

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.

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Candidate Signature: *Robert J. Simril*

1. Do you want United for Portland's endorsement and support?

We are at a crossroads. A new council, new structure of government. I met with Mike Jordan, and align with what he describes as an "enterprise approach". I have never pursued politics until this moment. I have been in business for 35+ years with companies like Microsoft, Coca-Cola, ran global revenue for Tony Robbins and have owned my own small business. Portland and business have suffered over these past four years, and a safe and thriving Portland is essential to living the valued and unique experience we all want. Business revenues are down, folks are leaving, tourism has dried up and our community is exhausted. With a strong mayor, and a coalition of reasonable and practical folks on the council, we can move things forward. We can both have compassion for our homeless and be better stewards of our ever-expanding financial resources. I bring accountability, KPI's, leadership, creativity and results.

2. What's your approach to ending unsheltered homelessness in Portland?

I have several ideas that are out of the box. First, I believe we should find a suitable and legal camping site and support the no camping and no open drug use bans. We need our streets and sidewalks back. We need public transportation to be safe for all. I advocate and support these measures, and as a person with a family member who has been an addict her entire life, we need proper support and we

need them to “participate in their own rescue”. They are dying, the community is suffering. We are enabling them to return to the streets, suffer, become sick or die.

I believe we can leverage the use of county funds, working with the state, to extend foster care for kids up until 23 years old (currently available for kids with mental illness). These kids are our next generation of homeless, and we can provide shelter and encourage them to attend trade schools and become more prepared for becoming independent. My family participated in foster care, to both help with our monthly expenses and support needy kids. This will reduce the flow of folks moving onto our streets, becoming addicts and help families with monthly expenses.

Additionally, I would advocate that current homeless folks on the streets be matched with people who may have an extra room to rent out to non-addicted folks living on the streets. This would support the financial pressures on the estimated 70k folks who are perhaps one paycheck away from being homeless themselves. Income for them to rent a space, a home for single moms with kids and other non-addicted or mentally ill folks (estimated to be around 30% of current homeless). This too would be funded by the county, leveraging current funding unspent resources.

Another solution involves retired school buses. These are termed “skoolies”. The US government, in an effort to replace gas guzzlers, is providing electric school buses to school districts across the US. Beaverton school district is on the list to receive 65 buses. We acquire them, remodel them into whatever format we need (bunk beds with baths to accommodate module outpatient treatment for addicts or single-family residents and so on). The cost is approximately \$40-50k per conversion and they are beautifully done. There is an entire industry around these. They remain property of the city, placed on secured city land, are modules and can be moved and located in a range of city and county property (mitigating NIMBY). This solution could give us agility, flexibility and speed to address part of the crisis. Envision outpatient care community in one area, and family community in another. The buses don’t drive, and folks can stay as long as they abide by the rules. Funding 65 skoolies would cost under \$5M (one time cost + annual maintenance) and could house 300-400 folks. That compares favorably to the county plan to spend \$25M to house the same number of folks.

All houseless folks are not the same. We need flexible, agile and efficient methods to move them from the streets and provide the relevant services to support their journey to health. That said, some folks will persist and suffer. We need to understand that flexibility and scale are important components of these solutions. We need many options, many ideas, but mostly we need speed to resolve these issues as our community is demanding results.

3. 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 need to continue to encourage private/public ventures. We need to reduce the permitting costs and burdens for both new projects and converting existing living spaces to accommodate the need. The model for investors must align with good business practice, and the metro, county and city should ease the costs and, in some cases, subsidize low interest loans, for example, to engage private funding to expand capacity. The proper mix will shift depending on the needs at the time, and should be spread around our community so no single community carries an undue burden. We should model existing projects, and learn and replicate their success. Albina Vision Trust will provide some great insights as will the mixed-use space being developed in the old post office space adjacent to the train station.

We should work closely with the private sector, find the right balance to encourage development and meet the ever-expanding demands of this population.

4. 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?

We should have access to all parts of our community, public transportation, 24/7 with the feeling of safety. My 20-year-old daughter should be able to work at a restaurant downtown, and feel safe taking the MAX home at 11PM after her shift. We should have clean streets, free of drug use, graffiti and garbage. I have been endorsed by both the Police and Firefighters Unions. My commitment to them is to be fully staffed and have the resources they need to protect our community. I spoke with Robert King, and we agree with the concept of “community policing”. I believe we can build trust back into underserved and communities of color if we recruit, train and mentor folks from the communities they serve. When I was young, we had a police officer who helped coach our baseball team. He was a role model and mentor. At one time, we had more visibility in the schools and communities. We need positive engagement, and I would hope to have future officers live in their communities (vs. commuting in from Vancouver for example). Safety is both a real and perceived concept. Where more affluent communities feel safer when they see officers driving by, communities of color may feel threatened. That said, all folks want fair and effective policing. We need to re-engage with folks in a positive manner, starting with young folks as often as possible.

