



2024 Portland City Elections Questionnaire

Thank you for taking the time to fill out United for Portland's candidate questionnaire. Any candidate seeking our endorsement or support must fill out this questionnaire.

The endorsement process and all responses will be made public on our website.

Please return this questionnaire via email to doug@moorestrategicconsulting.com. Please return it as a Microsoft Word document or as a PDF file by 8/30/24.

All questions are open-ended, and an opportunity to tell us about your thoughts on key issues facing our city, as well as discuss your leadership style. This will be shared on our website, and we ask that you take the time to tell us what you really think and what voters should know about you. There are no right answers to these questions, and we don't want you simply telling us what you think we want to hear.

If you need further information about any of the items covered in the questionnaire, please give United for Portland Executive Director Doug Moore a call at 503-729-5175 or email doug@moorestrategicconsulting.com.

Candidate Name:

Debbie Kitchin

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Email:

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Candidate Signature: *Debbie Kitchin*

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- Do you want United for Portland's endorsement and support?
Yes. I would be honored to have the endorsement of United for Portland and would welcome support for my campaign.
 - What's your approach to ending unsheltered homelessness in Portland?
We are never going to make progress on homelessness without more housing. We haven't built enough housing across the spectrum for decades. This has created pressure on housing costs. The other side of the housing affordability gap is income growth. Income growth has not kept up with housing costs and other costs of living. The federal government decreased its funding of low-income housing decades ago. Gaps in the social safety net such as uncovered medical costs, mental health and addiction issues and other social issues have added to the crisis.



Every action to reduce homelessness should be viewed through a lens of whether it contributes to long-term success for people who are currently homeless. We need to provide a continuum of housing options to meet people where they are, including temporary shelter where people have privacy, wrap-around services, addiction and mental health services, and job training where applicable. It's important to recognize that needs may differ for different groups and individuals and at different stages of recovery from the trauma of homelessness. It appears that the tiny home villages have been more successful at transitioning people into long-term housing successfully and facilities that are trauma-informed, such as Path Home. We need wrap-around services, more treatment facilities for addition or mental health issues.

One of the best approaches focuses on prevention because the trauma of homelessness creates additional programs for people to overcome. Increased rent assistance and eviction-prevention assistance are needed. Currently, eviction assistance is available only when a household is very close to eviction – creating stress and potential threat for the household.

One thing that is often overlooked is the preservation of existing low income housing. It is far less costly to preserve and maintain existing housing than it is to build new low-income housing. This may include purchasing or helping purchase existing homes, loan or grant programs that help with maintenance or equipment replacement costs so that people can stay in their homes, acquisition of land in mobile home parks or purchasing low-income units that are expiring. The more we can keep people housed, the more we are able to make true progress in addressing homelessness.

- How do we create housing sufficient to meet future needs, not just current needs? What mix of housing does that look like to you?
We have not been building enough housing for years. To have more abundant housing, we need to allow for increased density and more flexibility. We need to reduce the cost of housing to alleviate the housing affordability gap. The following are areas of focus:
- Reduce the time and cost related to permitting by continuing the work of consolidating all permitting activities in one office and adopting metrics for timeliness of responses. Permitting times should be reduced from 200 days to a target of 60-90 days.
- Pursue zoning changes to allow increased density in close-in neighborhoods such as suggested in the Inner Eastside for All proposal
- Preserve existing low-income housing or naturally occurring lower-income housing – this costs so much less than building new and can help stem the tide of the need for replacements of existing housing
- Pursue building and zoning code modifications to reduce out-of-date requirements and conflicts between areas of code. Shift the focus to performance based standards rather than prescriptive standards. Performance based standards allow for more flexibility and innovation.
- When you think of public safety, what does that mean to you? What will you do to ensure public safety for all Portlanders as a member of the city council?



Everyone should feel safe in their community. I think of public safety in broad terms, including policing, fire protection, emergency response, emergency preparedness, and safety on our streets for pedestrians, cyclists and drivers. Public safety is one of the basic services of a city. I support community policing. We need to make sure we are filling all of our vacant police officer positions as well as be prepared for upcoming retirements and other vacancies. I support trying to hire more police officers who live in Portland. We need to rebuild trust between our police force and communities of color and other communities. We need police accountability oversight. Our fire bureau has been understaffed as well, with overtime costs taking up unexpected increases in the budget. I support fully funding Portland Street Response and would advocate moving to operations 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. I support faster emergency response times, gun violence prevention programs, and safer streets for pedestrians and cyclists. I am concerned about the increase in hate crimes, and I believe it should be a special focus for public safety. All our public safety bureaus should be collaborative, transparent, and accountable to the communities they serve.

- What do you see as Portland's economic engine, and what do you believe it should be for the future?

