



COLUMBUS LOCAL VOTER GUIDE

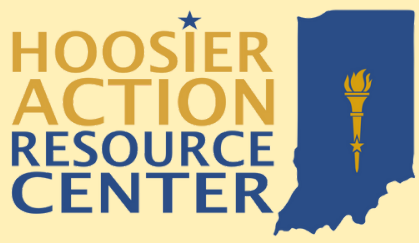


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**Declined or failed to respond*

WELCOME & INTRODUCTION

This non-partisan local voter guide was compiled by the Bartholomew County chapter of Hoosier Action. We are a group of community members who believe that everyday people should be at the center of the decision making which impact our lives. We want to build a Columbus where our elected officials put the needs of everyday people first and represent the very best of us.

This year is a local election year: the Columbus mayor, City Council, and City Clerk are all up for election. Local elections are one of the most direct ways to affect change in your community, and even a single vote can have a big impact. Last local election, just one vote decided a city council race.

This voter guide is part of our local Columbus elections project “Put People First: Vote Local 2023,” which you can learn more about at hoosieraction.org/columbus. We created this project after holding 250 conversations with Columbus residents where we identified three core issues: housing, mental health, and government transparency. Through these conversations, we created “The People’s Platform,” which you can read on the next page, as well as the candidate’s questionnaire which we invited all mayoral and city council candidates to fill out. This guide includes all candidate responses received by the deadline in full.

The Bartholomew County Chapter of Hoosier Action is committed to putting everyday people first, building everyday people power to work with elected officials year-round, not just during the elections. We are committed to continuing to bringing together everyday families and working with decision makers to make Columbus a place where working-class families and tenants can live safe, thriving lives here.



We hope you’ll consider joining us at our next chapter meeting! To learn more sign-up at hoosieraction.org/events or contact Stephanie, the Bartholomew County Community Organizer, at stephanie@hoosieraction.org.

THE PEOPLE'S PLATFORM

We envision a Columbus that puts people first. Where every individual, child, parent, and grandparent has a safe roof over their head. Where all of us – no matter how much money you make or how long you've called Columbus home – can live in our homes unafraid of being priced out. But there are real barriers that stand in the way of this vision. Everyday working people bear the brunt of our community's shortage of safe and affordable housing, the overdose and mental health crises, and the need for more well-paying jobs that keep up with rising costs while allowing us to support our families. These are not unsolvable issues. But we will need our city to put the needs and priorities of everyday people first, instead of the wealthy few or out-of-town corporate developers who profit off of our town becoming more unaffordable. We believe the people closest to the problem are closest to the solution. So it will take all of us coming together and making sure the voices of everyday families are at the center of decision making in our city to pave a brighter path forward.

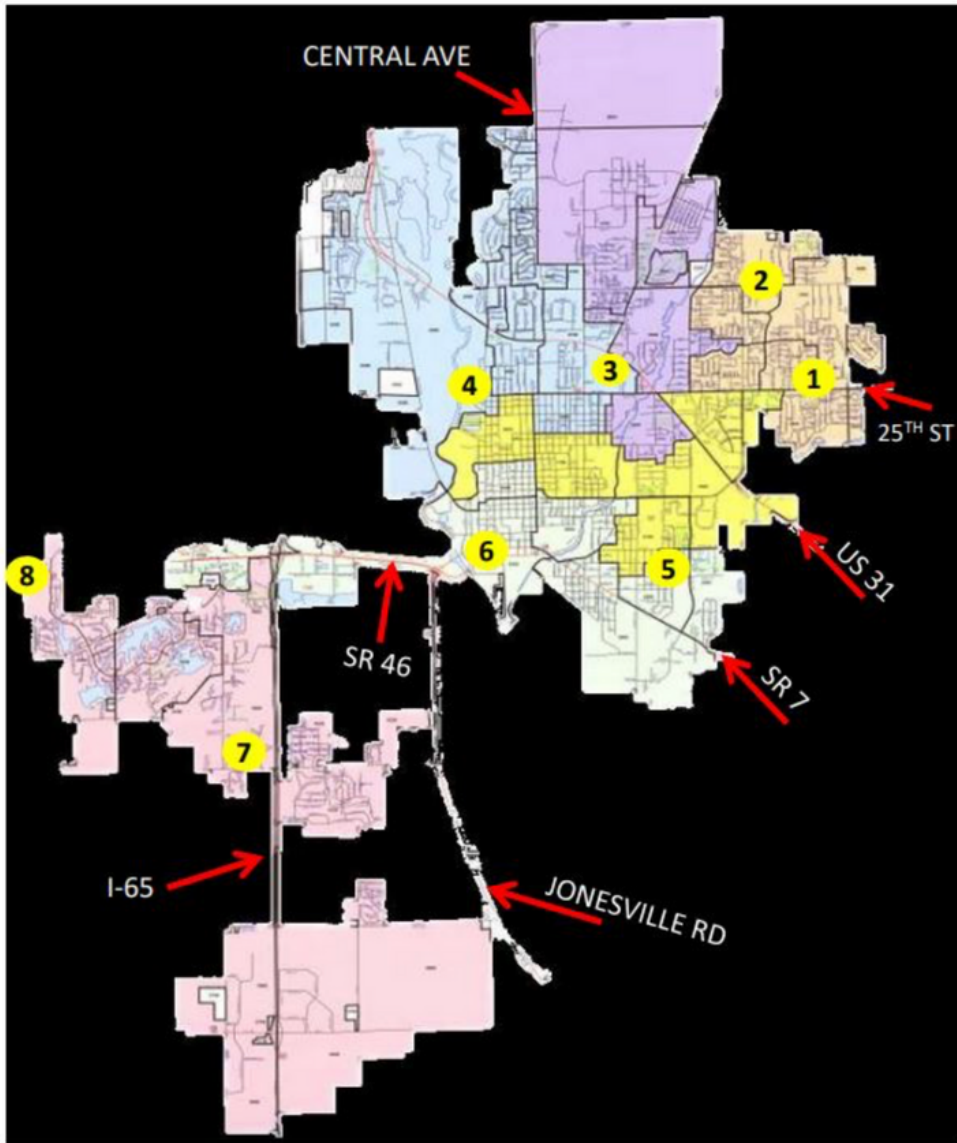
AFFORDABLE & SAFE HOUSING - All people deserve safe, stable and affordable housing. We want a future where all families, no matter their income, have a healthy, dignified, and beautiful home. We need a city that is committed to providing safe, accessible, and truly affordable housing to families at all income levels, not just those towards the top. We need a city that will take all possible measures to protect the safety and condition of our homes, so our neighbors do not have to live in fear of getting sick, being retaliated against, or losing their home. We need a city that sufficiently funds services to those who are homeless or unhoused, because we are all safer when our neighborhoods are stable.

