

Name: Courtney Johnson **Interview #4**
Seeking Office: Incumbent
Carver Mayor

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How long have you lived in your community?

12.5 years

Are you a Homeowner or Renter?

Homeowner

Do you own other real property (e.g. Business, Cabin, Investment, or Rental Property)? If so, which?

I have a condo in downtown St. Paul, which I use as a rental property.

Describe your civic and/or community engagement.

As Mayor, I have represented the City of Carver on the Carver Business Council, Carver Fire Relief Board, Carver County Leaders, District 112 Community Leaders, Carver County Mayors, Regional Council of Mayors, Minnesota Mayors Association and the Carver Fire Board. In each of these examples I have worked to advance opportunities for Carver, build relationships and work together with others in our community for a better Carver. I've also lobbied on behalf of the City of Carver in a variety of ways, including my work to find funding partners for the Levee Improvement Project, a \$12M endeavor which will modernize the Minnesota River levee to continue to protect the City of Carver from floods. To date my work has resulted in \$2.75M allotted to this project from both Federal funding and grants from the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR), and the Lower Minnesota River Watershed District. In addition to serving as Mayor, my in the City of Carver has included City Councilmember (2017""2018), Planning Commission (2014""2016), Park and Recreation Board (2011""2013) and Steamboat Days volunteer (2012""2016). I volunteer on the Community Action Partnership of Scott, Carver and Dakota Counties (CAP Agency) Board of Directors, at Carver Ridge Senior Living and the Carver Scott Humane Society.

What is your fundraising goal? How much have you raised to date?

\$4000/\$100 - I just announced my reelection campaign!

Are you accepting PAC contributions?

Yes

Please list any notable supporters or groups of supporters for your campaign

I have many residents and notable community leaders who are supporting my campaign for reelection!

What are the most important housing challenges facing your community?

Affordable housing and the lack of a variety of housing stock are easily the most important housing challenges in the City of Carver. To address this issue, I asked we study it and actively consider solutioning for affordable housing, life-cycle housing and housing programs as a component of our 2021/2022 Strategic Plan. After meeting with the Carver County Community Development Agency (CDA) we created and adopted a Housing Action Plan that captures both where we are currently and aspirations for future housing options in Carver. In April, we adopted a Connection Fee Waiver policy as a tool to implement the City's goals for incentivizing affordable housing, which is a priority in both the City's 2040 Comprehensive Plan and the City's Housing Action Plan. The Connection Fee Waiver Program is a tiered approach based on a project's level of affordability and area median income. The policy outlines reporting requirements and requires 20 years of affordability for units that qualify. A project can receive a maximum of \$250,000 in fee waivers. After adopting the Connection Fee Waiver policy earlier this year, we granted our first Connection Fee Waiver of \$250,000 for a future project in Carver which will consist of 103 new units, targeting different household income levels and increasing affordable housing in Carver. The building is intended to have 16 units at or below 60% AMI, 60 units at or below 50% AMI and 27 units at or below 30% AMI.

The Twin Cities Metro is facing a housing shortage unlike any we have experienced in recent history. What will you do to increase the number of homes available to residents of your community?

Since being elected to City Council in 2017 we have approved 1,020 units of single and multi-family housing. This makes the City of Carver one of the reasons why Carver County is the fastest growing county in the State of Minnesota. Carver's mix of rural surroundings and historic downtown makes our community highly desirable. While our residential development continues at a fast pace, we're working hard to ensure it's the right kind of development. By sticking to the "Design Carver", Comprehensive Plan we've been able to plan for the infrastructure needs of our growing community, ensure a broad range of housing options and welcome commercial and industrial development, which has served to start broadening our tax base and bring jobs to Carver. Additionally, our city staff is terrific. They work to welcome and educate developers about our community, while removing barriers to bringing their projects to Carver.

Minnesota has one of the largest homeownership gaps between Whites and Blacks, Indigenous, and People of Color. This is one of MAR's primary concerns. What would you propose at the local level to close this home ownership gap?

The homeownership gap between whites and blacks, indigenous and people of color is a tough issue to solve, but it is important that we work to come up with innovative solutions to address this important issue. The City of Carver has a great relationship with the Carver County Community Development (CDA) which provides affordable housing opportunities through homebuyer seminars, the community land trust (which provides secure, affordable access to land and housing for our local workforce), mortgage products and rehab loan programs. In Carver, like many communities, there is a low supply of homes that are available at a price point that is attractive to first-time homeowners. New construction, which often comes with a greater price point, is a large percentage of home sales in Carver. As part of the work we did to create and implement Carver's Housing Action Plan, we met with the Carver County CDA to get a better idea of the tools that were available to spur affordability and increase homeownership in Carver. The first tactic we've employed to assist with affordable housing is the Connection Fee Waiver, which I've explained in my answer to question number 13. Looking ahead, I anticipate and will advocate for exploring other tactics to address affordability, which will serve to help close the housing gap. Change will require intentional policymaking and effective partnerships, not only at a local level, but also nationally, because addressing the issue of the homeownership gap between white and BIPOC communities will require changes across the entire housing system. Regardless of if the Minneapolis Area of REALTORS choses to support my campaign for reelection or not, I sincerely hope to partner with MAR in the future to help tackle the issue of the homeownership gap and to collaborate on solutions together!

How do you think the city can best balance the rights of tenants and property owners to effectively manage rental housing?

I work to balance the rights of tenants and property owners to effectively manage rental housing by building relationships with residents through community engagements. I regularly participate in "Meet the Mayor", and "Coffee with Courtney", events at the two large apartment buildings in Carver. Through these events I have built relationships with Carver residents who rent, the property managers and owners so that if and whenever there becomes an issue, we have a familiarity to dive right in on solutions.

What are your views on property tax rates in your community? Do you have concerns related to the city's property tax rate? If so, how would you address those concerns once elected?

Our City Council has been very committed to decreasing the tax burden in Carver. This has led to a 15% City tax reduction over the last 10 years. I am proud to have been a part of that work as a member of City Council for the past six years, and have made fiscal responsibility a key element of my leadership as Mayor for the past four years. Looking forward, Carver's preliminary calculations are showing the city tax rate decrease from 48.40% to 37.24% for 2023, which will mean a tax decrease on the city's portion of property taxes on the average valued home in Carver. I will argue that there is always more work that can be done to reduce Carver's property tax rates. That said, I am proud of the property tax reductions thus far. As Mayor, I have worked hard to be a good steward of taxpayer money by seeking out grants, public/private partnerships and other means of cost sharing, which has lowered the City of Carver's expenses. If I am elected to serve another term as Mayor, I will continue with the same fiscally conservative practices.

Please provide links to all social media accounts connected to you or your campaign if any.

www.facebook.com/CarverMayorCourtney/

www.instagram.com/Carver_Mayor_Courtney/ www.courtney4mayor.com

The Minneapolis Area Association of REALTORS(R) may plan to interview some candidates virtually, would you be willing to participate, if contacted?

Yes