

Bloomington Mayor

John Hamilton (D)
John Linnemeier (D)
Darryl Neher (D)

1) What are your qualifications for the office you are seeking?

HAMILTON: I have the deep hands-on experience and progressive vision to help lead Bloomington forward. I'm a Bloomington native who, with my spouse Dawn Johnsen, chose to raise our children here. I successfully led two award-winning state agencies for Democratic Governor Frank O'Bannon, overseeing environmental protection and family and social services. I founded an award-winning nonprofit and bank to promote economic justice and opportunity—they now employ 50 people. Very active locally, I also served on the school board, chaired the Sustainability Commission, chair the Shalom Community Center, and have energetically supported Democratic and progressive causes for decades.

LINNEMEIER: I hold a B.S. and two Master's degrees from IU. I'm a life-long resident of Bloomington. I've held many jobs, including 7 years in government managerial positions with the VA and DOD. I've been a teacher, steel worker, air track driller, powder monkey, and plenty more. I owned a small business in Bloomington for 14 years (Flying Fish Painting). After being shot in Vietnam, I returned recently and made friends with "the enemy". I've travelled to 115 countries and observed democracy in decline. I relate to people from all walks of life and know how to inspire and lead.

NEHER: I've lived in Bloomington for 24 years, engaged in the issues that impact our community – as a student, parent, employee, volunteer, and City Council member. On Bloomington's City Council, I'm in the middle of the policy debates and decision-making, elected as City Council President for two consecutive terms. I've earned a reputation for thorough research, fair and engaged governance, and a deep understanding of how our city works.

Prior to City Council, I led community discussions for 12 years as public affairs host of WFHB's Interchange and WGCL's Afternoon Edition, and continue to teach leadership, strategy, and communication at IU.

2) What approaches will you take to manage economic growth downtown?

HAMILTON: Overdevelopment of the downtown is jeopardizing Bloomington's reputation as a beautiful city. As mayor, I will protect Bloomington's unique aesthetic. I will push for formal local historic designation of the square to prevent future encroachments. I will implement aesthetic and environmental rules to curb new development that undermine the downtown with "ugly" development. Recent projects like the proposed "Graduate" hotel are not appropriate to the iconic downtown. Such projects evade established standards through a "waiver system" loophole that allows the Plan Commission to permit variances to new developments. I will insist

that the city planning department respect existing standards and I will work with the city council to update standards and tighten waiver loopholes, to assure that future development enhances, rather than diminishes, the beauty of downtown.

I will also implement policies that help create sustainable jobs downtown. I will help establish a shared workplace for start-ups, entrepreneurs, and innovators to work and collaborate in the downtown Tech Park. I will push to build a fiber optic broadband network that will lower business costs and help attract new clean businesses to the downtown area. And I will enthusiastically support the arts and creative vibe that enliven our downtown.

LINNEMEIER: The idea of a high-density downtown, which makes for a more efficient use of infrastructure and transportation, was a good idea. The revival of a vibrant downtown scene was also a good idea. It was a good idea for students to live close to campus, not in residential neighborhoods. Sadly, though, the execution of these policies has been inconsistent. The result has been that the streets north of the Square have become unattractive canyons. Most of the apartments are owned by out-of-town corporations that suck millions of dollars out of our community. With practically no setbacks and hideous architecture, they're nothing but cash-cows for people with no interest in Bloomington.

CFC has an honorable track record of considering the needs of our community before thinking about profit. They've built some stately townhouses on East 7th Street, The Kirkwood apartment community on West 5th Street, and the affordable Bicycle Apartments on South Madison Street. We should work with companies like CFC, who seem willing to create a more diverse downtown community, not just a student ghetto.

We need to ensure that no more small, unique, locally owned businesses like Max's and Ladyman's be pushed out of the downtown by franchise businesses.

NEHER: Our focus should be to enhance our community's economic vitality -- and we can do that in three ways:

(1) Stand up against rampant growth to protect the quality and character of our downtown square, Kirkwood corridor, and our neighborhoods. On City Council, I've initiated legislation that would require Council authorization for height waiver requests, and I will push for stronger standards as we revise our zoning codes.

