

John **Hamilton** wants to throw the doors of City Hall wide open and get as many people involved in government as he can.

"I'm an intentional thief of good ideas from any place we can get them," the Democratic mayoral candidate said during a recent interview. "And there are lots of people with good ideas. There are council members; there are boards and commissions; there are people in our community; there are other mayors in Indiana and around the country."

As mayor, **Hamilton** would want to gather those ideas, because "no one of us has the picture of where Bloomington should go."

The city's path can only get better as more people are included in the conversation, and that conversation is something in which people in Bloomington want to participate, he said.

"As a candidate for mayor, you get the chance to sit down in a lot of people's living rooms and different settings and hear what people think about their city," he said.

"People care a lot about this city, and that is a great thing."

**Hamilton's** own love for the city — along with his love for political service and a desire to help the city move forward — motivated the Bloomington native to jump into the mayor's race to begin with.

He said he thinks he's the best person to help the community continue in the positive direction that past leaders have established.

"I think I'm an experienced leader who has a good vision for the city moving forward — for good jobs, affordable housing, strong education and a transparent and effective government," he said.

**Hamilton** was heavily involved with state government while heading the Indiana Department of Environmental Management and then the state's Family and Social Services Administration during Gov. Frank O'Bannon's administration.

He said he also has a great respect for local government. He's met with city employees, county employees and others across the community to talk and also simply to listen.

He said he's committed to finding ways to make government work better.

"One of our challenges is to make sure we're as effective and efficient as we can be," he said. "We need to be penny pinchers. We need to be wise investors. We need to take the long view to help our community continue to be the place that it is and that it has been."

**Hamilton** said to make sure that happens, you "have the very best people you can" (for those city employees biting their nails, he described the work force as both "wonderful" and "talented"); set clear objectives and help employees reach them; and keep government officials accountable by releasing those goals publicly.

**Hamilton** cited examples of how he's made those things work before, from establishing regional IDEM offices to helping build a strong early intervention network through FSSA.

So how would he make things happen in Bloomington?

One way is by following through on commitments he made during his campaign for the Democratic nomination.

"I've urged that we actually have a 24/7 tip line as soon as possible — I actually think we should have that now — where an employee of the city or any other person can call or email anonymously and say, 'Hey, I noticed this about city government,'" **Hamilton** said.

That would provide citizens with a safe way to notify the city about things and be engaged, he said.

**Hamilton** also has committed to reach out to an outside firm to get an independent view beyond the annual review by the State Board of Accounts of the city's financial oversight system.

He said while there have been definite improvements in the structures in place over the past year, there also "were obviously some shortfalls in the last couple years," and he'd simply like to have another set of eyes take a look at the oversight system.

Another thing he'd like to see is a high-speed fiber optic network throughout the city.

He also has committed to starting weekly, open sessions during which either he or a department head would be available to talk to community members and give updates on the day-to-day work of the city.

Other issues, such as wealth and income inequality, will be a little "stickier" to tackle and take more time, he said.

**Hamilton** would want to get started working on that and other quality of life issues right away by assembling a group to help think about how the city can "take steps to try to lift all boats and to make opportunity more available to all of us who are here."

"Our community needs to work for everybody. I haven't met people who want to be poor or who want to be homeless, and many people end up, through their paths in life, having periods of greater or lesser success. One of the the wonderful things about Bloomington is our health and our compassion," he said. "It is important that we help identify ways to help everyone be as successful as they can."

That means finding ways to make sure Bloomington continues to offer good jobs and coming up with some strategies for making sure housing is affordable.

The city can aid that effort by finding out what strategies are working in the community and by helping to direct and coordinate community efforts by gathering people around the same table, he said.

For now, **Hamilton** is focused on listening to groups of people organized by issue, geography or anything else, an effort he'll ramp up as the campaign starts by going to house parties as he did before the primary election.

And he wants to hear from people from all walks of life.

"I love open government and a lot of involvement of folks," he said, adding that it's key for the community to remember that the government is theirs and that their voice matters.

## **JOHN HAMILTON**

Party affiliation: Democrat

Day job: President of nonprofit founded to support community development and economic opportunity.

Experience: Ran Indiana's Family & Social Services Administration and Department of Environmental Management; former MCCSC School Board; former Bloomington Sustainability Commission chair; Shalom Community Center chair; two decades leading innovative nonprofit and financial work combating income inequality.

Positions: Will use extensive experience and proven leadership to pursue progressive policies; create sustainable jobs; establish community-owned, city-wide fiber **Internet** networks; insist on tight fiscal controls and open government; advocate for public education; push for affordable housing; preserve our unique

downtown character.

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