OVERDOSE CRISIS & MENTAL HEALTH - Everyone deserves compassion and care when dealing with addiction and mental health. We envision a future where anyone going through a hard time is met not with judgment, fear, and incarceration, but with dignity, compassion, and care. We need a city that works to end the stigma for drug use and addictions, supports evidence-based treatment and care, and expands pathways to recovery to ensure that everyone can access affordable treatment. Communities are strongest when we care for each other in our hardest moments, and we need a city that pushes for this.

WELL PAYING JOBS - All of us deserve to be able to find and keep a good, honest, well-paying job that supports our local community and ensures we have more than enough to care for our families, keep a roof over our heads, and save for the future, without having to work multiple jobs well beyond retirement age. We need a city that pushes to make this possible and invests in our working people.

ACCOUNTABLE & TRANSPARENT GOVERNMENT - All people deserve to have access to how our shared public resources are spent. We need a city that is not only transparent about the decisions, but also actively works with everyday working people to make those decisions and lead on important community projects.

WHERE & WHEN TO VOTE



Vote Center Locations for 2023 Municipal Election

Satellite Locations:

NexusPark (Formerly Fair Oaks Mall)
Voting begins at this location on October 16th (Mon-Fri 8am-5pm) and ends on November 6th at noon. October 28th and November 4th (Saturdays 8am-3pm)

Barth. Co. Governmental Office Bldg. (Franklin Street side) Saturdays (October 28th and November 4th) 8am-3pm
NO VOTING AT THE COURTHOUSE

Election Day Sites – November 7th

1. **Flintwood Wesleyan Church**, 5300 25th St, Columbus, IN 47203
2. **St. Johns Masonic Lodge**, 4131 Rocky Ford Rd., Columbus, IN 47203
3. **NexusPark (Formerly Fair Oaks Mall)**, 2288 25th St, Columbus, IN 47201
4. **Donner Center**, 739 22nd St., Columbus, IN 47201
5. **River of Living Water Christian Church (formerly Berean Bible)**, 51 N Brooks St, Columbus, IN 47201
6. **Barth. Co. Governmental Office Bldg.**, 440 Third Street, Columbus, IN 47201
7. **Terrace Lake Church**, 4260 W. 200 S., Columbus, IN 47201
8. **Westside Community Church**, 124 Tipton Lakes Blvd, Columbus, IN 47201

Remember to bring a valid photo ID with you to vote!

Check your voter registration and view a sample ballot at indianavoters.in.gov



FAQS ABOUT VOTING

WHAT DO I NEED TO VOTE?

A valid photo ID is required to vote in person in Indiana. Your photo ID must display your name, an expiration date (can be current or expired sometime after Nov 8, 2022), and be issued by the State of Indiana or the US government. Acceptable forms of ID include: Indiana driver's license, Indiana-issued photo ID card, US Military ID, or a student ID from an Indiana State school.

CAN I VOTE IF I'VE BEEN PREVIOUSLY INCARCERATED?

Yes, you can vote! Voting rights are restored upon release from jail or prison. People who have been previously incarcerated should check their registration, and re-register to vote if it has been canceled. Individuals on parole, probation, home detention, or people who are in jail awaiting trial can vote. People who are in a community corrections program, such as work release or electronic monitoring, can vote.

I REQUESTED AN ABSENTEE BALLOT, BUT I THINK IT IS LOST IN THE MAIL, WHAT SHOULD I DO?

First, you should call your local your local county board of elections for their advice. You can request a new absentee ballot be sent via the mail or vote in-person on election day instead. If you choose to vote in-person on election day instead, make certain to notify the poll workers of your lost ballot when you go to vote.

CAN I TAKE MY KIDS TO THE POLLS?

Yes, children under 18 are allowed to accompany their parents or guardians to the polls.

CAN I TAKE A PHOTO OF MY BALLOT?

Yes! In 2015 a Federal Court judge halted implementation of a law banning "ballot selfies." It is legal to take a photo of your ballot before or after you fill it out.

WHAT IF I'M STILL IN LINE WHEN THE POLLS CLOSE?

Stay in line! Polls are open 6 am-6 pm local time on election day. In Indiana all voters in line prior to 6 pm are eligible to vote.



SEAN BURTON

CANDIDATE FOR MAYOR

Why are you running for office?

My decision to run for office was made so that the Columbus Mayoral race could be a contested race for the first time in over a decade. I'm passionate about affordable housing and making it so that residents of Columbus can live happily void of worry about how they'll pay for their home or eat. It's important from an accountability standpoint that these races are contested and not just handed over.

What, if anything, should the city do to increase affordable housing options locally?

I feel like the city should be partnering with companies that build, and manage, Section 42 properties and get some ideas for how and where to develop here in Columbus. We're doing a great job of developing housing but not the housing we need. We're moving forward as if the shortage doesn't exist.

What, if anything, do you think the city should do to protect residents and ensure that rentals are safe and habitable?

The city should be fully responsible for holding landlords accountable for the dwellings they own. Nobody deserves to live in unsafe conditions. It is my thought that there should be a form of code enforcement that monitors the safety and upkeep of rental housing.

What, if anything, do you think the city should do to address and prevent homelessness in our community?

Homelessness is difficult and it's been around for a long time. However with it's expansion on the rise it's never been more prevalent that something needs done. Efforts to combat the contributing factors to homelessness (i.e. drug addiction, gambling addiction, hard times) will be the best place to start. Working together with the State and surrounding communities to make sure we have the tools in place to create an environment of recovery as opposed to solely enforcement.

What, if anything, do you think the city should do to address the overdose crisis and support those struggling with substance use disorder?

I feel like a movement from treating people like criminals to treating them like humans is a great place to start. ASAP has done great work in Columbus but we have a way to go. Addressing the growing mental health crisis in our world would also be paramount. We have an obvious range of issues that all tie in together. Housing costs, mental health, substance abuse and homelessness. Vicious cycle . . .



SEAN BURTON

CANDIDATE FOR MAYOR

Would you support the implementation of mobile health crisis response units in Columbus?

I like the idea of expanded response resources. Mobile units ready to respond can't be a bad thing. However, if this were to be in our future I'd like to see them working in conjunction with law enforcement. Given that it is still criminal activity and a big time public safety issue overall. I do like the idea of making it more of a medically responsive effort as opposed to just having armed officers showing up.

How do you plan to be transparent and accountable to your constituents if you're elected?

Columbus needs to constantly be seeking new ways to fully engage with its residents. I've tossed around the idea of a mobile app that residents could download to any device. There they could engage with local officials, have easier access to live and archived feed from public meetings and have important safety information at their fingertips and through push notifications. My goal is to open the doors of transparency and make every citizen feel like they are an important part of these processes. Because they are!



MARY FERDON

CANDIDATE FOR MAYOR

Why are you running for office?