(2) Pursue a sustainable economy committed to local businesses, fostering a culture of entrepreneurship that attracts and retains the young professionals who are our next generation of business, community, and neighborhood leaders. The mayor must serve as an ambassador for Bloomington to attract businesses that are good community partners, fit with our values, and pay living wages. The execution of the Certified Tech Park is important, but cultivating employers who offer our citizens living wage jobs will be the biggest challenge to raising our wage floor.

(3) Continue to cultivate our community's wonderful quality of life by investing in our parks, bike/ped infrastructure, sustainable energy infrastructure, arts, and social services. These

amenities are attractive both to Bloomington residents and potential employers considering a move to our city.

3) What will you do to ensure transparency and accountability in city government?

HAMILTON: I am deeply committed to transparency and accountability in government. As an experienced public executive, I know their power and importance. As mayor, I will ensure that community members have detailed access to all city activities and information, as well as a voice in the budgetary process and policy formation and implementation, though both online and in-person means. As mayor, I and my department heads will offer weekly open meetings to give and receive information about city activities, challenges, and opportunities. I will regularly host town halls and neighborhood forums and maintain an open door policy. I will ensure my administration posts numerous important measures of government performance, including crime statistics, public safety response times, performance data for things like pothole repair or recycling pickup, and other services on the city website. I will work with the city council to explore participatory budgeting to allow neighborhood residents, through a democratic voting process, to nominate proposals for how a percentage of the city's funds will be spent.

In short, I will be clear, explicit and accountable about our goals as a city—what we intend to do, and how well we do it, on a regular basis.

LINNEMEIER: The Wycoff and Gerstman scandals have struck at the very core of trust citizens had in their local government.

The most important thing the next mayor must do is to restore that trust. It starts with campaign finance practices. It shouldn't require \$100,00 to run for mayor. Do we need billboards, radio and newspaper ads, PR consultants, and junk mail to learn what we need to know about the candidates?

The mayor sets the tone of an administration, and that starts with how they run their campaign. I've run mine on a shoestring. It was easy to forego corporate contributions, but I went far beyond what the other candidates were willing to do. I don't take contributions over \$250. I require all contributors to affirm that they are not the owner of a business that does business with the city, nor the spouse of an owner, or the employee of such a company, nor their spouse.

Once in office I will request a top-to-bottom audit of all departments. There's a war on whistleblowers in America, but in Bloomington things will be different. First day, a sign will go up on my door... "WHISTLEBLOWERS WELCOME!"

NEHER: A culture of transparency and accountability will be the standard of my administration and will be seen in three ways:

(1) Bloomington residents should know the effectiveness of local government in delivering your basic city services. I will initiate a "Bloomington Accountability Scorecard" – an online quarterly update highlighting our city's strategies and metrics for success. If you want to know

emergency response times, how much material is recycled, or how many potholes have been filled, you can readily find these answers and more on our scorecard website.

(2) The City can better utilize communication technology to deliver updates on city projects and policies. I will work with the Council of Neighborhood Associations to share online the most recent information on city projects impacting specific neighborhoods and offer videocasts on legislation and projects most important to you.

(3) We need regular face-to-face conversations and forums that take government directly into our community. I will engage stakeholders in policy initiatives early to ensure I continue to earn the public's trust. I will also reinstitute the State of the City Address and launch monthly forums featuring city and county leaders to answer your questions directly and proactively engage citizens on the issues.

4) What should the role of the city be in supporting the development of more affordable housing?

HAMILTON: The city, led by the mayor, must address our lack of affordable housing head on. Bloomington must be affordable for people of all incomes and backgrounds to maintain our unique character. Thousands of individuals and families with children struggle with the collision of low wages and high housing costs.

As mayor, I will lead a multi-pronged approach to affordable housing: I support inclusionary zoning, requiring new developments to set aside a certain percentage of units for lower income tenants or owners, to increase the supply of affordable units and keep rents down. I support permanent affordability restrictions, so when public resources create affordability, we keep it affordable in perpetuity, like a trust. I support creative financing of affordable housing, such as identifying a dedicated revenue source for affordable housing (like a real estate transfer fee), activating our long-dormant Housing Trust Fund, and supporting nonprofits in building or acquiring homes needing upgrades or preservation for new low-income owner/renters. And I support combating poverty and homelessness, by attracting additional federal funds for supportive housing, including repeating our efforts at Shalom bringing in \$1 million in new federal funds to create Crawford Homes to house and support some of Bloomington's most disadvantaged.

