

Page 1: Government Affairs Committee - Candidate Selection Survey

Q1

Full Name

Jenna Carter

Q2

Preferred phone number

612-284-8751

Q3

Preferred email address

jennacartermn@gmail.com

Q4

Office Sought

At Large Councilmember

Q5

Town of Residence

Bloomington

Q6

How long have you lived in your community?

2017

Q7

Are you a Homeowner or Renter?

homeowner

Q8

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

no

Q9

Describe your civic and/or community engagement.

Before my time on City Council, I was on the VEAP board of directors, a local nonprofit providing supportive services focused on food and emergency rent assistance. During that time, I advocated for affordable, safe, and inclusionary housing policies through the Bloomington Housing Coalition. I served as the chair of the policy committee and on the leadership team, where we focused on strengthening the connection between residents, community organizations, and city government. I also brought together parents to raise awareness of student homelessness in our city. As part of that, we collaborated with school district staff and a local nonprofit to launch a toiletry drive to meet the needs of homeless students. In addition, I have been very involved in volunteering for local, state, and federal candidate campaigns. And I am active in supporting my children's sports and school activities.

Q12

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

I am in the process of confirming several endorsements with other electeds, labor unions, advocacy organizations, and associations. I do have the support of the entire current city council and mayor, as well as other elected officials including Bloomington's Hennepin County Commissioner and state representatives and senators. In addition, I recently learned I have been endorsed by the AFL-CIO.

Q13

What are the most important housing challenges facing your community?

Homelessness - The Housing and Redevelopment Authority partners with Hennepin County on homelessness prevention and response assistance. The board recently contracted with a consultant to complete a homelessness study for Bloomington. The goal was to better understand the issue and have recommendations for the HRA and City Council on how to move forward.

Affordable housing - I am very proud to say that Bloomington is 90% of the way to reaching its MetCouncil 2030 affordable housing goals. However, we still have a way to go for 50% or less AMI. In addition to financing the creation and preservation of affordable units, we have a Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher program and manage project-based Section 8 contracts.

The homeownership gap - White Non-Hispanic homeownership is 75% whereas Black, Indigenous, and People of Color household ownership is only 40%. I am very proud of the work Bloomington's HRA is doing to address this issue. We have programs to provide financing for down payment/closing costs loans, financing for home improvement and rehabilitation loans, and homeowner counseling

and education. In addition, the HRA is helping to finance the development of affordable single-family homes and is administering a pathway to homeownership program.

Q14

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?

As an HRA Commissioner, I will continue to support our efforts to increase home options in Bloomington for both rental and home ownership. As a built-out city, it is very challenging to increase the number of homes available. However, the Council recently went through a process to reduce zoning barriers in the single and two-family zoned areas of the city. I was supportive of most of those changes, although I had concerns with some. With that said, the changes passed and Bloomington has now significantly reduced zoning barriers that may have previously prevented the development of new housing. In addition, the HRA is in the process of purchasing parcels that will be used for affordable homeownership opportunities and is currently working in partnership with Habitat for Humanity and Homes Within Reach (West Hennepin Affordable Housing Land Trust) on several additional lots.

Q15

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?

Education - The Bloomington HRA is partnering with Project for Pride in Living on homeownership educational sessions each month in English, Somali, and Spanish.

Increasing access to down payment assistance - Bloomington Homebuyer Mortgage Assistance (HMA) is a pilot down payment assistance program for income-eligible households, at or below 80% AMI, to purchase a home in Bloomington. Eligible applicants can receive up to a \$10,500 forgivable loan.

Building affordable homeownership options - in partnership with Habitat for Humanity, WHAHLT, MAC-V, and others.

I would like to see Bloomington participate in the HUD Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) homeownership program or similar programs to continue to increase opportunities. I believe the Bloomington HRA Administrator is looking into this already.

Q16

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

Ideally, when we develop or revisit city policies, key stakeholders like tenants and property owners should be engaged to provide input. Those policies should then provide the guidance staff needs to effectively manage rental housing.

For years, Bloomington has had a Rental Housing Collaborative, a city-wide group administered by the HRA for managers, owners, and other interested persons involved with rental property. There is also strong involvement from Bloomington Police and the City's Environmental Services Division. I believe this gives City staff the opportunity to build relationships with property owners so that when issues arise, there is a space to talk through and get feedback.

Q17

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?

The City of Bloomington has been able to maintain relatively low property tax rates, particularly compared to surrounding cities. In large part, this is due to the presence of the Mall of America and a significant hospitality industry. With that said, Bloomington is a growing community with aging infrastructure and core city services that need investment. In addition, Bloomington is a changing community and becoming more urban. Residents want bike and pedestrian facilities, infrastructure to mitigate climate change like electric charging stations and solar panels on buildings, natural resource preservation, and the addressing of invasive species, and the list goes on. We do need to invest in these amenities and services, but do our best to partner and leverage other resources as much as possible. We also need to continue asking the hard question, what can we stop doing? When the pandemic hit and during my first year in office, Bloomington was faced with a six million dollar hole in our general fund budget. We pulled together a Community Budget Advisory Council that developed recommendations and scenarios for budget cuts. Some of those included things like closing the DMV and turning over operations of Hyland Greens Golf Course to Three Rivers Park District. These were hard decisions, but sometimes these are the decisions that have to be made, whether they are due to a pandemic or something else.

Q18

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

<https://www.facebook.com/JennaCarterMN/>

https://www.instagram.com/jennacarter_mn/