Columbus is my home, and has been for over 30 years. I've been privileged to raise my family here, work and volunteer in many great organizations and build a productive life. I've also been honored to work for the City of Columbus for the past eight years, in the role of Executive Director of Administration. I've been fortunate to meet and work with many great business partners, employees and residents. We've been through many challenges and we will continue to deal with tough and critical issues over the next four years. These include attracting businesses, providing housing at all levels, retaining residents, providing quality public safety and other services. I believe I have the drive, experience, and knowledge to move Columbus in the direction it needs to tackle and address those issues. And I want to continue to be a part of what makes this city grow and prosper.

What, if anything, should the city do to increase affordable housing options locally?

The lack of housing is an issue across this country. We lacked affordable housing prior to 2020, and the pandemic and subsequent economic issues has exacerbated the problem. High material costs and a lack of labor have hurt developers, and inflation has affected many people's ability to afford to buy or rent a home. We know anecdotally we lack housing, although the city has added 1900+ housing units over the past eight years; however, we lack hard data to make informed choices as to how to best use our resources. This fall, we began a housing and needs assessment to identify existing housing stock and recommend future housing strategies for the city. Housing is a spectrum and we need units at all levels – but most importantly at the low/affordable/attainable level. This study will give us data to find developments, identify resources and tax credits and work on neighborhood revitalization strategies.

What, if anything, do you think the city should do to protect residents and ensure that rentals are safe and habitable?

The City has been proactive over the past 5+ years, using our code enforcement officers to identify and work with owners of unsafe and uninhabitable properties in the City. We have developed a strategy which, once a complaint is made or an officer identifies a home as being unfit or missing necessary services for habitation, mandates a property owner respond to code enforcement, the Board of Public Works and Safety, and eventually the court system. We have focused on the worst properties in the City – with a goal to have them rehabilitated, condemned or demolished. We work on an average of 50 houses a year so they can get back into the housing market – or a new home can be built. This work is a priority for the current administration and City Council and will continue to be for me as a mayor.



MARY FERDON

CANDIDATE FOR MAYOR

What, if anything, do you think the city should do to address and prevent homelessness in our community?

Homelessness is a challenge we face – and one with no obvious solution. It is an intractable issue which overlaps with what our community have been already working on – substance abuse and mental illness. There is a spectrum of homelessness – some of it is caused by temporary circumstances and we have local resources which can help address those needs. The challenging population are those who are chronically homeless – often with underlying substance abuse and mental health issues. We will continue to support Brighter Days – our local homeless shelter. And, ASAP was created in 2018/2019 to address substance abuse issues and Recently the community launched a new mental health initiative – Mental Health matters – to see how we can impact growing mental health issues. By working in partnership and proactively, we’ve had impact. We will continue to reach out and partner with other organizations to intervene and proactively try to address these issues.

What, if anything, do you think the city should do to address the overdose crisis and support those struggling with substance use disorder?

The City of Columbus joined with Columbus Regional Hospital and Bartholomew County to create ASAP in 2017. The goal of the collaboration was to address the local opioid crisis and produce measurable goals which would address the community challenge. We created ASAP as a separate, stand-alone entity which would identify programs in several areas to address the problem at several levels – through jail treatment, a new drug court, prevention, residential treatment and a HUB to provide information and guidance the community members. And, as part of this effort, CRH set up TASC, a local out-patient treatment center which provides services to hundreds of patients, which hadn’t been available prior to ASAP. The City of Columbus and Bartholomew County provide over \$1 million each year to support this initiative. My goal is to continue to support ASAP, and help it evolve as the community needs change.

Would you support the implementation of mobile health crisis response units in Columbus?

A mobile health crisis unit currently exists in Columbus. The City and Bartholomew County are currently part of a program through Centerstone which provides mobile health crisis response to a 10 county area. The rapid response team includes mental health professionals such as Peer Recovery Specialists, Crisis Care Specialists and Licensed Mental Health Therapists. In addition, Stride Center in Columbus is available on 2 nd Street which is a subacute and acute crisis stabilization center. The City is also one of six partners including Bartholomew County, Bartholomew County School Corporation, Columbus Regional Hospital, Centerstone and United Way which has created an initiative – Mental Health Matters – to address challenges we see in the community and improve the mental health system for adults and youth in Bartholomew County. See mhmbc.org

How do you plan to be transparent and accountable to your constituents if you’re elected?

No response provided by the candidate.



TOM DELL

CANDIDATE FOR CITY COUNCIL AT LARGE

Why are you running for office?

I humbly ask for your support and vote as I seek reelection to a new term on our City Council. Whether it be the advent of all forms of new housing developments in Columbus and the accompanying energy, the activities and amenities of the forthcoming NexusPark or the myriad of other positive developments in Columbus and Bartholomew County, I will continue to provide positive leadership and support - engaging the community to develop positive ideas and solutions. *Listening to your reactions and opinions about all of this is a great reward!* To obtain all the benefits for our community as Columbus becomes a “Class 2 city,” I look forward to working with the Mayor and other council members setting the direction for strides forward.

What, if anything, should the city do to increase affordable housing options locally?

First of all, we must realize this challenge faces the entire nation. We are all looking for solutions and programs toward a better scenario. Certainly a key aspect of meeting the challenge is the free market. The city must continue to do all it can to support developers who want to increase our inventory of housing. The increased interest throughout various parts of our community is there!

When possible we need to work with the developers to support projects that will not just be “market-rate” housing but also some projects that support housing that provides subsidization for qualified tenants. The increased interest in downtown residential projects is heartening and rejuvenating. The developers of the workforce housing project, Gladstone Apartments, is working with the city’s Redevelopment office toward an even larger project that would again bring on quality workforce housing priced apartments. Their current success bodes well.

What, if anything, do you think the city should do to protect residents and ensure that rentals are safe and habitable?

The city has recently added an additional code enforcement officer making an investment in our efforts to combat such blight. We must continue to support Code Enforcement and the Board of Public Works and Safety as they identify and resolve issues. The ordinance review committee needs to make sure that our ordinances and consequences (fines) are of the best standard to enable enforcement and promote resolution.



TOM DELL

CANDIDATE FOR CITY COUNCIL AT LARGE

What, if anything, do you think the city should do to address and prevent homelessness in our community?

The rise of homelessness is something that tops many constituents' concerns. This is a challenge facing communities across our country. It is not only about affordable housing but also often about people facing mental illness and addiction. ASAP provides a model as the City and its various partners work in a new initiative to provide better coordination, improved programs and strong support for some of our most vulnerable community members with its Mental Health initiative.

Additionally, the city of Columbus must continue to foster, to demand and to support the best programs possible throughout our not-for-profit community and social service agencies. There is no short and easy answer. It is going to take continuous focus, prioritization and hard work.

