging and dilapidated housing stock.

- Attracting middle class residents to La Crosse neighborhoods.

We have many neighborhoods that take great pride in making sure their homes are kept up.

- Developing job and business opportunities for residents.

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

It is very important to continue to invest in schools, parks, and libraries, but we sometimes forget about certain parts of our city. I have been asking for a long time to give more attention to the Upper Northside, we have Hickey Park on Palace St. that's needs improvement and also Wittenberg Park. If money is not invested than Wittenberg park should be put on the tax rolls. It is an eyesore.

- 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.

By putting more resources into our neighborhoods this improves values and increases tax base and thus brings families back. But this needs to be city wide and not just certain districts.

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.

That is what is unique about our city. Tax base is increased by increasing values of our property and we have property that the city owns and should put all vacant property back on the tax rolls by selling it.

- 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?

Yes.

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

No. We need to put its focus on our City and making its improvements here.

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Should the City consider extending sewer or water services without requiring annexation?</li> </ul>
<p>No, with annexation you create more tax base.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Do you support continued funding of the bluffland acquisition program?</li> </ul>
<p>No, we have spent a lot of taxpayer's money on this in the past. And now need to focus on other needs in our city.</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>No, with the improvements that will be made with Exit 3 and the Interstate 90, No road through the city is needed but let's take a look at widening of Hwy. 16.</p>
<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>
<p>I am not in favor of the 7<sup>th</sup>.&amp; Cass roundabout, this will not be much of an alternative, may be more confusing for some. There is a possibility of the 12<sup>th</sup>.Ave. extension that may be of some help but at what cost?</p>
<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>
<p>How would anyone police this? I have also been opposed to special fees.</p>
<p>6. How would you promote the safety of pedestrians and bicyclists throughout the City?</p>
<p>There are rules to abide by for all motorist, pedestrians and bicyclists.</p>
<p>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?</p>
<p>It is up to each individual to be aware of their own consumption of alcohol, I do not believe it is the Cities role other than enforcement of violations.</p>
<p>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?</p>
<p>I think by having camera enforcement not only in our downtown but other parts of our city and by having an increase on the streets of law enforcement.</p>
<p>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.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Should the historic status of a building have an impact on whether it is demolished?</li> </ul>
<p>Yes, most importantly.</p>
<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>
<p>What the proposed use would be and how it would benefit everyone.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Should the city provide funding and/or technical help for property owners to maintain and</li> </ul>

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renovate historic buildings?
If there are resources available yes.
<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, not at this time
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?
We talk collaboration all the time and really do a terrible job. Egos and territory's get in the way.
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?
I would love to have a decrease but if we could just keep holding them that would be great. Taxpayers cannot afford any more increases, they are tapped out.
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.
As I said earlier Taxpayers are tapped out. I am opposed to user fees and utility districts.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>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.</li> </ul>
I will not support this.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Should the city look to fees and fines as a source of revenue or as a cost recovery device only?</li> </ul>
Fees and fines are just another tax.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>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?</li> </ul>
I would like to get rid of certain fees and not raise them 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?
The discussion of an administrator should not continue.
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?
I feel if we continue the enforcement of our existing codes this should solve the major problems.
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?
My constituents know that I continue to represent them by controlling the spending and improving our neighborhoods and solving their issues when they arise.