



Livable Neighborhoods, Inc.

www.livable-neighborhoods.org

PO Box 831

La Crosse, WI 543602-0831

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

2017 La Crosse Mayor/Council Candidate Survey

Livable Neighborhoods is a non-profit citizen's advocacy group established in 1996. Our purpose is to improve and promote the livability of all neighborhoods in the La Crosse area. We encourage citizens to research and discuss important issues in our community, including the positions on those issues by candidates for elected offices.

The following questions have been developed by our Board of Directors to help La Crosse residents learn more about the candidates for Mayor and Common Council prior to the Spring Election on Tuesday, April 4, 2017. We are inviting each candidate to complete our survey.

The responses of all candidates will be made available to the public and media at www.livable-neighborhoods.org. The answers will be posted as submitted without summary, editing or comment.

Please complete the survey by providing your best answers to the highlighted statements and questions. Your answers can be as short or as long as you choose and include references or links.

You can access a blank survey at www.livable-neighborhoods.org/2017Survey.doc. Save the file with your name in the file name, and then type your answer to each question in the row below each question (As you type, the row will expand automatically as needed). Or if you prefer, you hand write your answers (please number) on a separate piece(s) of paper.

Please return your completed survey to info@livable-neighborhoods.org. Or mail to Livable Neighborhoods, Inc., PO Box 831, La Crosse, WI 543602-0831

Questions? Please contact *Charles Clemence* at 738-1736 or vp@livable-neighborhoods.org.

Thank you for your willingness to serve.

Candidate for: Mayor _____ Common Council (District 10)

Name:	RICHARD P. BECKER
Address:	2121 DENTON STREET
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Campaign Email:	—
Campaign Web Facebook Twitter:	—

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1. The proposed 5B-1 N-S Corridor between I-90 by US Hwy 53 and US Hwys 14/61 (South Ave) @ 7th St S remains in the La Crosse Area Planning Commission (LAPC) and the Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WisDOT) long-range transportation plan for the La Crosse area. The original 5B-1 proposal also remains enumerated in the Wisconsin Statutes and on the approved list of Major Highway Projects of the Transportation Projects Commission (TPC). WisDOT currently has 6 build options for a new N-S road that are hybrids of the original 5B-1 proposal through the marsh and the neighborhoods. This is all despite the 1998 referendum turning down the original 5B-1 proposal by 11,951 to 7,076, as well as the City of La Crosse Comprehensive Plan, several neighborhood plans and the City Transportation Vision that do not include any calls for any new N-S road through the marsh or the neighborhoods.

Do you believe there is a need for any new N-S road through the marsh and the neighborhoods in the City of La Crosse? Please explain.

NO. THE TRAFFIC VOLUME DOES NOT JUSTIFY A NEW ROAD.

2. The LAPC and WisDOT also have other proposals to for existing highways, including:

- extend 12th Avenue S in Onalaska to State Hwy 16 just north of County Hwy B
- expand State Hwy 16 from 4 lanes to 6 lanes from County Hwy OS to La Crosse St
- expand La Crosse St from 2 lanes to 4 lanes from Losey Blvd to 7th St
- (original proposal) expand South Ave between Green Bay St and Ward Ave from 4 lanes to 5 lanes (Two way left turn lane in the middle) with restricted access on side streets, which would remove a few businesses and most of the houses on one side of an entire block (proposal has since been scaled back).

Do you believe there is any need for any additional roads or expansion of existing roads? Please explain.

I DO NOT SUPPORT ANY OF THE OPTIONS LISTED ABOVE. THESE OPTIONS ARE TOO DESTRUCTIVE.

3. Transportation Demand Management (TDM) is a series of policies and standards that require employers and institutions provide alternatives to their employees, customers and students that currently rely heavily on single occupant vehicles (SOVs) as their primary mode of transportation. TDM policies and standards are established by municipalities and include such things as flexible scheduling, telecommuting, ride sharing, express commuter buses, incentives to live closer to their destinations, walk or bike, ride mass transit, van pools, or private buses, provide concierge services for employees, etc., combined with market rate commuter parking (no more "free" parking), on street paid parking via kiosks not meters in commercial districts to discourage use by commuters and encourage turnover for nearby merchants, with revenues used to improve the district, and commuter impacted neighborhood parking districts to discourage the use of residential streets by commuters.

Do you believe the City of La Crosse should prioritize implementing TDM policies and standards to prevent La Crosse from further becoming a drive through community? Please explain.

I'M WILLING TO CONSIDER SUCH MEASURES DEPENDING ON EACH SPECIFIC CIRCUMSTANCE.

4. The City of La Crosse faces continuing budgetary challenges stemming from increased costs as well as stable

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or decreasing revenues. The results have been significant reductions in personnel as well as deferred maintenance and improvements to our existing infrastructure. In short, we're paying more and getting less.

How can we best utilize the available resources, while maintaining the level of services and investments in our infrastructure that are essential for a city to thrive and survive? Please explain.