Meeting challenges like these and providing quality city services are the rewards and responsibility of civic participation. I remain committed toward quality governance in my next term.

What, if anything, do you think the city should do to address the overdose crisis and support those struggling with substance use disorder?

During the past two terms, the City in coordination with multiple partners including Bartholomew County and Columbus Regional Hospital among others successfully conceived and launched ASAP - the Alliance for Substance Abuse Progress. We have seen many good efforts succeeding from this effort including new treatments situations, support groups and much more. We must continue to support the positive evolution of ASAP.

Additionally, the city has had strong success through law enforcement and its Intelligence Led Policing unit. City Council needs to support our first responders on all levels as we work to compassionately and collaboratively meet this crisis.

Would you support the implementation of mobile health crisis response units in Columbus?

Yes - if the funds are there and coordination is establishing with our existing law enforcement agencies.

How do you plan to be transparent and accountable to your constituents if you're elected?

Through a positive and collaborative process, I can assure you that your local city government works diligently to deliver great ideas, transparent government and positive results. As the city evolves in this next term, we must expect this to continue!

ALEX ENGLEBERT

CANDIDATE FOR CITY COUNCIL AT LARGE

Why are you running for office?

I am running for city council to bring action to the government. There are real needs in our city that need urgent attention as well as a reprioritization of taxpayer funds. Our focus should be continuing to make Columbus a city that works for all citizens. City government needs to demonstrate its commitment to all citizens, not just be an organizer of town halls and forums. Let us resolve to put rubber to the road and work to make this city better. As a city councilman, I will vote for action.

What, if anything, should the city do to increase affordable housing options locally?

In some ways the city is headed in the right direction. There are more apartments as well as housing construction going on which will alleviate the housing crunch for some. But, there is a much broader sector of the city that is struggling. We have to approve and/or solicit construction of apartment projects that have monthly rates below market value. The average size of the American family has gotten smaller, but the size of the average American home is bigger. Our focus needs to be on smaller units with broader affordability.

What, if anything, do you think the city should do to protect residents and ensure that rentals are safe and habitable?

The City must be prepared, if necessary, to seek redress in the courts regarding uncooperative landlords. Landlords have an obligation to provide safe and appropriate conditions for their renters. The City should take all complaints seriously, investigate and inspect, and take action against rental companies that are sacrificing common decency for greater profits. But, it is also about education and making sure that renters know what they are signing up for and to understand their rights.

What, if anything, do you think the city should do to address and prevent homelessness in our community?

The City Government must act strongly and decisively in the area of providing affordable housing. Columbus has a growing homeless population and the city must invest in and/or construct government-sponsored subsidized housing for this group. The priority of the City Council must be to move these citizens from the street corners into housing. This effort must be complimented by providing job training and education opportunities to return them to self-sustaining contributors to our society. Government is the only engine powerful enough to solve this problem.

ALEX ENGLEBERT

CANDIDATE FOR CITY COUNCIL AT LARGE

What, if anything, do you think the city should do to address the overdose crisis and support those struggling with substance use disorder?

Substance abuse disorders are a product of the mental health crisis that is facing many communities in the United States. A good first step that can be done immediately is to make the drug Narcan more widely available in public places so citizens can receive and/or administer potentially life-saving treatment for opioid emergencies. Knowledge and access to Narcan should be just as accessible as AEDs in our public spaces. We will never be able to eradicate substance disorders, nor mental illness. But, we can adjust our responses to save more lives

Would you support the implementation of mobile health crisis response units in Columbus?

Mobile Health Crisis Response Units are a relatively new protocol and option for responding to certain emergencies that have gained popularity nationwide. While I support any option that frees up our Police to address more potential life-threatening emergencies and make better use of their manpower, I think there is room for discussion. My answer to this question can only be “maybe” at this time. We need to hear from our police, citizens, and mental health professionals on what their feelings are and what the data shows.

How do you plan to be transparent and accountable to your constituents if you're elected?

The City Council needs to be better stewards of using social media and the internet to bring transparency to government. Citizens should not be left wondering how their tax dollars are being spent. While traditional stories in The Republic are fine and good, Facebook, Twitter (X), and other social media platforms should be used to gather citizen input and communicate developments on city policy. The City should hold far more open forums than they do to give citizens the opportunity to speak and ask questions regarding proposed spending projects. The proposed Riverfront Project would be an example.



PAUL HOFFMAN

CANDIDATE FOR CITY COUNCIL AT LARGE

Why are you running for office?

I'm running for city council because I'd like to use my leadership, communication, and organizational skills to make Columbus the best possible place it can be for all of our residents. I am committed to getting to root cause of problems and solving that, not just put a bandage on the symptoms. I'll seek information from knowledgeable sources, listen to the concerns of the citizens, and make decisions in their best interests.

What, if anything, should the city do to increase affordable housing options locally?

There needs to be a two-pronged approach: Increase pay and decrease home costs. Increasing pay is national in scope, but we can do a part here by incentivizing businesses that pay employees a decent wage. Wall Street is using tech firms like Zillow to buy eat up starter homes. This has created a pipeline for big investors to buy properties, often in communities of color, and flip them for much higher prices. This leaves the starter home market base for people who need them. We need to remedy that.

I also think we can Incentivize new construction of affordable homes, work to lift condo lending restrictions as condos are often a step toward first-time home buying, focus on manufactured housing as they typically cost less than homes built on-site, seek to improve financing for existing homes, and help borrowers with better financing tools.

What, if anything, do you think the city should do to protect residents and ensure that rentals are safe and habitable?

We have codes; they need to be enforced better. So we need to put more resources into code enforcement, whether that's more hours, more backbone, or other remedies, I'll find out.

What, if anything, do you think the city should do to address and prevent homelessness in our community?

We have some great services for the homeless. But we do not have many places for them to go during the day, and we do not have a supportive housing program. We need one. Supportive housing is permanent, affordable housing with on-site support services to serve the needs of the most vulnerable population, including homeless individuals and people with disabilities. Many of these people don't have a support system, so wherever they are on the road to gaining permanent housing, employment, mental health care, etc., they need support. In addition, providing these services will make our city safer for all.



PAUL HOFFMAN

CANDIDATE FOR CITY COUNCIL AT LARGE

What, if anything, do you think the city should do to address the overdose crisis and support those struggling with substance use disorder?

The best way to prevent drug overdoses is to prevent drug misuse and addiction. Early use of drugs increases a person's chances of becoming addicted. So, preventing early use of drugs or alcohol may go a long way in reducing these risks. Also, risk of drug use increases greatly during times of transition, whether for teenagers or adults. But because the brain is still developing during adolescence, using drugs at this age has more potential to disrupt brain function in areas critical to motivation, memory, learning, judgment, and behavior control. Research- or evidence-based programs can help prevent drug addiction in youth. So, we need such programs.

