



Iowa City Area  
Business Partnership's  
2021 Voter's Guide  
to the Iowa City  
City Council Elections

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# Iowa City City Council Candidate 2021



## Megan Alter, Ph.D.

Occupation: Senior Resource Manager: English Language Arts ACT

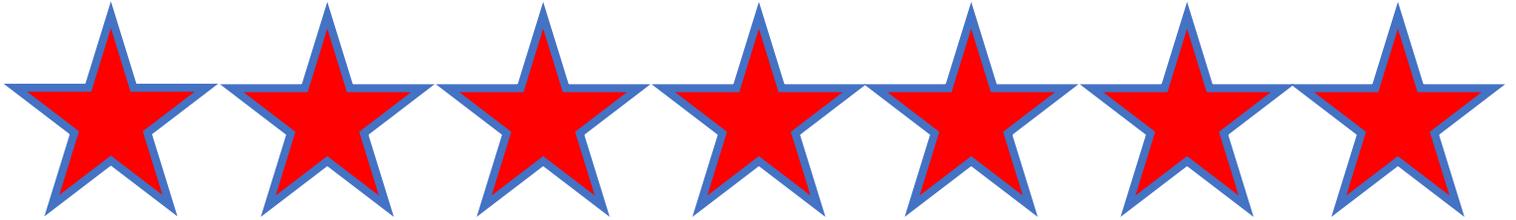
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**Community Service:** 2 term Housing and Community Development Commission for City of Iowa City  
Co-Founder of Neighborhood NESTS: micro-hubs for at-risk students in the ICCSD  
Leadership Committee of South District Neighborhood Association  
Big Sister with Big Brothers Big Sisters: seven years and counting  
Board Director, Summer of the Arts Board  
Former Board Director, Iowa Women's Foundation  
Iowa City Recreation Master Plan Steering Committee  
Chair of ACT's United Way annual fundraising drive  
Iowa City Child Care Task Force Advisory Committee  
Black Voices Project  
Johnson County Affordable Housing Coalition

**What do you love most about the community?** I appreciate that we show fierce pride and love for long held community traditions and celebrations while also creating new ones. We are growing, adapting, and learning as a community that is increasingly diverse and honest and all the stronger for it. Iowa City has a "growth mind set."

**With so many issues to address, what would be your primary focus on the council?** My chief priorities are to improve challenges caused by systemic and economic inequities and increase opportunities for more people to enjoy all that Iowa City offers.

a) Provide access to affordable childcare to Iowa City families by partnering with local groups and stakeholders (including JoCo, ICABP, ICCSD, UI). This is a complex issue, but it should be addressed as a municipal issue since it is an equity, economic, and community concern.

b) Attract, retain, and support local retail options in the South District and adjacent neighborhoods. Currently the only local place South District residents can buy socks is at the Waterfront HyVee. Iowa City needs to invest in this area and look seriously at the future of the IC Marketplace. As part of this priority, we need to provide better safety measures for residents crossing Hwy 6, especially at Sycamore St. to get to schools and the commercial district on 1st Ave.

c) Increase affordable housing for the residents who fall in the lowest area median incomes (AMI); this affordable housing should be permanent instead of reverting to market price after 15 years. Additionally, we need to attract and allow first time homeowners opportunities to buy and live in Iowa City.

**How do you define economic development?** I define (optimum) economic development as an investment in the community which also can be felt positively in people's daily lives. To me, this looks like a good mix of local retail fare, stable jobs in the professional services and industry, strong business groups striving for increased participation by under represented groups, particularly women and the BIPOC community to foster business growth, and a well-paid workforce. As we continue to work through business changes and practices COVID has necessitated, it is important to focus on business retention and support so that we do not lose more local businesses, to work assertively to attract new businesses throughout Iowa City as well as downtown, and foster new business creation through business incubators, professional networks, and municipal support of business grants, loans, and partnerships.

While community development is not traditionally considered a part of economic development, I am heartened by the way local economic groups are working to change the cultural climate that has historically excluded people of color or tokenized them. I firmly believe that the path forward to a strong(er) local economic environment is by putting inclusion at the forefront. Economic development will not suffer for having more people at the table. Quite the contrary, in fact.

