



**Bloomington Board of REALTORS®**

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## Candidate Questionnaire

Name	Isabel Piedmont-Smith
Mailing Address	1108 S. Rogers St.
City, State, Zip	Bloomington, IN 47403

Office being sought:	Bloomington City Council, District 5
Party affiliation:	Democrat
Are you an incumbent?	Yes
Previous elected Offices held:	Only this one

***Background information:***

Current occupation:	Department Administrator/Fiscal Officer, IU
Other work experience:	Graduate Secretary, IU Social Studies Teacher, MCCSC
Educational background:	BA, History - Oberlin College 1992 MAT, Social Studies Education - Boston University 1994

***Please attach current resume.***

1. **What problems do you think will face the holder of this office over the elected term?** In broad terms, issues of sustainability are key, meaning can our city thrive in the long-term, and what does it take to do that? Barriers include lack of housing that is affordable for low-income as well as moderate-income people, dependence on a few large employers, dependence of most commuters on single-occupancy vehicles, and the epidemic of substance use disorders.
2. **What actions would you take to solve them?** In the next 4 years we will need to invest in public transportation and bike/pedestrian pathways, regulate scooters, prioritize affordable housing at the hospital site, and collaborate with the county on a Law Enforcement Assisted Diversion (LEAD) program to keep people with addictions out of jail and get them into treatment. I also intend to support local businesses through financial assistance and collaborative initiatives. See item 5 for more ideas on housing.
3. **What do you consider to be your top priorities if elected?** (1) The current hospital site, which will soon be owned by the City, must be developed with affordable housing, some mixed use, and a community center, including programming for seniors. (2) We must reduce greenhouse gas emissions by incentivizing alternative transportation, through continued bulk purchasing programs for solar panels, and through energy conservation efforts.
4. **What is your position on Private Property Rights?** Individuals have rights associated with their property, but these must be balanced with the needs of the community as a whole. All individuals benefit from a thriving community. Regarding development, I think there should be clear and fair rules for people seeking to build in Bloomington, but with significant public input to protect what already exists in our neighborhoods.
5. HUD defines affordable housing as housing where the “occupant(s) is/are paying no more than 30 percent of his or her income for gross housing costs, including utilities.” The median household income in Monroe County for 2017 was \$49,180 (Stats Indiana). The median sold price for homes in Monroe county in 2017 was \$178,000. A household making the median income with \$500 in debt and a \$5,000 down payment, can afford a \$146,000 home. How do you

**propose creating an environment to increase supply for these families?** We need a comprehensive housing study for Bloomington, and we need it as soon as possible. The Comprehensive Plan passed by Council in 2018 called for the creation of a Housing Commission, which I will work to implement in 2019. The commission must include representatives of IU so we can better gauge the need for student housing. Once the study is completed (within one year of the creation of the commission), I propose we hold a Housing Summit including all levels of local government, IU, BBR, MCAA, local developers, and affordable housing specialists to discuss the report and come up with a game plan to address the problem.

- 6. How do you propose supporting economic/industrial/housing growth in our community?** As stated in the Vision Statement section of the city's 2018 Comprehensive Master Plan, "the vision of growth and development for our community is a qualitative one." Also, "simple physical growth should not be confused with economic development nor be understood as a means to foster economic development." In this context, I want to focus on jobs and housing for people already in Bloomington. It's more a matter of converting the current built environment to be more affordable, and supporting local business that pay a living wage. That said, I would support local developers that have a stake in the long-term well-being of the city over external developers who build and then leave.
- 7. What is your position on the use of tax abatements?** Tax abatements are one tool that we can use to encourage well-paying jobs and affordable or "work force" housing, but they must always be scrutinized closely for the long-term benefits to the community that can expect to be achieved in exchange the tax break.
- 8. What do you think is the appropriate use of EDIT funds?** The Economic Development Income Tax has not been passed in Monroe County, and as far as I know it has not been recently proposed. Therefore I have not yet studied this issue. As with all issues, should this be proposed by local government colleagues, interest groups, or constituents, I would research the issue, see what other Indiana counties have done, and develop a plan that best meets the needs of Bloomington.
- 9. What changes in the governmental structure do you see in the next five years?** I don't foresee any changes.
- 10. What would you like to accomplish most if elected?** Along with City Council colleagues and the mayor's administration, I would like to come up with a plan for

the current hospital site that includes affordable housing for low-income and moderate-income individuals and families, some mixed use (commercial/retail), and a community center with senior programming. I think we should hire a master developer with a deep commitment to local engagement and closely monitor their progress as development moves forward. This site is adjacent to City Council District 5, so it is particularly important to me as District 5 representative.

11. **What can REALTORS® do to help you achieve your goals?** You can provide much-needed data on housing in Bloomington, participate in the housing commission and the proposed housing summit to chart a course for greater affordability.

Campaign Manager Name:	Isabel Piedmont-Smith
Campaign Treasurer	Penny Githens
Would you accept PAC money?	I will not accept funds from a PAC whose members may stand to gain financially from City Council decisions.
Address of campaign committee:	PO Box 1163, Bloomington, IN 47402