Mental health plays a part in many addictions. Removing the stigma from mental health care goes a long way in helping people seek out that sort of care. Emergency medical personnel and officers of the law need to carry Narcan to treat opioid overdoses.

Would you support the implementation of mobile health crisis response units in Columbus?

Definitely. A police officer is responsible for law enforcement and public safety and providing emergency services when responding to calls and investigating crimes. They patrol areas to detect and prevent crime. While many of them are adept at dealing with mental health and substance use crises, it's not their top field of expertise. We have professionals who are trained specifically to deal with such cases; let's do a better job getting them in on these incidents, even if a police officer is the first responder.

How do you plan to be transparent and accountable to your constituents if you're elected?

I will be available by phone and email, as all city council members should be. I will also put together an email newsletter, keep my website up to date, and post relevant information on social media.

CHRISTOPHER RUTAN

CANDIDATE FOR CITY COUNCIL AT LARGE

Why are you running for office?

I don't believe our money is being spent correctly and I don't believe our constituents are being listened to. I want to be a mouthpiece for the community and help guarantee that what we (from this side of the table) are actually seeing what they're looking at. There is a lot of work that I am willing to dedicate to besides the official meetings!

What, if anything, should the city do to increase affordable housing options locally?

Instead of saying something's going to get done, get off your duff and do it. We can't afford to entertain anymore new housing projects that are market rate prices. All the developers, private owners that rent their unit out, property managers, the assessors office, and other individuals needs to get involved to see how and where we can cut the fat off the rental rates from here on out!!

What, if anything, do you think the city should do to protect residents and ensure that rentals are safe and habitable?

In order to get an internal inspection of the dwelling, there has to be a complaint to the Health Dept or Code Enforcement. Often times, these tenants get evicted because the owner don't want to fix what's wrong with their unit! Many times, things have gotten out of control and caused the house to be condemned only to cause the owner thousands of dollars in repairs that could have been evicted. I will do some further research to see what if anything we can do!

What, if anything, do you think the city should do to address and prevent homelessness in our community?

The current administration believes there is enough help by outside agencies to take care of this problem. I DISAGREE! The city should find a grant locally or federally to purchase a building such as the old Columbus Transitional Care building on Midway and repair one wing at a time and make it a true 24/7 shelter. The other programs available are doing good for some but not everyone fits into that category! My bottom line is "help them up, not write them off!"

What, if anything, do you think the city should do to address the overdose crisis and support those struggling with substance use disorder?

We need to form a team and us as city leaders go out and talk to the homeless. Let them know we're concerned, and we care about them. Get a mentor and walk them every step to get them into rehab or get the help they need. When the program we have started now, it was a "let's push our beliefs on them no matter their opinion!" This left a bad taste in everyone's mouth.

CHRISTOPHER RUTAN

CANDIDATE FOR CITY COUNCIL AT LARGE

Would you support the implementation of mobile health crisis response units in Columbus?

This is exactly what Bartholomew County needs. Everyone gets scared and tightens up when they see a patrol go by let alone a police officer with a gun drawn. We need to decrease the fear instead of inciting the fear and the situation going horribly wrong due to non-cooperation by the subject!

How do you plan to be transparent and accountable to your constituents if you're elected?

I will hold a community meeting every quarter to let everyone know what could possibly be on our agenda and overall get a feeling or opinion on what they are currently facing in their lives and how we might be able to help them. I will also call-in state leaders to let them hear from the constituents and we will keep pressuring them until we get the answers we want and need!

CHRISTOPHER BARTELS

CANDIDATE FOR CITY COUNCIL DISTRICT 1

Why are you running for office?

As a medical professional, small business owner, volunteer, and family man during the COVID pandemic, I had first hand experience of the changes in our community. I am running for office to work on lowering property taxes, lower housing costs, and lower crime by supporting law enforcement. I hope to foster a safe city to work, play, and build community.

What, if anything, should the city do to increase affordable housing options locally?

Affordable housing for tax paying citizens is a major problem. I have been involved in residential housing for over a decade and have seen the changes along with the reasoning behind the changes. I believe in the long term it will get better, but in the short term things will get worse. The private sector has current projects building new, remodeling old, and repurposing existing buildings to provide more housing in Columbus. That along with more affordable building technologies, I see the cost of housing to decrease. I will continue to work on the root of the problem, making sure projects can be completed in a fashion that meets the needs of affordability. I have proven experience and have the knowledge to help with the solution. A major concern right now is that housing programs are paying out more than market rent. This along with growing red tape for renters trying to apply, the tax paying citizens are being punished. There are even cases where they have been evicted only to be replaced by a government housing program. This is a real problem and I have proven experience to bring new ideas to the table to address the housing crisis.

What, if anything, do you think the city should do to protect residents and ensure that rentals are safe and habitable?

I have been directly involved with housing in Columbus over the last decade. There was a time when Columbus had many more blighted properties. This developed due to aging buildings, lack of maintenance reinvestment, and tenants poor treatment. Property quality has improved dramatically over the last 10 years and continues to do so. Like I stated above, there are many private sector projects in the works. I have personally spent years repairing blighted properties, financing everything without taxpayer dollars, and have documented the neighborhood improvements. I am also currently working with Force construction on a downtown plan for new affordable green homes to replace some of the homes that require a lot of repairs. Over the years, I have worked with multiple local real estate groups and organizations building relationships and brainstorming ideas to continue improving housing in Columbus. Although the COVID pandemic had a huge impact on progress, I have seen things pick up again.

CHRISTOPHER BARTELS

CANDIDATE FOR CITY COUNCIL DISTRICT 1

What, if anything, do you think the city should do to address and prevent homelessness in our community?

Homelessness involves mental health, drug addiction, eviction, or job loss. It requires involvement by the homeless individual and the community. Thankfully, our loving community formed multiple avenues of outreach. I have personally been involved, and can report that churches, non-profits, doctors, and local businesses are working together and implementing plans.

What, if anything, do you think the city should do to address the overdose crisis and support those struggling with substance use disorder?

In order to maintain my licensing, I am required continuing education in drug abuse and addiction along with the proper channels to direct patients. These requirements stand with all medical professionals and many other professionals. Drug addiction, much like homelessness, is a multifactorial problem. There is not one reason for the disease and therefore not one solution. Thankfully, our loving community has formed more options to be available than ever before. Communication, direction, and patient follow through to these options is key to the success.

Would you support the implementation of mobile health crisis response units in Columbus?

Unfortunately, I do not have much knowledge of this new proposal. But, I can tell you the process I would complete to learn more about it before making a decision. I would start by going to police in the community and asking them their thoughts on the proposal. I would then look into other communities that have integrated the program to benchmark and see if it is working. I would need to research, attend an informational meeting, and ask more questions to the organization before I could properly answer this question.