LINNEMEIER: The city must move on many fronts in order to increase the supply of affordable housing.

In 1956 when Tom Lemon was mayor, some people lived up on "Pigeon Hill" in dirt-floored shacks. My dad, Dr. Robert Linnemeier was elected president of the Bloomington Redevelopment Commission because they knew Pop would run a tight ship and see that every dime was spent wisely. Without pay, my father served under Republican and Democratic administrations for over 20 years. He oversaw the construction of hundreds units of decent affordable housing. I believe they should be expanded to meet the growing needs of poor people

trying to get a leg up and in need of decent housing. We should continue to seek out federal funding to expand this program.

In addition, we should engage the private sector. First, we must preserve existing affordable housing using an affordable housing maintenance program. We should identify suitable sites for developers to build affordable housing and include tax incentives and perhaps even subsidies to encourage builders to provide affordable housing rather than more lucrative larger homes. Finally, we should require that builders include some percentage of affordable housing in their plans.

NEHER: We must develop stronger policies that support more affordable housing in our city. I will fight for strategies to be clearly outlined in our upcoming Growth Policies Plan revision and pursue those policies in the update of our city zoning code.

With inclusionary zoning under attack by Republicans in the Indiana Legislature, we must consider ways to use the tools we currently have available to incentivize affordable housing: tax abatements, non-financial incentives, and possible use of Tax Increment Financing (TIF) dollars. The combination of incentives encourages the development and/or inclusion of affordable housing units from developers in exchange through financial incentives, city investment in infrastructure, and possible tradeoffs such as increased density, modified use restrictions, changes to parking requirements, and expedited permitting.

Another opportunity is to recapitalize the Housing Trust Fund as a vehicle for the city to support and/or develop affordable housing projects. The HTF has been dormant, but it can once again be a valuable tool with an infusion of dollars from federal grants and private sector participation.

I also look forward to hearing the proposals from the Affordable Housing working group being led by City Council members Chris Sturbaum and Susan Sandberg.

5) How will you address downtown parking issues?

HAMILTON: I would not have supported the downtown parking plan adopted by the city council in 2013. Open government and accountability are essential to our city government. But there was no clarity to the purpose, and thus no accountability for success or failure, of the parking plan. Were the meters installed to increase revenue? To steer more cars to parking garages? To improve parking access for downtown stores? To deter full-time employees from street parking? To strengthen the downtown overall? To increase mass transit use? How is success defined? The parking meters should not be used as a revenue-generating mechanism—it's a crude and regressive tool; other options are better if needed.

As mayor, I will immediately review the meters and develop the data needed to determine whether they should stay or go, or on what conditions. All should be measured by whether they are helping strengthen downtown and enhancing the vibrant, creative center of our sustainable city. We need stronger mass transit (e.g., Sunday bus service) and constantly improving ease for

bicyclists and pedestrians, including people with disabilities. As mayor I also will provide crystal clear accounting of where any parking revenue is coming from and where it is spent.

LINNEMEIER: It's easier to find parking spaces now than before meters were installed. That's a plus. The city has found a new way to tax and inconvenience us. That's a minus. Since revenue doesn't include costs, the meters may not be netting the city much anyway.

CVS will survive, but small businesses unique to Bloomington, like Caveat Emptor, Yarns Unlimited, and Stefanos will probably die. Employees of downtown businesses received yet another burdensome expense. Furthermore, I think they're ugly.

We built parking garages that we paid too much for and now can't pay off. Rather than moving cars every 2 hours (UNBELIEVABLE!) county employees might have been allowed to use unused parking garage spaces. Is communication between the city and the county that bad? We asked a parking meter company for a solution to our parking problem. Did we expect they'd recommend making parking garages safer and easier to use by using human parking attendants?

Where do we go from here? I'll waffle for once. Let's poll downtown businesses, their employees and those who utilize those businesses and live with whatever the majority decides, including compromises like allowing free parking after 8:00 p.m. Leave parking meter salesmen out of the conversation.

NEHER: The pressures on downtown parking will continue so we must regularly re-evaluate our parking policy. The current use of meters has increased turnover, reduced vehicle warehousing on the street, and increased the overall use of our parking garages – all desired outcomes from the policy.