**Our community continues to grow. How should the city plan for future growth?** To plan for future growth from a business as well as community perspective, my top campaign priorities remain strong contenders. To attract businesses and a workforce we need a strong community whose needs are met. We need to bolster neighborhoods like the South District by recruiting retail businesses and services needing a range of leasing options to ensure different districts remain vibrant, viable, and retain individuality.

We absolutely must create more affordable housing: I favor expanding the Homeownership Program beyond the South District; I would also like to see older homes rehabbed through City programs to increase neighborhood stability and affordability. Planning and zoning also needs examination.

To serve a growing population, Iowa City should envision a thriving network of affordable childcare professionals who are supported through collaborative partnerships, and which helps families with financial and placement needs. As part of this effort, Iowa City's plans for more community centers with robust programming throughout the city is also key.

We must consider how to expand the tax base thoughtfully and effectively to balance community improvements with economic health. That said, if we envision better use of existing commercial areas and encourage new construction/development that fills gaps to meet both purposes.

**What are the most important issues facing businesses in our community and how can the city support them?** Three come to mind right away: COVID recovery is and will be one of the most important issues for businesses for a while. The City has already provided small business loans and grants and should continue to do along with federal funding already available. Businesses should actively recruit more BIPOC to sit on boards, invite advice from underrepresented groups to move its commitment from diversity to inclusion. Finally, Iowa City must invest in a new future landscape of retail and services since big box stores have lost market appeal. The City can support these efforts by funding innovation and incubation labs and entrepreneurial training.

**How can the city help attract and retain a diverse workforce?** As I mentioned above, having more visible diverse participants and contributors in the business community is important for attracting and retaining BIPOC and other under-represented groups. But diversity is itself a broad term, not applying solely to race and ethnicity. Economic and workforce diversity is also highly desirable; as a city, we must broaden opportunities people to live here. The City must offer affordable housing across the spectrum: for renters, both single professionals and families; for potential home owners we must provide a range of housing options so that we do not continue the trend of attracting workers in Iowa City while home ownership and rents go to Coralville and North Liberty. Iowa City should also provide additional opportunities for families through refreshed parks and recreation programming: this is not a “nice-to-have,” it demonstrates the City’s commitment to a healthy and inclusive community that values its residents. I have noted it a lot already, but the City should work with public and private partners to expand affordable childcare options and approaches to what childcare looks like. This is perhaps one of the strongest recruiting and retention incentives a community could offer to its workforce.

**What unique perspective or skills do you bring to the council?** I am a strategic thinker and a practical one: I bring ideas into being. As the co-founder of Neighborhood NESTS (micro-hubs for at-risk students during COVID), I attest to the power of coalition building and focused action. We brought state, county, and local officials to the table along with the UI, ICCSD, and non-profits, and stood up our first hub in six weeks. I know how to listen, take input, adapt, and co-create stronger plans. Finally, as someone involved in community efforts for years, I am committed to championing the simple truth: women’s issues are community issues.

# Iowa City City Council Candidate 2021



## Jason Glass

Occupation: Lecturer at the University of Iowa Tippie College of Business, Human Resources Consultant, Staff Sergeant in the Iowa National Guard 34th Army Band

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**Community Service:** Vice Chair, Iowa City Human Rights Commission- 2020- present  
Iowa Human Rights Board Member- 2021-2016  
Board President- Professional & Technical Diversity Network (PTDN)- 2006-2010  
Chamber Leadership Program- 2019-2020  
Past President, Iowa Senior Human Resources Association (ISHRA)- 2020  
State Board (Director At-Large), Iowa Society for Human Resources Association (current)  
Corridor Business Journal Forty under 40 award: 2009

**What do you love most about the community?** I love it here! Iowa City has so many cool spaces. There is so much energy and creativity. It comes from residents that are passionate about our city and being involved, whether in musical/theatre performance, activists on the Ped Mall or in entrepreneurial and business ventures.

**With so many issues to address, what would be your primary focus on the council?** I'm not running because of one issue or cause, but to be a problem solver on all challenges we face. Some of our current priorities should be:

- Public safety- We are seeing increasing gun violence in Iowa City, which the current council is not addressing. We are also debating the proper role of law enforcement in general. I believe we can both make our community more safe and be innovative in making law enforcement more equitable and community focused.

- American Rescue Plan funds- We have big decisions to make about how to use \$18M in federal money. I believe the focus should be on directly supporting those most impacted by the pandemic and not included in previous support. We should also look at projects that are sustainable and the whole community can benefit from.