How do you plan to be transparent and accountable to your constituents if you're elected?

I will continue the high level of communication of which I have shown throughout my career as a professional in the community and my campaign. Talking to citizens, business owners, churches, nonprofits, and associations will continue to be a regular part of my week's schedule. I am a reasonable person open to conversation as long as the other side holds the same standards.



NICK SLABAUGH

CANDIDATE FOR CITY COUNCIL DISTRICT 1

Why are you running for office?

I feel tremendously blessed to have grown up in Columbus. This city has given me a lot, and it seems like a great time to give back.

I've always had an interest in urbanism - the planning and management of great cities. This city has a lot going for it, and with good leadership, the sky is the limit.

What, if anything, should the city do to increase affordable housing options locally?

The cost of housing is the number one issue I hear about from the people I talk to every day. Many people are paying rents above what they can comfortably afford, and the supply of affordable units continues to fall short of demand.

I believe in a three-pronged approach to addressing these issues. One, encouraging new and more affordable development by making it simple and easy to build Accessory Dwellings citywide, and by relaxing restrictive zoning to allow construction of new multi-unit homes such as duplexes and townhouses without expensive and time-consuming variance and appeals processes.

The toughest truth is that there are simply many jobs that don't pay enough to cover rent in this town. Our living wage for many years has been thought to be about \$17 an hour, which makes an affordable rental rate about \$800 per month. Almost no units are available at that rate.

Thus - and here is where I suspect I differ most from my opponent - I would vote for expansion of income adjusted rental subsidies, the creation of an eviction prevention program that helps people temporarily catch up on late rent payments, and stricter affordability requirements for developers who seek tax abatements and direct subsidies from city funds.

What, if anything, do you think the city should do to protect residents and ensure that rentals are safe and habitable?

I would love to see a Tenant's Bill of Rights in Columbus that sets out basic protections to which all tenants are entitled. Many rights are already set out at the state level: Clean, working water and sewer connections. Clean homes free of infestation. Safe, up-to-code dwellings. Unfortunately, some residents still don't have homes up to that standard. For this reason, I believe tenants in Columbus need more protections against eviction, such as an anti-retaliation provision for reporting maintenance failures and eviction prevention programs that help tenants resolve issues with their landlord without fear of eviction.



NICK SLABAUGH

CANDIDATE FOR CITY COUNCIL DISTRICT 1

What, if anything, do you think the city should do to address and prevent homelessness in our community?

We have wonderful programs to help the homeless, to help with addiction, and to transition people back into the workforce, but the job is not done until no one is left on the street.

This is a problem that we can solve, if we as a community choose to. Existing programs can easily be expanded, beds added, and funding allocated. But that's just the start.

We must also change the way we handle homelessness and the issues that drive it in a structural way. Communities all over the country have found major success in what are called "housing first" or "permanent supportive housing" programs. These programs provide immediate housing and ongoing support, and cost significantly less compared to our current approach.

What, if anything, do you think the city should do to address the overdose crisis and support those struggling with substance use disorder?

While great programs such as TASC exist, they fall short in key areas. Many only find their way into TASC as the result of an encounter with the legal system, after first having been arrested and even jailed.

I believe that we need a different set of supports that avoids arrests and jail time, providing safe places and services for a person to get sober and receive support without a court order or a parole condition.

Would you support the implementation of mobile health crisis response units in Columbus?

Absolutely. Our first responders currently shoulder far too much of the burden of this crisis. Many cities have successfully added mental health and drug crisis responders, specifically trained and equipped to handle such issues. Columbus should explore these options and find ways to reduce the risk and harm for current users while also offering safe, non-punitive programs for those who are ready to get clean.

How do you plan to be transparent and accountable to your constituents if you're elected?

As anyone who eats breakfast at Jill's Diner can tell you, I'm out talking to people in my district just about every day! I also plan to maintain an open social media presence where I will be sharing regular updates about what's going on in Council meetings and with the boards and commissions to which I am appointed.

It's easy to get lost in the minutiae of meeting agendas and minutes if you're not there, so I want to make sure everyone in my district understands what we're working on and why I'm choosing to vote the way I do - and that they can tell me if they disagree!



ELAINE HILBER

CANDIDATE FOR CITY COUNCIL DISTRICT 2

Why are you running for office?

I'm running for office because I think it's important for people who love Columbus to step up and lead in our community. It's hard to put your name on the ballot, but if people who have good intentions do not, then we would be led by those who don't have any intention of serving the people.

What, if anything, should the city do to increase affordable housing options locally?

There are a lot of things the city can do, from incentivizing developers, to taking a look at housing codes. Allowing for smaller lot sizes, smaller minimum housing requirements, allowing for accessory dwellings, supporting duplex and condo housing, etc. These are all the role of city council, but the need is there for forward thinking councilors who support alternate types of housing vs. the traditional single family developments.

What, if anything, do you think the city should do to protect residents and ensure that rentals are safe and habitable?

The city should be working to enforce the housing codes that exist today. We not only created the landlord registry so that the landlords could be identified behind LLC's, but we also have supported hiring an additional code enforcement officer so that the work can be done to ensure housing comes up to a safer standard.

What, if anything, do you think the city should do to address and prevent homelessness in our community?

The city should be working to coordinate the services offered to support those in our community. A lot of services currently exist, but they are not easy to navigate. How can someone get a job if they don't a license? How can you get an ID if you don't have an address? These are hurdles that people are facing that cause them to become homeless and we need to help support those who are outside of mental illness and addiction to be able to keep or find housing.

What, if anything, do you think the city should do to address the overdose crisis and support those struggling with substance use disorder?

The city created ASAP in 2016 I believe, and we've supported that initiative every year to help people not only in recovery, but also with the courts and medical care. The city has supported all police officers carrying Narcan to help revive those that are unconscious, but at the end of the day, the problem was started with the over-prescribing of opioid medication and that had to stop to keep the problem from progressing further. The city is tasked with dealing with the fallout, and has supported programs and recovery centers that have come to council.



ELAINE HILBER

CANDIDATE FOR CITY COUNCIL DISTRICT 2

Would you support the implementation of mobile health crisis response units in Columbus?

Absolutely. Our council supported the hiring of a full time chaplain for the police department to ensure that our officers have access to someone who is a neutral party who can help support from a mental health standpoint, and I see no reason why we wouldn't want to do the same for those in the community who are struggling.

How do you plan to be transparent and accountable to your constituents if you're elected?

I plan to continue to be responsive and respectful to everyone. I respond to every email I get (even if I'm a little late), and I try to make myself available on social media so that people know what's going on in the community. I'm always happy to share my logic behind my votes even if I don't agree with everyone, and I try to seek public input where I can. If there are more ways I can be transparent and accountable, I would be happy to take that feedback and try to incorporate it into my term.



