

Bloomington City Council, District 3

Allison Chopra (D)

Nelson Shaffer (R)

1. What are your qualifications for the office you are seeking? (100 words)

CHOPRA: As a former downtown business owner, I have had first-hand experience with the local economy, parking issues and employment. I have served on the board of the Bloomington Urban Enterprise Association where I gained an appreciation for the responsibility of being a good steward of taxpayer dollars. I have completed the City of Bloomington's Citizen's Academy and Leadership Bloomington Monroe County, which has widened my awareness of local government and non-profit agencies. Currently, I am a J.D. candidate at the IU Maurer School of Law. The analytic thinking that I engage in daily will transfer nicely to Council work.

SHAFFER: A resident of Bloomington for 40+ years, I was a research scientist at IU where I led a research group and represented professional staff--now retired but active and own a small business. Married 35+ years with six children and five grandchildren. I've had leadership roles in many scientific, religious, civic, service, political, and hobby groups and directed the Indiana Academy of Science for 13 years. Cofounded Celebrate Science and Midwest Chapter Friends of Mineralogy, and helped start several businesses. I own a small farm in Ohio. I am trained in local citizen's academies. I assist science outreach efforts.

2. What role should the city play in addressing homelessness and the need for affordable housing? (125 words)

CHOPRA: The city should be aggressively addressing both of these issues. We should consider utilizing tools such as zoning management, incentives for developers, land banking, and partnering with area businesses and non-profit organizations. A diverse representation of community members should be included in these discussions. Any good solution will come from a combination of input from community members.

SHAFFER: The city can promote mental, moral, and physical health through life skills training such as Kemp College, Updraft, and religious shelters and programs. Bloomington should enforce current laws and seek federal, state, and philanthropic programs to assist in its efforts. The city needs a full time grant writer. We should seek programs to assist vets. I do not favor additional local taxes unless a proven, effective, and economically responsible effort can be made. I would encourage surrounding areas to minister to their homeless, keeping them closer to their own homes and families.

3. What approaches will you take to foster economic growth? (125 words)

CHOPRA: I will continue the city's work of encouraging urban infill. I will also support development that creates diverse, sustainable job opportunities. I am looking forward to the Certified Technology Park development and the opportunities it will create.

SHAFFER: Bloomington needs a less restrictive environment for expansion of existing businesses and recruiting of new companies. We need more action with fewer restrictions. The newly announced technology effort is good but it has taken many years. The city should show more openness to unconventional operations and have more cooperation with IU, other innovators, and state development efforts. The city should leverage areas around I-69 for business development. We should advertise our city better and promote Bloomington as business friendly. Bloomington has low wages and we need better jobs! We should support Blooming Labs, Maker efforts, robotics, and other active inventors groups.

4. What would you propose to better serve the social needs of senior citizens? (125 words)

CHOPRA: The wellbeing of our senior citizen neighbors is something that I will urge the council to focus on. I think it is important to keep senior citizens thriving in neighborhoods and homes among the rest of the community. I have spoken to many seniors in District 3 who have expressed a desire for a safe, accessible, and welcoming senior citizen center. The city should evaluate whether we are spending Parks and Recreation and Housing and Neighborhood Developments proportionately in relation to the number of senior citizens in our city. If not, a community center, whether fully or partially city-run, may be able to address this discrepancy.

SHAFFER: Bloomington needs better transportation for seniors. Perhaps a Uber-like system would be good. We also need smooth sidewalks and trails to make walking easier. Senior games is a good program that could well be expanded. Senior safety programs would be useful, perhaps even with a local shooting range. The city could support more nutrition programs to teach better eating and age-appropriate activity. Seniors want to feel useful. I would like to have a seniors helping toddlers and children program. The experienced have much to teach. Parks and Recreation could mount a senior memories program to save experiences from long ago. The city should seek to place seniors on boards especially planning.

5. What other concern do you find important and how would you address it? (125 words)

CHOPRA: Accessibility and community connectivity are two objectives that I would like to focus on. I want to promote better sidewalks for our neighbors with disabilities. I want to make sure that every child who lives and goes to school within the city can safely walk or bike to school. I want to see parks, trails and safe streets connecting the entire city. If we continue to build community connections through common meeting spaces, our city will be better equipped to handle all the other issues mentioned above. A strong community is one that knows and cares for one another.

SHAFFER: There should be very careful consideration of urbanizing areas (the two mile fringe of old). I would like to inventory and repurpose empty buildings where possible. Blooming Labs and other innovators could put now vacant space to good purpose. I want to honor our stone heritage and attract tourists with a Limestone Heritage Park. Development near or because of I-69 is inevitable. We need to be prepared. An east-west route is needed for possible increased

traffic. Using new GIS and sensing techniques should be applied to development. Technical experts should be hired to assess plans by city amateurs.

6. What possibilities do you see for the use of the hospital site on Second Street? (125 words)

CHOPRA: I am pleased that Mayor Kruzan and the current administration have been proactive with this challenge. The task force they have developed is diverse, encompassing all the major stakeholders, including community members, and is well led by the Steering Committee Chair, Vi Simpson. I look forward to the progress reports and findings that they share with the council.

As a City Councilmember, my job will be to share and discuss their progress with the residents of District 3 and bring their reflections back to the Council and task force to consider.

SHAFFER: The old hospital is a special building. It has features that could be attractive to technology firms who need gases, vacuum facilities, isolation areas, and other features already in the hospital. It should not be torn down until careful and visionary studies are done. Perhaps it could house inventors. It might be useful for a senior-toddler facility as mentioned above.

7. What policies would you promote to protect the environment and conserve energy? (125 words)

CHOPRA: I would promote policies, such as a plastic bag ban, incentives for new developers to use solar power, and reducing pesticide use in our city parks. I believe that Bloomington can be better in this area and I also believe that the community expects us to take big leaps in the direction of being more environmentally conscious. It is not enough to just keep up in this area; we need to strive to be progressive.

SHAFFER: I would encourage completion of the Materials Recycling Facility (MRF) that is partly constructed and would reuse materials. I would reuse buildings, even mines, for tourism or other job-generating operations. I would promote applying biotechnology to cleaning the environment and stretching resources. Energy harvesting and scavenging are new fields that hold great promise for recovering now wasted energy. Bloomington could be a leader in this work. Bloomington High School South has demonstrated one technique to great acclaim.