- Back to basics- Assuring our basic city services, which we often take for granted, continue to be a priority.

Not an issue, but another focus of mine will be a non-partisan approach- I will not donate to, register with, or endorse any candidate or party. My focus will be Iowa City, not a party platform or concerns about loyalty/disloyalty.

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**How do you define economic development?** Economic development means always moving forward and constantly growing and innovating. If we are standing still, we are falling behind as new technology and ideas are generated.

It also means being a place where people want to invest, not just their capital, but their time and energy and dedication. City government needs to regularly ask itself how we are meeting that goal. We need to create a safe, stable, consistent and predicible atmosphere so that people can make long term plans with less risk and more confidence.

It means diversification in economic activity. Large employers, start-ups, and everything in between are needed to have a vibrant community. We are so blessed to be a city with a Big Ten University, which provides employment and vibrancy to our community. We also can't rely solely on that advantage. We can do more to build a more vibrant economic city.

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**Our community continues to grow. How should the city plan for future growth?** The city has already done a lot of planning and developed detailed plans for much of the city. We need to work those plans as a catalyst for action. Far too often, the plans are used as reasons to deny or unnecessarily delay projects. I don't believe that is, or should be, the intent. While having guidelines and clear direction on code and zoning is important, we must also remember that our comprehensive plan was meant to encourage growth and development. We should remember that when we get into the weeds on a particular project or building design.

The city can also plan for future growth by assuring basic city services and utilities are in place as we grow. For instance, our Fire Department has not increased staffing in 10 years despite a 10% increase in population and city growth, both up and out. It takes time to recruit, train and build staff. The city must be proactive to assure that as the infrastructure is in place to meet our growth.

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**What are the most important issues facing businesses in our community and how can the city support them?** Obviously, the pandemic has created numerous challenges for everyone, including businesses. How we recover, both in the short and long term is the most important challenge. We have innovative and resilient people operating our businesses and they are the best ones to answer the question of how the city can support them. I want to assure that city elected officials and staff are listening to what those needs are and are eager to partner and problem solve.

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**How can the city help attract and retain a diverse workforce?** This is a passion of mine. I've recruited people here and led efforts to welcome a diverse workforce through non-profit and other volunteer work.

The city can help by continuing our tradition of welcoming newcomers and continued outreach to them to engage them in city activities, like recreation and the library. Our wonderful downtown festivals and neighborhood events are also great.

The city can also help by removing barriers to entrepreneurship and investment. To have diverse workforce, we need a diverse business community, and the city must partner with organizations that are attracting and retaining Iowa City companies.

The city also needs to assure our housing growth keeps up with our workforce demand. We have developed a reputation as a city that is not friendly to development and that needs to change. It's one of many drivers of affordability as well. We have wonderfully progressive community. The first 8 letters of progressive spell "progress", which means growth and development.

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**What unique perspective or skills do you bring to the council?** I bring 20 years of human resources experience in local companies, making workplaces safer and more equitable. I've been on state and local boards. I'm involved in music and theatre. I have a passion for human and civil rights. I have served my state and nation. I've touched many areas of the community and had to solve problems with a wide range of people and perspectives. I've built positive relationships with people who vary in views and political affiliations. I've done so by being respectful and inclusive. I will bring that approach to council.

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# Iowa City City Council (District B) Candidate 2021



## Shawn Harmsen

Occupation: Professor

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Other:



**Community Service:** Grade School Parent Volunteer at Lucas Elementary  
Iowa City Boys Baseball Little League Coach  
Campaign Manager Mazahir Salih  
Campaign Manager Royceann Porter  
Campaign Committee RaQuishia Harrington  
Campaign Manager Megan Alter  
Volunteer on multiple local, state, and national level campaign efforts

**What do you love most about the community?** I love that this is a community where my wife and I can raise our kids. It's a livable community, a progressive community, a community with a long tradition of trying to become a better version of itself with a set of community values unique in Iowa.

**With so many issues to address, what would be your primary focus on the council?** As the council continues working on ongoing issues and encounters challenges we haven't seen yet, my decisions will be guided by my overall mission to work to increase economic, racial, and social equity and justice in the community. More specifically, I will work on affordable housing, transportation, workers' rights, and identifying and taking action to dismantle systemic racism in our community.