THE NEED TO PRIORITIZE SERVICES AND EXPLORE ALTERNATE SOURCES OF REVENUE OTHER THAN THE PROPERTY TAX.

5. The City of La Crosse, along with several local organizations and business, have made important strides in stabilizing and even improving our neighborhoods. Many of our older neighborhoods and even some that are not so old, especially those in the flood plan and along our highways continue to experience challenges. More owner occupied single family homes are being converted to rentals and property maintenance continues to be a challenge. Neighborhood businesses that add the quality of life are coming back in some places, but not others.

How do we continue and even improve these efforts while avoiding gentrification? Please explain.

INVOLVING MORE PEOPLE FROM THE NEIGHBORHOODS IN THESE JOINT EFFORTS.

6. La Crosse has seen an increase in the people that choose to walk or bike more often over recent years, however this also increases the potential for conflicts and crashes with motor vehicles, with the people that walk or bike more likely to be severely injured or even killed.

How can we improve traffic safety in general, but especially for people that walk or bike? Please explain.

ONE METHOD IS TO PROVIDE DESIGNATED BIKE LANES.

7. La Crosse, like other communities in the Upper Midwest, has experienced an increase in the problems due to methamphetamine and heroin, in addition to our chronic challenges with binge drinking and acute alcoholism.

How can the City of La Crosse, together with La Crosse County and other institutions, best address these scourges and the negative impacts on the individuals as well as our community? Please explain.

THREE POSSIBLE WAYS INCLUDE COMMUNITY POLICING, COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT RESOURCES AND EDUCATION, AND EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS PROGRAMS.

8. Most revenues for municipal services come from property taxpayers, with 53.5% coming from residential property owners (UWEX 2010 Report). Industrial and commercial properties are assessed at different rates than residential properties, with depreciation and other exemptions available to business and rental property owners. About 50% of the property in the City of La Crosse is tax exempt, although a few of the larger institutions pay for some municipal services. And about 50% of the residential properties are rentals, with typically with many more adults per dwelling unit than in owner occupied single family homes. These factors result in a disproportionate share of the costs for providing municipal services being borne by the smaller and smaller number of adults in the owner occupied single family homes. State statutes provide for municipalities to

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establish various utilities, user fees and special districts whereby property owners would pay based on the municipal services provided, rather than the assessed value and property type.

Would you support establishing the following? Please explain.

- Conditional use permits for parking lots for 5 or more vehicles, with an annual permit fee based upon the number of parking spaces, with the funds used for street maintenance, traffic patrols and emergency services?

I'M OPEN TO EXPLORING THIS IDEA.

- A street amenities utility to cover the costs of providing street lights, sidewalks, and streetscaping (trees, planters, bike racks, waste receptacles, carriage walks, etc.)?

I'M OPEN TO EXPLORING THIS IDEA.

- A multi-municipality fire protection district to provide fire protection funded by fees based on property use (agricultural, industrial, commercial, residential, vehicular, recreational, haz mat, etc.), with fire stations located where needed vs. based on municipal boundaries, and staffed with full-time paid and/or on-call paid fire fighters based upon the upon the potential need?

I'M OPEN TO EXPLORING THIS IDEA.

- Conditional use permits for retailers of alcohol with annual fees based upon the types and methods of alcohol sales (i.e. 24 oz and 40 oz malt beverages, personal sized bottles of hard alcohol, \$1 shots, all you care to drink specials, etc.) with the funds used for increased police patrols and clean up?

I'M OPEN TO EXPLORING THIS IDEA.

9. The City of La Crosse has a strong council – weak mayor system of government with a full-time salaried mayor. The mayor can and does work with department heads, but has no power to hire, fire or discipline any of them – this power rests, with limited exceptions, with the Common Council, which requires a majority to take any action. In 2012, the voters defeated a proposal to hire a city administrator via a referendum in large part because of the politics of that time. The current mayor will have served 4 years and is unopposed in the upcoming election for another 4-year term. Many other cities, including neighboring Onalaska, have changed to a part-time mayor and a professional city manager to improve accountability of the day to day operations of the municipality.

Is this something that should be discussed for possible implementation in 2021? Please explain.

I AGREE IT SHOULD BE DISCUSSED.

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10. The City of La Crosse has more boards and commissions than most of our peer cities in Wisconsin, with a number established to rule on various appeals. Some of these boards and commissions meet far more often (i.e. Board of Public Works meets weekly vs. monthly or bi-weekly) than our peer cities. A few boards and commissions also have some difficulties obtaining a quorum to conduct business. Citizen participation and input are important, but so is limiting the number of meetings that people must attend to obtain approvals, permits or licenses. Many of our peer cities rely on their professional staff to handle approvals, permits and licenses administratively based on the ordinances and resolutions approved by elected officials, with a single body of elected officials to hear most of the appeals.

Should the City of La Crosse reduce the number of boards and commissions, and streamline the process for approvals, permits and licenses so staff can deal with administratively? Please explain.

