



LAWRENCE BOARD OF REALTORS®

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2021 CITY COMMISSION CANDIDATE QUESTIONNAIRE

Name: _Bart Littlejohn_____

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Biographical Information

Occupation: _Marketing Manager_____

Previous Government Experience: _Government Relations Coordinator – Golf Course Superintendents Association of America_____

Involvement in Community Activities: _Present -- Chair – Parks and Rec Advisory Board, Member-Douglas County Health Improvement Plan – Steering Committee; Past – President, Pinckney Neighborhood Association, Irish Road Bowling Chair – Lawrence St Patrick's Day Parade Committee, 2019 Leadership Lawrence Graduate, Junior Achievement – Bowling & Pen Pal program_____

Positions on Important Issues

Priority Issues:

1. What are your three top public policy priorities if you are elected to the City Commission?

___ It's my goal to work as hard as possible to bring as many people together as I can to provide solutions for the people of Lawrence focusing on equity, housing and economic development. _____

Housing Affordability:

2. What does "housing affordability" mean to you?

___It means that everyone: going from those people who are houseless; to the people who are looking to buy their first home; to the folks who are looking to move on to their 2nd or 3rd home (and everyone in between);

should at least have the opportunity to purchase a home. Right now that's just not possible and it's locking up our ability to positively affect availability and affordability. _____

3. In 2018, the Commission received the results of the BBC Housing Market Analysis. Among other things, that study told us:

- **Between 2001 and 2018, Lawrence saw an 85% increase in the median price of sold and listed homes (Section II, page 9);**
- **An affordably priced home using the HUD 80% MFI (the definition adopted in Plan 2040 for “affordable housing”) for Lawrence in 2019 is \$180,000 (Figure II-13, Section II, page 12);**
- **Nearly 50% of non-student renters in Lawrence want to buy a home and could afford a home priced between \$110,000 and \$262,000 (Section II, page 12);**

Since then, housing prices have steadily increased in Lawrence while inventory has declined. How would

you suggest Lawrence address this availability and affordability gap?

____ *I think that one of the regrettable aspects of the compilation of the 2040 plan was that it left the folks who have intrinsic knowledge of the market out of the input process: namely realtors, builders, and developers (both non-profit and for profit). I think that led to some onerous zoning regulations and ordinances that have contributed to the limited inventory of both available and affordable homes which have stunted the market. We should devote resources and compose a Housing Plan that includes all relevant actors. Specifically, the City, the County, (as above realtors, builders, and developers (RBD)), and also representation for the homebuyers.*

4. The Lawrence Board of Realtors® believes that everyone in Lawrence should have access to safe, affordable housing and that everyone should be able to experience homeownership within their means. Meeting the demand for moderately priced housing is difficult. The City of Lawrence has identified Affordable Housing as a major priority. Do you support new development policies that increase the cost of residential development? Please explain.

____ *I understand that the development and construction of homes will always face increases, but my goal is to have the RBD included in the conversation so that we can work on ways to defray the cost to the homeowners as much as possible. Because when we do that we all benefit.* _____

Would you support new development policies that would incentivize new residential development meeting market demand to supply workforce housing at \$250,000 or less? Please explain.

____ *Of course, I would have to review the policies; but I do think that it is very much needed to continue the growth of this town.* _____

Energy Efficiency

5. In March 2020, the City of Lawrence adopted Ordinance 9744, establishing a goal of 100% clean, renewable energy in all municipal operations by 2025 and city-wide by 2030. The Kansas Legislature pre-empted this ordinance during the 2021 session with the Energy Choice Act. What is your opinion regarding

clean energy policies and how should we balance environmentally conscious policies with the rising cost of housing and utilities?

*It will be a delicate balancing act. But, the important thing to remember is that we are talking in terms of transition and immediate change. Because if the latter was the case; it might be a bit of sticker shock for the consumer. Conversely though, I will remain committed to it. I will make sure that every year that a higher percentage than the last comes from clean renewable energy b/c there is a tendency for that type of commitment to get lost in the process.*_____

Sidewalks

6. The City of Lawrence has implemented a policy requiring landowners to maintain and repair sidewalks on their property or the City will do so at the landowner's expense. Do you support this policy? Please explain.

*Quite frankly, I think there has to be a better way. Because the current policy is causing some people NOT TO purchase homes given the eventual maintenance that would be needed to upkeep the sidewalks. Plus, if we are really serious about making this town more healthy we have to find those ways to encourage people to pursue those healthy habits.*_____

Economic Development:

7. In 2012, the Lawrence City Commission and the Douglas County Commission approved a proposal submitted by the Lawrence Chamber of Commerce to create the Joint Economic Development Council that is responsible for a wide range of economic development activities in our community. Do you support this partnership, and do you support the continued funding of the Joint Economic Development Council? Do you intend to promote economic development in the City of Lawrence and Douglas County? Please explain your answer.

*Absolutely! I think that it's vital that we continue to find ways to be on the same page as the County; because communication seems to continue to be one of our ongoing difficulties. I intend to promote it to best of my ability because I think it is vital to our collective success.*_____

8. When appropriate, do you support the use of economic development incentives (such as industrial revenue bonds, tax abatements, rebates, community improvement districts, etc.) to attract or retain jobs and economic development investments in our community? Please explain your answer.

*I'm glad that the retain factor was mentioned. Because sometimes we fall into the trap of relying too heavily on recruitment of business rather balancing those efforts with economic development for our working folks in town.*_____

9. How would you propose to balance the need for economic development and increasing density in our City with preservation of the City's character and historic resources and monuments?

___ *Simple answer: by trying to bridge the gap between the two factions through communication. I think there is some validity in the assessment from the consultant firm regarding the Downtown Master Plan in that some of historic resource ordinances might be inhibiting growth in the city. I also love that this town has such a historic nature and I want to retain as much of it as I can but we must join that passion with a way to allow the natural progression of growth of the town.*_____

City Budget Issues and Property Taxes:

10. In terms of your priorities on the City Commission, how highly would you prioritize your commitment to decreasing, or limiting future increases in the mill levy rate?

___ *I would try to hold off on it as much as I can but sometimes we have to be able to take the long-term measure of our situations at hand. At times that necessitates an increase. But what I will not do is operate in a vacuum without fully communicating why it is taking place and would consult industry experts and those who would be directly affected by it.*_____

Thank you for your valuable time and cooperation in completing this candidate questionnaire. Your response will be greatly appreciated and will be distributed to our membership so they can make an adequate judgment on the merits of the candidates. Please return this questionnaire to our office by June 18, 2021.

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