**How do you define economic development?** I think what this is really asking is how do I define the kinds of economic development I think would be good for Iowa City. Broadly, healthy economic

development in Iowa City looks like smart, sustainable growth, widespread growth and investment throughout the community, and development which benefits a broad cross-section of our community. Economic development needs to have this broad and clearly definable impact across the community because, as the old saying goes, “a rising tide raises all boats.” We all do better when we ALL do better.

A big factor right now for economic development is the 800-pound gorilla in the corner of the (hospital) room. The disruption from COVID and the decisions we face are ongoing. Not only do we have to use the federal recovery funds ethically and wisely meeting immediate needs as well as looking into the future, but we can't forget we are still in the middle of this pandemic. One of the many reasons we need to support policies which support layers of protections which fight the spread of COVID is that any striving toward economic development is like striding with a broken foot. From disruption of supply chains that stretch abroad to crammed ICUs in our local hospitals to a hundred other ways, leadership that refuses to acknowledge and take meaningful action are a millstone around our economic necks. I will support our local leaders who have provided some leadership on this issue, and be a voice for more action on COVID.

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**Our community continues to grow. How should the city plan for future growth?** I love that Iowa City is a growing community and the demand to join our community tells me a whole lot of people around us recognize the things we have to offer.

A few things our planning process should, and in some cases already does, plan for this growth is through things like zoning codes which are form based, rather than more traditional zoning approaches. The hope is that these codes will allow for greater variety and density in our new growth (as well as in other parts of the city) so that in 15, 20, or 50 years from now when this expansion is aging it is still able to support the cost of maintaining the necessary infrastructure that serves our community. Speaking of infrastructure, our city will likely want to look at how our emergency services are able to provide those services to our expanding city. Planning for these needs and handling them before they reach a crisis level is the most cost-effective long term approach to planning for this growth.

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**What are the most important issues facing businesses in our community and how can the city support them?** As I've already mentioned, the ongoing COVID pandemic is hurting everyone, in a hundred different ways. The first thing the city should do, and I applaud Mayor Teague and his mask mandate for the positive impact it has had on the health of our community members, is do all it can to curb transmission locally.

Another thing the city can do is support the kinds of widespread community growth, in a variety of neighborhoods, which create a positive feedback loop for business. The city also needs to continue the ongoing work to improve the ease and affordability of transportation in the community. When workers and customers across the income spectrum can go places to work and to shop, businesses are among the first to see the benefits.

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**How can the city help attract and retain a diverse workforce?** How do you attract and retain any workforce? Pay nobody less than a living wage. Treat workers with respect and dignity. Recognize the dignity of work and support workers' rights to organize and bargain for themselves. In short, do the real concrete things that make it worth a person's while to join a workforce in a community.

To apply this to attracting a diverse workforce, promote the kinds of education and cultural competence that makes a workplace a place where nobody feels excluded from all the things I've outlined because of their race, national origin, gender, or sexual orientation. The city as an employer should always be working to set an example in its own practices. It can also continue to foster the kinds of community efforts which address things like structural racism and promote inclusivity and diversity.

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**What unique perspective or skills do you bring to the council?** I am a former journalist and currently an educator. My entire adult life, in one way or another, has centered around gathering information, listening to as many people as possible, and then taking that variety of information and turning it into something that helps inform, guide, and uplift the community of people around me. As a member of the council, I will lean heavily on those skills and experiences as I work to represent this diverse and vibrant community.

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# Iowa City City Council Candidate 2021



## Bruce Teague

Occupation: Owner, Caring Hands and More

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### Community Service: VOLUNTEER / BOARD / COMMITTEE ACTIVITIES - CURRENT

IC Compassion

Johnson County Task Force on Aging (Vice Chair July 2018 – 2020)

Johnson County Livable Community; Community Foundation of Johnson County – Board member;  
Better Together 2030 Steering Committee Member

Past Activities: The Spot Youth Community Center (adolescents and young adults) ; Christian  
Community Cultural Center (Volunteer); Parkview E. Free Church – “Faith in Action Volunteer”;  
Hospice Volunteer; United Action For Youth (UAY); ONE Iowa Advisory Board; TRAIL of Johnson  
County

### CLUBS/PROFESSIONAL MEMBERSHIPS - CURRENT

Iowa City Chamber of Commerce 2007

Rotary 2008

Targeted Small Business 2010

The Council on Quality and Leadership (CQL) 2018

Past Memberships: Iowa Alliance In Home Care 2005-2015; Christian Community Cultural Center  
2006-2015 (Board President 2008 – 2015); AARP 2008 – 2015 (Chapter 1816 President July 2009 –  
2015); Olmstead Task Force 2013-2018; Iowa City Housing Authority – Program Coordinating  
Committee 2008-2011