THE CITY SHOULD CONTINUE TO REDUCE THE NUMBER OF BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS. THE CITY HAS ALREADY DONE AWAY WITH OVER ²⁰ COMMITTEES

11. In 2012, the Joint City-County Housing Task Force Report identified several recommendations the City of La Crosse could act upon to improve neighborhood revitalization efforts, with the #1 Recommendation "Better education and enforcement of existing codes and standards".

Do you agree this should be #1? Do you believe code education and enforcement have been a priority by the various City of La Crosse departments? The Municipal Court? Please explain.

THIS SHOULD BE #1 FOR THE VARIOUS CITY OF LA CROSSE DEPARTMENTS AND MUNICIPAL COURT.

12. One of the biggest obstacles to neighborhood revitalization are chronic nuisance properties. A single nuisance property can have a negative impact on an entire block or area. Examples of chronic nuisance properties are homes, apartments or businesses used as drug houses, scrap yards or party houses, empty and dilapidated properties with pests and vermin, owners or tenants that are chronic alcoholics or drug users, etc. There are also properties with constant problems such as assaults and fights, drunk and disorderly, thefts, vandalism, sources of drunken drivers, "falls" and "accidents", etc. One example, in June 2014 for the first time, the City of La Crosse shut down 214-216 24th St S after years of complaints and arrests involving drugs and other crimes. Since then, other properties have been identified as potential nuisance properties and most of the property owners have been cooperative, however there are others that remain. Orders to correct for code violations are issued, but citations with fines are rare. The police issue citations and even make arrests when warranted, but too often the drug dealer is back at it a few days later or the drunken behaviors continue the next weekend, etc. The eventual result for some of these properties is they eventually end up so dilapidated they are condemned and razed, often at significant taxpayer expense.

Do you believe identifying and addressing nuisance properties has been a priority by the various departments? The coordination between city departments as well as with county and state officials has been sufficient? That the Municipal Court and Circuit Courts have been supportive when all other means of addressing these chronic nuisance properties have failed to achieve positive results? Please explain.

I BELIEVE IDENTIFYING AND ADDRESSING NUISANCE PROPERTIES HAS BEEN A PRIORITY BY THE VARIOUS DEPARTMENTS.
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I BELIEVE THE COORDINATION BETWEEN CITY DEPARTMENTS AS WELL AS WITH COUNTY AND STATE OFFICIALS HAS BEEN SUFFICIENT. I BELIEVE THAT THE MUNICIPAL COURT AND CIRCUIT COURTS HAVE BEEN SUPPORTIVE WHEN ALL OTHER MEANS OF ADDRESSING THESE CHRONIC NUISANCE PROPERTIES HAVE FAILED.

TO ACHIEVE POSITIVE RESULTS.

13. Currently the City of La Crosse Parking Utility provides "free" on street parking (paid for by a special parking assessment on downtown property owners), "free" ramp parking for up to 3 hours, \$1 an hour ramp parking for more than 3 hours with a maximum of \$6.00 per day, with leased ramp parking for \$25 + tax per space per month for 12-hours M-F 6AM to 6PM, or \$35 + tax per space per month for 24-hours. These rates do not cover the capital costs for the ramps, much less the additional costs for maintenance, utilities and security, or the loss of potential tax base for development. In Rochester, MN on street or ramp parking is \$0.40 to \$1.40 per hour, and leased ramp parking from \$90 to \$170 per month, with the rates depending on the location and duration

Do you believe it is time for the City of La Crosse to replace the special parking assessment on downtown property owners with a market rate parking system that will encourage on street turnover of spaces and discourage on street commuter parking to help build traffic for merchants, provide funds for improved cleaning, maintenance and security of the streets, sidewalks and ramps, as well as pay the full capital costs for building the parking ramps? Please explain.

I'M OPEN TO THE IDEA BUT SHOULD CAREFULLY STUDY ADVERSE IMPACTS UNIQUE TO THE CITY OF LA CROSSE. FOR EXAMPLE, DRIVING BUSINESS OUTSIDE THE CITY.

14. State laws provide for the establishment of Neighborhood Improvement Districts (NIDs), which are similar to a Tax Incremental Finance (TIF) district for commercial or industrial areas. The property owners in a potential NID petition to create the NID and if approved by the municipality, a NID Board made up of property owners in the NID is established. The NID Board can then levy a special assessment on the properties in the NID to be used for capital improvements in the NID.

Do you support the general concept of Neighborhood Improvement Districts (NIDs)? Please explain.

I SUPPORT THE GENERAL CONCEPT OF NEIGHBORHOOD IMPROVEMENT DISTRICTS.

15. Finally, what experience, ideas, qualities, etc. do you have that will help you make the City of La Crosse the best city it can be for all our residents?

MY STRONGEST QUALITY IS TO WORK COOPERATIVELY TO SOLVE PROBLEMS.