JERONE WOOD

CANDIDATE FOR CITY COUNCIL DISTRICT 3

Why are you running for office?

I am running for office because I love helping people and I want to represent those who feel they don't have a voice when it comes to issues in the city. I am also running to help push issues like substance abuse, youth engagement, and health and wellness to the forefront. I am also a huge advocate for "actual" affordable housing in our community.

What, if anything, should the city do to increase affordable housing options locally?

The first thing that needs to be done is to actually determine what affordable housing in our community looks like. Paying over \$1,000 per month in rent is not affordable for the majority of our community. I am of the belief that fixing our affordable housing issue will also help with the amount of people that are currently homeless in our city. Affordable housing is not working hard every day just to spend your entire check on rent. Unfortunately, that is the situation that a lot of people are currently in.

What, if anything, do you think the city should do to protect residents and ensure that rentals are safe and habitable?

I believe that we can fix this issue by holding our landlords accountable at all times. There are far too many instances where people are living in homes that are not properly taken care of and there are landlords who are not doing their job. I also believe that tenants have a responsibility in keeping up with things inside their home as well. Problem caused by tenants should not fall on the landlord. However, if there are issues that arise or pre-existing issues, the landlords need to make sure that they are taking the necessary steps to ensure the safety of their tenants.

What, if anything, do you think the city should do to address and prevent homelessness in our community?

Homelessness is an issue that not only affects our community but the surrounding communities as well. I believe addressing the affordable housing issues can help mitigate this problem. I also believe that giving more resources to our existing shelters will help as well. I like the idea of not only providing shelter but also providing the necessary tools to make them equipped to sustain life on their own. That could be help with building a resume, budgeting classes, and mock job interviews. This is an issue we can never stop trying to fix in our community.



JERONE WOOD

CANDIDATE FOR CITY COUNCIL DISTRICT 3

What, if anything, do you think the city should do to address the overdose crisis and support those struggling with substance use disorder?

The first thing we need to understand is that this disease does not only affect the addict but the entire family as a whole. In this instance that word family means community. We can't look at or treat those suffering from addiction like there's no hope for them. They need love and support just like everyone else in our community. This is an issue that grows daily and its only getting worse. Therefore, we should be using every resource available to help those suffering from this disease. Not just the immediate families but the community as a whole.

Would you support the implementation of mobile health crisis response units in Columbus?

I fully support the use of a mobile health crisis response unit in our community. The police do a fantastic job under Chief Richardson but there are other areas they are more needed. To have trained professionals in the mental health field would be a great addition to our community. Mental health is something that I feel isn't talked about enough today's world. Taking the additional steps to have the right type of help when dealing with mental health problems is great for our city.

How do you plan to be transparent and accountable to your constituents if you're elected?

I am no different or better than anyone in our community. I go to work every day and I do my best to help provide for my kids like many others do daily. I want to be viewed as someone who is approachable at all times. I want to be on city council to help people that need help. I will continue to be involved and visible in our city. I am a regular guy just trying to make a difference in the community that raised me.

KEEGAN HILL

CANDIDATE FOR CITY COUNCIL DISTRICT 4

Why are you running for office?

I've been looking for more ways to get involved with the community, and while helping a friend run in the primary elections an opportunity arose. I love Columbus, but I have concerns about the future of this city and the people that call Columbus home. In recent years I have felt that I can no longer sit on the sideline and let my vote alone do the work. While I have much to learn, I feel that I could not pass up an opportunity to bring a working class perspective to our local government.

What, if anything, should the city do to increase affordable housing options locally?

Housing is a major problem for the whole country right now. Columbus can do it's part by working with developers to build lower and middle income properties and also work to expand housing co-op initiatives. I do believe more long term strategies need to be considered such supporting more pathways to home ownership and lessening incentives of non-resident investors owning large numbers of homes.

What, if anything, do you think the city should do to protect residents and ensure that rentals are safe and habitable?

I think this speaks to a broader point about awareness. There are requirements that landlords must follow and there are legal remedies available to those that require assistance. Efforts clearly need to be made to make such information and services better known to tenants in need. While the need for further regulation and protections may be in order, we need to keep in mind that any additional costs will be paid (with interest) by the tenant of a for-profit rental.

What, if anything, do you think the city should do to address and prevent homelessness in our community?

I am an advocate of housing first policies. We need first to recognize that for these individuals Columbus is their home, just as it is ours. I think that housing the unhoused in the short term looks like an expansion of shelter housing, in both quantity and hours of operation. I hope that in the long term we can work together to create multiple stages of housing with a social infrastructure.

What, if anything, do you think the city should do to address the overdose crisis and support those struggling with substance use disorder?

I'm glad to say that Columbus has been making progress in this area, while it is slow, I believe we are moving in the right direction. I am determined that programs like the ASAP hub get the funding and support they need. We have a long way to go, but I urge the city to have robust programs for those residents that need assistance at every stage of the rehabilitation process.

KEEGAN HILL

CANDIDATE FOR CITY COUNCIL DISTRICT 4

Would you support the implementation of mobile health crisis response units in Columbus?

Most certainly! This is a huge piece of what criminal justice reform looks like for the country.

How do you plan to be transparent and accountable to your constituents if you're elected?

From the start of my campaign, I have given my contact information to everyone I've spoken to and encouraged everyone to feel comfortable and confident reaching out. As a representative I would like to maintain a habit of soliciting the opinion of a few constituents at random on a regular basis. A crucial piece of this is engagement, and that will require a consistent effort on the part of myself and the community at large. I believe that one part of that to create an easy group or forum for which people can participate.



KENT ANDERSON

CANDIDATE FOR CITY COUNCIL DISTRICT 5

Why are you running for office?

The short answer is to serve and give back. My wife and I moved to Columbus twenty years ago and raised three children here. Indiana and Columbus have been very good to us. Serving on the Council would be another way of giving back.

I also believe that my work experience in industry and government could serve to enrich the perspectives represented on the City Council.

What, if anything, should the city do to increase affordable housing options locally?

The City Council is currently conducting a housing study. Studies are very important because they help identify root causes and associated solutions, and they serve to build consensus. Studies also help with prioritizing limited resources.

Columbus consists largely of single-family home housing. I am confident that the housing study will identify the need for a larger variety of housing types and densities as an avenue to greater affordability.

What, if anything, do you think the city should do to protect residents and ensure that rentals are safe and habitable?

During my meeting with you, you addressed this as one of your concerns. There are multiple local government agencies that work in this area. Code enforcement with and through the Board of Public Works, the County Health Department, and other adjacent departments. If elected I would be gaining more information about this concern to understand the situation from all perspectives and have more facts upon which to build an opinion.

If elected, I will be a very data driven member of the council. At the moment, it is difficult to propose solutions to a possible problem that requires more definition. I am very open to learning more.