**PROFESSIONAL RECOGNITIONS:** 40 under 40 (2010); Governor's Volunteer Award (2010); IC Compassion - Good Samaritan Award ( 2015 ); Kirkwood Distinguished Alumni Award (2019); Black Voices Project – Outstanding Community Service Award (2020); West High - Distinguished Alumni Award (2021); Dirty Diva's (IC Gay Softball League) – Spirit Award (2021)

**What do you love most about the community?** The spirit of the people who care enough to work together for a better tomorrow. This is not a community content with status quo, it seeks to boldly lead on the important issues of our time and I am blessed to live and lead in such a dynamic community. The community is vibrant and has diversity in many aspects.

**With so many issues to address, what would be your primary focus on the council?** We must continue to safely navigate this pandemic, find ways to improve social and racial justice all while ensuring that Iowa City is an attractive place to live and work. Our business community has suffered through this difficult time. As a small business owner, I know there is more that we can do to grow our economy sustainably and help grow and attract more businesses here. Iowa City has come a long way to improve upon its reputation as being difficult for business come here but, we have much more work to do and I value the input of the Business Partnership and its members to help ensure businesses feel welcomed.

**How do you define economic development?** I define economic development as the collective growth of businesses paying living wages, creating more opportunities for individuals to live and work in Iowa City. Supporting sensible, sustainable growth with developments which improve neighborhoods. Having supportive local policies and city staff working in a regulatory environment with competitive tax rates to provide a fair, transparent and supportive climate for success.

**Our community continues to grow. How should the city plan for future growth?** We need to continue to plan for growth not with a one size fits all model, but as we are doing with the new South District Plan and our continued revisions to the Downtown District, by looking at the unique needs, history and potential of each neighborhood so that we are adding value while minimizing any negative impacts whenever possible. Reviewing zoning codes are vital in our growth. The council is looking at comprehensive plans and form-based codes and determine if form-based codes will be adopted more throughout the city. There's a little of opportunity for mixed use in what would typically be residential neighborhoods. Turning a lower level of a residential home into a business would be one of those out of the box ideas that I believe would benefit people in a neighborhood. There are many benefits that includes a business owner potentially paying less for rent/mortgage and depending on the products many within the neighbor could walk. Businesses within walkable distance helps with climate action goals as well.

**What are the most important issues facing businesses in our community and how can the city support them?** Finding staff with the skills and attitude to work. As a small business owner, I know how difficult it is to find and retain the best people. For us to succeed as businesses though we must continue to address the external barriers that prevent people from being able to live and work in Iowa City. Specifically, the high cost of housing, the lack of affordable childcare and similar barriers such as transportation. We as a city are working on solutions and thank the Business Partnership for your

leadership especially on the childcare issue. There is much work to be done on these difficult challenges, but we are making progress.

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**How can the city help attract and retain a diverse workforce?** We start from such a good place in this regard, the brand of Iowa City has always been one of welcoming of all people. We must continue to make this promise the truth. We also must keep finding ways to be together through events, the arts and all those things this pandemic has made difficult. Along with addressing the issues noted above, we need to keep making this awesome and amazing community fun and creative. That is how cities such as Austin and Nashville have prospered, we should follow their lead, but do it in our own unique way.

I think the city can continue to partner with IBABP, Think Iowa City and now Project Better Together on tangible ways the city can be more intentional on attracting talent. There are many ways to accomplish this and I believe the city is open to investing in an opportunity to attract people to our city. We know many people that visit Iowa City fall in love with it and could see themselves living her. The vibrancy and diversity in businesses many find attractive and help with people decision to make a transition to move here.

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**What unique perspective or skills do you bring to the council?** There is a steep learning curve for anyone joining council. I've learned a lot but I also had experience to lead from day one and to keep moving the city forward. I have taken the time to learn, listen and lead. I will continue to make myself available to growth and understanding. My skills are in my ability to connect with people and find ways to help them live their best life. This is what I have worked to demonstrate in each good and challenging day as mayor. I will continue to listen to the ideas and suggestions of the Business Partnership and its members to ensure that council is doing our best to support quality economic growth.

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