



Candidate Questionnaire, Whitewater, WI Municipal Election, April 2, 2019

Councilmember Aldermanic District 3: Brienne Diebolt-Brown

**Q1. What motivates you to want to become or seek another term as a Common Council member?**

I served on the council for half a year in 2015. I enjoyed serving the community in this manner, and I'd like to do so again. Since we moved here in 2012 I've served the community in number of capacities. I helped found the Whitewater Makerspace, helped found the Tuesday Whitewater City Market while on the board of directors for Downtown Whitewater, consulted for the Whitewater Community Foundation, and served on the board for the Irvin L. Young Memorial Library. In these roles, I've gotten to know a number of people, long-time residents, Latinos, graduating UWW students and young professionals. One of my goals while serving on the Council is to build closer ties among these groups.

**Q2. What aspects of your background will help you best represent the people of Whitewater on the Council?**

In the seven years that I've lived here, I have volunteered with a number of organizations. Prior to that, I lived in a number of places--in small towns and large cities, with and without universities, here and abroad--and I have witnessed up close how other cities have dealt with issues of development, mass transportation, public safety, and food security. I also have an extensive background as a journalist, a scientist, and a researcher. I study best practices, and I'm willing to listen.

**Q3. What aspects of Whitewater's resources are most likely to stand the city in good stead going forward?**

UW-Whitewater is one of our biggest assets. It brings in amazing professors and students hungry to make a difference. We need to build better Town & Gown relations and convince our students and young professionals to put down roots. New professors and university staff who want to be a part of the community have only a few year-round options: the Whitewater City Market and the library. Although the library is woefully underfunded, it is still a valuable resource that we should nurture and develop. It builds community for not only our residents but also those of nearby villages and townships that have no libraries. The City Market has created a lot of enthusiasm for the Whitewater Grocery Cooperative, and I intend to support this local movement as the council considers its most pressing issue: how to solve the fact that Whitewater is an official USDA food desert. I am open to whatever solutions best serve the interests of our community.



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**Q4. Do you think the city should be doing more to encourage the sharing of roads in the city between automobiles and bicycles? If so, what would you recommend?**

Yes, we should be designing more roads to be bicycle- and pedestrian-friendly. We need more bike racks and safe bike lanes. UWW students need this. I want to bike around town safely with my children. Bicycle-friendly cities attract people looking to live more healthy and independent lifestyles, and they create more dollars by creating more tourism.

**Q5. Do you think the city should be doing more to promote all-electric vehicles? If so, what would you recommend?**

One of the most pressing issues in Whitewater is the lack of reliable and inexpensive mass transportation. Most students don't have cars and there is a significant impoverished population that could lose everything if their car breaks down. So many cities in our country have moved toward electric shuttles, and we have an amazing University that could serve as a testing ground for charging stations. Obviously, we would need to do more research on the feasibility of creating the infrastructure for electric vehicles, but we should at least do the leg work.

**Q6. Should public locations like City Hall be encouraged to have signage in both English and Spanish?**

A significant percentage of our population speaks Spanish, and the best way to make them feel welcome in government locations is to provide them with literature and signage in their native tongue so that they can understand their new country better. When I lived in Venezuela, Germany and Hungary, I found it very difficult to mail a letter, open a bank account, or otherwise interact with government agencies. I can sympathize with the effort that it takes to navigate a legal system in my non-native language. Bilingual signage is a simple necessary first step for integrating non-English speakers into our community.

**Q7. Are you satisfied with the city's involvement in working with the University to choose the next Chancellor?**

I frankly don't know how the Council is involved in the search. It has not yet been on the agenda at any of the Council meetings I've attended. The community member serving on the chancellor search committee is highly qualified, and I'm confident that she will represent us well. We should reach out to the search committee to ensure Council members and other people meet with the finalists when they are brought to campus for visits. In general, I look forward to working to improve Town & Gown relations.



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**Q8. How do you think relations are between the citizens of Whitewater and the police force?**

Aaron Raap is a thoughtful and competent Police Chief. I've had numerous conversations with him on improving interactions between the neighborhoods and the police. His leadership has created more of a culture of understanding, and we have discussed how to introduce the police department to different neighborhoods so that more conversations can be had. There are always misunderstandings and tensions, but I think we also have some great leadership.

**Q9. What, if anything, should the city be doing to encourage the sort of downtown commercial and cultural activity to attract visitors and new residents to Whitewater?**

The city should be sponsoring more small strategic fixes to our downtown - such as sponsoring cleanups and mural painting on our alleyways and ugly walls. So much can be done with a layer of paint. The Common Council should also be sponsoring small business endeavors like a park for food trucks, painting walkways on streets and creating public art in places that slow down speeding cars and encourage pedestrian traffic. We should also be going to the Capitol and making sure Madison supports local control and initiatives that help small businesses get a leg up and succeed.

**Q10. Is the proximity of agricultural land to the city something to be welcomed or should building be encouraged for the sake of the tax base?**

While I am not necessarily opposed to developing existing farmlands next to Whitewater, I feel that our community's interests are best served by focusing on renewing downtown and existing structures rather than building outwards. We should be changing our tax structure to encourage business growth in our vacant buildings and rebuilding homes within the city. Many small towns like Whitewater are now developing "infilling" practices like these, which have proven successful.