As a member of our City Council, I will be introducing an amendment to change parts of our parking policy in the coming weeks. Specifically, I will propose changes to shorten the hours of meter operation and eliminate credit card fees from meter payments. I will also fight to maintain the three-hours-free parking policy in designated areas of our downtown – particularly the Fourth Street Garage.

As we move forward with our Growth Policies Plan and zoning code updates, we must carefully review our parking requirements near all future development – including parking ratios and possible structured parking in projects with increased density.

6) What will be your approach to the urban deer problem?

HAMILTON: The white-tail deer pose two very different community challenges. At Griffy Lake, they challenge the long-term viability of the ecosystem. In residential neighborhoods, they challenge some residents' sense of enjoyment of their homes and property, as well as safety, while others strongly appreciate the presence of, and respect for, wildlife.

As to Griffy Lake, I will emphasize first that our community must steward this amazing asset for the long haul. We need clear vision to leave future generations of Bloomingtonians with a fabulous nature preserve. We need better connectivity across the bypass; we need better trails; and we need to preserve the natural diversity and abundance. Science must inform that work. As mayor I will follow the science and the long-term vision for Griffy. And I will respect the actions of the elected city council as well in evaluating options.

The neighborhood deer issue is a social/political decision. Given the great diversity of views of neighbors and neighborhoods, the city council, closest to the neighborhoods, is the best place for necessary decisions and compromises. Four years of study and deliberation have yet to produce action from the council. As mayor, I will press for resolution and support their decision(s).

LINNEMEIER: The urban deer problem in our neighborhoods will not solve itself, and kicking the can down the road again is not my way of doing things. I may have a solution that will be palatable to most citizens and make ecological sense as well.

Most people are already acquainted with the advantages of spaying and neutering their pets, so I don't think this idea would be difficult to sell to the citizenry. In Fairfax, Virginia, does are darted with an anesthetic and then transported to veterinarians who perform an ovariectomy before releasing them. With trained volunteers to transport the deer and veterinarians willing to donate their services, the cost becomes downright cheap.

The only problem with this is that the DNR won't allow it. In Fairfax they've gotten around this kind of prohibition by initiating an ongoing scientific study of the effect of sterilization on urban deer population. The IU Biology Department, Ball State, or the Purdue Vet School could easily do that. Failing that, Matt Pierce might introduce legislation to circumvent the DNR's policy, which frankly makes no sense to begin with. Sometime you have to think outside the box.

NEHER: I support only the use of non-lethal measures within the urban environment of Bloomington. Specifically, the Deer Task Force Report proposed a number of alternatives (including fence height, feeding ban, etc.) that should be considered by City Council. Additionally, Ball State researchers are collecting data concerning deer migration within our city that will ultimately help guide future policy decisions – which could include working with the Humane Society of the United States on a deer management plan.

I supported a lethal strategy for Griffy, but am waiting to see the report from White Buffalo to better understand the reasons for the cancellation of the cull. The cancellation is one data point to consider plus the subsequent research on plant regeneration that should take place this spring. This information will provide guidance on how to move forward with the Griffy policy to preserve this critical local ecosystem.

7) What will you do to improve and enhance cooperation with Monroe County, IU, and Ivy Tech?

HAMILTON: I will be a proactive and engaged mayor and communicate constructively with all surrounding jurisdictions, including the county and the region. I will make sure that the leadership of county government, IU, Ivy Tech, and our local schools have open contact with the city in general and me personally. I know many of these individuals personally and will enhance already strong channels to share our goals and challenges. Bloomington is the anchor and leader of our region, and as mayor I will represent our interests and values positively and energetically. I will conduct regular meetings with officials from Monroe County, IU and Ivy Tech.

We in the city will not always agree with sister institutions or jurisdictions. I will be a good listener and a good leader toward important goals. I will set the tone that even when goals are not identical, we can accomplish far more by cooperating. I have decades of experience doing this hard work of collaboration: growing the community development bank that I founded; working with mayors, legislators, and county officials while leading two large state agencies; and serving the public on numerous boards dealing with sustainability, poverty, public education, preservation, and other issues.

LINNEMEIER: Coordination between the city and the county has occasionally been a problem. There has been duplication of services, the overlapping of responsibilities and occasionally, unproductive turf wars. These types of problems create inefficiencies and cost tax payers' money.