KENT ANDERSON

CANDIDATE FOR CITY COUNCIL DISTRICT 5

What, if anything, do you think the city should do to address and prevent homelessness in our community?

Homelessness is clearly top of mind for residents of Columbus. I have heard this from many people as I go door to door. As noted in my response to The Republic, I believe we have a lot of work to do to make progress on this issue. Columbus has always been at its best when we have built consensus and worked as a team to tackle issues. As a next step, I believe we need to put more definition on the problem of homelessness. We all know the root causes of homelessness but we need to better understand which root causes are leading and which are lagging. A joint study of the problem will be needed to build the required consensus to make progress on this issue.

As part of the consensus building process we should benchmark other communities' approaches to the homeless problem in order to learn about best practices.

What, if anything, do you think the city should do to address the overdose crisis and support those struggling with substance use disorder?

The City created ASAP along with CRH a few years ago. The county court system has created the drug court. The hospital has their outpatient treatment center, law enforcement has the joint narcotics team. These efforts show just how large of a challenge the opioid crisis is to our community. If elected, I would support the City's continued funding of ASAP.

Would you support the implementation of mobile health crisis response units in Columbus?

I would defer to the leadership of our first responders on this. If the first responders of the city were to request the establishment of this capability within the city I would be supportive of it.

How do you plan to be transparent and accountable to your constituents if you're elected?

Central to my platform is being a voice for the citizens of District 5 on City Council. Once elected, city council is responsible to represent all of their citizens. To do this well, it is important to listen to constituents and be their voice. It is also important to communicate back to constituents. The role of a political leader within a legislative body such as the City Council is to understand and listen to the concerns of their constituents.



ERIC RIDDLE

CANDIDATE FOR CITY COUNCIL DISTRICT 5

Why are you running for office?

On June 7, I organized a 4-person panel at the library to commemorate the 15-year anniversary of the Columbus flood. In preparation, I reread my book about the first year of recovery, “Watershed: Service in the Wake of Disaster.” The leadership skills I developed, my relentless drive to serve, and my appreciation for serving people from all walks of life can all be traced back to this transformational experience. I was inspired by the reflections of community resilience from the panelists. When I was given the opportunity three weeks later to run for City Council, my enthusiasm to seek solutions to today’s challenges weighed heavily in my decision. I’m confident in my ability to make pragmatic decisions by applying my philanthropic heart, Christian faith, MBA education, entrepreneurial skills, and 28 years of relationship building in Columbus. I want to cultivate a safe, affordable, diverse, beautiful, and prosperous city.

What, if anything, should the city do to increase affordable housing options locally?

Housing affordability will be a top priority of mine in City Council. I’ve heard strong support for this while campaigning. In July, the Redevelopment Commission approved \$150,000 to complete a Columbus housing study. We should have results by spring 2024. Taking action aligned with the affordability recommendations is my goal. One of the first steps will be getting key stakeholders from the nonprofit community who identify affordable housing as a key need for their clients. This includes United Way and some of its partner organizations such as Thrive Alliance and Su Casa. We can not allow public dollars such as the proposed \$5.8 million for the property on Washington St. between 6th and 7th streets to be used for expensive housing. Subsidizing the wealthy to live in expensive apartments is the last thing we need to be doing while suffering through this housing shortage.

What, if anything, do you think the city should do to protect residents and ensure that rentals are safe and habitable?

The first thing the city can do is to enforce its ordinance standards around property maintenance. This summer, the Code Enforcement office has been doing a better job of holding landlords and property owners accountable to these basic standards. If it is deemed that new ordinances need to be considered to better protect renters and hold landlords accountable, I am willing to listen to those proposals as a member of City Council. The development of new ordinances could be done through reviewing the codes of other Indiana municipalities and holding private listening sessions among renters.

What, if anything, do you think the city should do to address and prevent homelessness in our community?

It starts with a foundation of empathy and commitment to providing safety. I recommend the creation of a new collaborative group devoted to homelessness, similar to our Alliance for Substance Abuse Progress (ASAP) and Mental Health Matters (MHM) Initiative, to address this issue. I am an advocate for including those who struggle with housing insecurity to be part of the group that is studying the issue and determining the best path forward for the city. In doing so, we are not only finding solutions for the homeless, but proactively preventing individuals and families who are at risk of homelessness.



ERIC RIDDLE

CANDIDATE FOR CITY COUNCIL DISTRICT 5

Since many people who suffer from homelessness also deal with addiction and struggle with their mental health, the ASAP and MHM groups have laid the groundwork for finding solutions. City Council can participate in facilitating a new focus group on homelessness that maximizes the excellent work already done.

What, if anything, do you think the city should do to address the overdose crisis and support those struggling with substance use disorder?

Overdoses and suicides are tragedies and I mourn the loss of those individuals. These types of death are preventable, but the solutions are highly complex. Unlike issues such as housing affordability that are economic in nature, overdoses deal with psychological pain and physiological complications with highly addictive substances. I do not have an easy answer. Our law enforcement officers need to be fairly compensated for the difficult work they do in preventing these drugs from entering our community. I support the salary increases that are part of the proposed Columbus city budget to pay our officers a competitive wage. An experienced and stable police force will be instrumental in reducing and responding to overdoses. City Council has been a stakeholder in Alliance for Substance Abuse Progress since it began in 2017. Continuing to invest in this effort must remain a commitment from our city so that these tragedies are prevented.

Would you support the implementation of mobile health crisis response units in Columbus?

Before answering this question, I want to thank Hoosier Action for your work in Columbus. I appreciate your non-partisan approach to building our Democracy and holding candidates and local officials accountable. You focus on issues that support those that are sometimes overlooked by the government. In doing so, you bring issues such as mobile health response units to the forefront of election topics. In my reading of this new law, these units are composed of licensed social workers and clinicians that will respond to non-threatening mental health-related calls in the city instead of law enforcement. I think this is an option worth exploring in Columbus. It is helpful that many of our police officers have taken Mental Health First Aid training. However, I do think officers would appreciate having trained medical professionals being present in a mental health crisis. The mobile health mental health crisis response units make that possible.

How do you plan to be transparent and accountable to your constituents if you're elected?

I am running for an open seat in City Council District 5. Tim Shuffett is stepping down after 3 terms and this opens an opportunity for a more engaged leader. Despite my work on city projects over the last 12 years, Tim Shuffett has never reached out to me. I will be more engaged with residents of District 5 who want to participate in city projects and advocate for change in Columbus. My slogan for the campaign is "Listen. Learn. Lead." I am eager to hear what others have to say, to do my research, and then make decisions after careful consideration. I am showing my commitment to connect by going door-to-door in my campaigning. I have knocked on over 500 doors already. Accountability and transparency start with a desire to connect, to not overpromise, to get the best answers, and to follow through with responsive communication.