The Portland metro area has many elements of a strong and vibrant economy. We have a strong manufacturing sector, a highly educated workforce, a creative community in the arts, music, design and maker space, an innovative food and beverage industry, world class athletic apparel industry and creative small local business community. Our traded-sector industries are the backbone of economic prosperity for the region and for the future. The public and private and nonprofit sectors need to work together better because we all have shared goals. Shared prosperity and better outcomes for everyone creates a virtual cycle that makes achieving our goals possible.

It is important to invest in the areas where we have a foothold and advantage. Prosper Portland has identified industry clusters where we have a competitive advantage and have the opportunity for growth. But it is not always easy to pick winners and we should generally create conditions that are conducive to innovation and economic prosperity, as that will be beneficial to whatever industries arise that we cannot foresee.

Our homegrown businesses have lasting power and commitment to Portland. I have used my voice and experience as a small business owner and regional economist (in my first career) to advocate for economic development and opportunities for small businesses, especially BIPOC-owned businesses. Our company participated in the Portland Means Progress initiative and the Oregon Association of Minority Entrepreneurs and Metropolitan Hispanic Chamber. I served on advisory committees for Prosper Portland, the Port of Portland and on the board of the Greater Portland Economic Development District, supporting more equitable economic development. Entrepreneurship is powerful tool for creating generational wealth for BIPOC members of our community.

We also need to focus on workforce development. A thriving economy does not mean anything if significant portions of our community cannot benefit from it because they don't have the skills



or experience. The city can encourage collaboration between the public and private sector for focusing on workforce development to increase opportunities for all our community in higher paying jobs in manufacturing, the trades, healthcare, technology and other industries. Labor unions play a critical role in improving pay and working conditions for working people. Partnerships are needed at all levels.

- Tell us about your leadership style. How will you work with constituents and interest groups? How are you going to address the inevitable disagreements in a brand new council of 12?

Collaboration is key for the new City Council and Mayor in leading Portland to a better future. In working across diverse interests and perspectives, it is important to develop what we have in common in terms of objectives, values and goals. Creating the foundation of shared values and goals aids in the process of developing action plans and direction. Clear communication will be essential, both within our districts and across districts. I am willing to listen and learn and will seek outcomes that address major concerns of differing viewpoints. It is also important to develop and share data as well as perspectives so we can look at issues from a common base. I believe in developing relationships with people as the basis for working together and will work on that within my district, within city council, with the Mayor and City Administrator, Multnomah County and our state and federal partners.

Some examples of my experience are relevant. I served on the board of the Energy Trust of Oregon and served as President during the time when we adopted Diversity, Equity and Inclusion initiatives, as well as hired a new Executive Director after the founding director announced her retirement. As a statewide organization, there were often differences between urban and rural representatives and the changing role of utilities and utility-funded programs during this time. I co-chaired the Southeast Quadrant Stakeholder Advisory Committee which included a wide range of interests including legacy industrial companies, multi-family developers, small retail and maker businesses, residents and environmental advocates. Both of these experiences involved working across divides and coming to agreement on how to approach our work.

- What would you do to align Portland's taxing and spending with our city's needs and values? Portlanders pay a lot in taxes. Our city needs to do a better job of spending taxpayer dollars and showing we can be responsible and prudent stewards of public dollars. We need to focus on basic services and making sure we are providing them equitably across our city. I agree with the Governor's task force recommendation to not add any new taxes for three years. We need to earn credibility in how we manage our spending before asking for more. In addition to taxes, costs of utilities such as our water and sewer rates need to recognize that many Portlanders are experiencing rising costs that make it unaffordable to live in Portland. Over time, I think there will be benefits of bringing management of our bureaus under a professional City Administrator. My view is that there is potential for savings because of eliminating duplication, inefficiencies and poor management. This will enable the city to provide services more effectively without increasing taxes.



- Is there an issue, topic, or policy we didn't ask about, but is very important to you? If so, feel free to ask and answer your own question(s).

How should the city respond to the threat of climate change?

Climate resilience is an important focus for city preparedness and action. Emissions from vehicles are a major source of pollution and greenhouse gases. We need to support alternatives to single-occupancy vehicle driving such as walking, biking, and mass transit. Making these alternatives more convenient and safer should be the focus of our planning; greater neighborhood housing density will make it easier for residents to use alternatives. At the same time, we need to plan for freight access to keep our businesses and supplies moving. Infrastructure needs will change as we move to electric vehicles. As we plan for these systems, it is critical to identify the impacts on less privileged community members and craft responsive solutions. I think there is huge potential in high-speed rail and would work with state and federal colleagues to support it on the West Coast. Clean air and water are essential for a thriving community and we need to make sure we focus on equity in our approaches and solutions.