Full out Unigov like they have in Marion County may be unachievable but we should at least begin to explore what is possible.

I have always felt that the value of informal contacts between people is vastly under rated. Certainly, committees involving high level representatives from IU, the city and IVTC are important but I would like to institute weekly lunches, racquetball games or walks in the woods with President McRobbie, Chancellor Vaughn and the mayor.

NEHER: Improving and enhancing cooperation between our city, Monroe County, Indiana University, and Ivy Tech requires the creation of clear and consistent lines of communication. If elected, I would actively work to build those critical community relationships. During my first week as Mayor, I would invite County officials, President McRobbie, and Chancellor Vaughn to establish quarterly meetings with the Mayor's office to enhance collaboration and communication within our shared community.

These relationships are particularly important when considering our vision for our community. For example, each major stakeholder brings its own vision for land use. How do these needs intersect and impact one another? Are there contradictions that work against the benefit of our community that could be resolved?

I would also expand the list of entities I would meet with – including MCCSC, representatives from our business community, our arts community, and social services community. Developing

these relationships is central to our long-term planning, and when there are policies that need to be discussed we can do so from a position of trust and respect.

8) What other issues do you think will be the biggest concerns for the city in the coming years?

HAMILTON: The greatest challenge in the upcoming years is building a 21st century economy while protecting Bloomington's unique way of life and increasing local sustainability. For decades we have been losing manufacturing jobs. While some employers have created new jobs, today, Bloomington's annual per capita income is just \$19,000. As a community we must unite and implement a strategy to build an economy that serves everyone—good paying sustainable jobs across the spectrum.

That's why I have a plan to encourage an entrepreneurial economy based on innovation and creativity. That means establishing progressive policies and approaches that include investing in city-wide broadband to cut business costs, providing loans and infrastructure for local businesses, and providing job training tailored to the local market.

Next, nothing is more important to our long-term health than strengthening our public schools so that every child has learning opportunities and outcomes second to none. Our next mayor must be an articulate and forceful advocate for our public schools. I will provide leadership in protecting and improving our public schools.

Finally, we must commit ourselves to ensuring all residents are a part of our city's vision, from ensuring affordable housing to providing an open and accountable government.

LINNEMEIER: The Hospital...Use sticks and carrots to keep it downtown. Have a backup plan if we lose, so the area doesn't become a hollowed out space...What's possible now that wasn't possible before? Affordable housing? A band shell? A sculpture garden? Start a website where regular citizens, not just the chosen few, can throw out ideas.

The Switchyard...Build a world class park...Seek out private donors...The Buskirk Chumley is an example. I'll donate 10% of my salary for a grove of Dawn Redwoods.

\$12.50/hr minimum wage... Seattle, San Diego and Santa Fe did it... Anyone who works 50, 60 or 70/hrs weeks should be able to own a small house and take their kids out for ice cream.

Decriminalize marijuana... Philadelphia did it... No one's life should be ruined by a victimless crime...It cost money and ties up police, prosecutor and jails.

Buses...For \$600,000 (7% of its operating budget), everyone in Bloomington could ride any bus, hop on and off at any stop, and go anywhere in town for nothing. The BT wants 1.5 million in new taxes to extend hours and add new routes. I'd spend the money differently.

A municipally owned high-speed fiber optic system... a small window of opportunity exists.

NEHER: (1) Homelessness: The City of Bloomington cannot be the silver bullet to solve homelessness, but I believe the Mayor can be a catalyst to drive broad-based community solutions that address our citizens' needs for shelter as well as mental health and rehabilitation services.

Through my work on City Council, I've learned that addressing complex problems requires political will, a commitment to best practices, and a willingness to listen to a range of community stakeholders.

As Mayor, I'll continue to support successful programs like Shalom Center, Crawford Homes, New Hope, Interfaith Winter Shelter, and other local not-for-profits and will drive new solutions through a community-wide collaborative process.

(2) Responsible Financial Management and Oversight: As taxpayers, you deserve to know your city is careful with your dollars. We can continue to expand our economic vitality and quality of life for everyone in our community by developing realistic budgets that protect our community's financial health. I will propose programs for our city only after careful study to ensure our "big new ideas" match the realities of our infrastructure, budgets, laws, and needs. To retain public trust, I will continue to implement sensible internal controls and rolling audits throughout city government.