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

Retaining and bringing folks into Portland, growing a healthy job market of high paying jobs, and being persistent to reduce the tax burden for business and taxpayers. We are losing too many high wage earners, and the city budgets to provide the infrastructure and services we all want is eroding. Tourism is essential, but folks won’t come back until they feel safe. Businesses won’t expand unless they feel they can attract both talent and customers. One of my three priorities is around fiscal accountability. We have plenty of resources that are poorly managed. We need to constantly ask how we can do more with less as a council, delivering better value back to the community. Transparency, KPI’s for bureaus and nonprofits, budget discipline as all essential to becoming more effective and ultimately leveling off and even reducing the excessively high tax burden.

6. 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?

I’m a collaborator, positive engager with all stakeholders, be it folks who work for me, with me or folks I serve. I believe you solve more problems working together, and that most folks want the same outcomes. My experience in business gives me a sense of how to work with a wide range of folks, styles, ego, agendas. I also find that while we want the same outcomes in most cases, the “how” trips folks up. Folks tend to want to put “there stamp” on a project, and I’m okay sitting back on that as long as we hit our deadlines, on time and on or under budget. Keep focused on the outcomes, keep questioning, with respect the process and give folks love when they succeed, and reprimand privately when things fall short or disagreement occurs. Never call anyone out, including county staff, in public, but rather stay in front of them, be persistent, build trust and mutual respect.

7. What would you do to align Portland's taxing and spending with our city's needs and values?

My second priority behind safer communities is fiscal transparency and accountability. The new city council must act swiftly, as 70% of Portland voters are dissatisfied with current leadership. Reorganizing the 33 bureaus into six silos, managed by professionals reporting to the city manager and mayor, will enhance efficiency and streamline decision-making. We need to understand the priorities and challenges of programs scheduled for the second half of fiscal 2024 and ensure they are implemented on time and within budget. No new taxes, reallocation of funding, with exceptions considered where enhanced safety is concerned such as police, fire, PSR and other safety related representatives.

A comprehensive financial review for each manager is essential as we prepare for a likely reduced or flat budget for fiscal 2025. Identifying key performance indicators (KPIs) with procurement and managers will help us preserve resources and reassign staff effectively. Training staff in new roles will reduce hiring needs and align them with city priorities.

To inspire and engage our teams, we must embrace change collaboratively, involving all stakeholders. Moving staff intelligently will foster new ideas and energy, ensuring a successful transition to the new city structure.

8. 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).

I have three priorities for the new council: Better Communities, Fiscal Accountability and effective and creative Infrastructure Investment. On addressing safer, cleaner, drug-free streets, and creative housing solutions, I will advocate to slow the inflow of youth from houselessness by extending foster care to age 23. Working with the state and county, this extension would allow vulnerable young people to pursue trade schools and develop independent life skills. On addiction, we lack healthcare, mental health, and addiction specialists. We should immediately use county funds to increase salaries, recruit nationally, offer signing bonuses, and cover relocation expenses. I support fully funded police and fire departments and expanding Portland Street Response (PSR). New hire efforts should be intentional about recruiting folks who look like the communities they serve to increase trust in communities of color. PSR staff can be trained to become licensed addiction counselors, funded by the county. With persistent increased warming in our region, I propose repurposing PCEF funds to create cooling areas in playgrounds by adding trees, sunscreens and clean water stations in parks, and public spaces and provide clean air filters and CO2 monitors to underserved communities, promoting safer living spaces. Finally, our community is highly taxed, and wants confidence in how funds are being used. We need to understand the effectiveness of bureaus and non-profits by developing KPI (key performance indicators) so we can optimize our resources and regain taxpayer trust. I would advocate for no new taxes or staff expansions, outside of our safety departments as discussed above.

I have never pursued public office until now, but I was inspired after meeting with Mike Jordan, Interim City Manager. He explained the new city structure, using the term "enterprise" to describe a move towards a more streamlined, accountable, and effective government. With experience at companies like Coca-Cola, Microsoft, and running a global team for Tony Robbins, I am skilled in solving large-scale

problems collaboratively and producing results. In the private sector, you perform or you're out, reorganizing every year and doing more with less. I am hardwired to solve problems, bring creative solutions, and generate results. Socially, I lived in the projects outside of Compton in the 60s. As a black kid with a white mother, I learned persistence, maintaining a positive outlook, and communicating with diverse communities. District 2 is 15% Hispanic, 10% Black, with a full range of social, economic, and racial diversity. I can engage with everyone, from underserved communities to boardroom leaders. While some candidates have public office, non-profit, and policy experience, I uniquely blend social experience with enterprise-level problem-solving skills. As we move to 12 councilors, we need to diversify our collective personal and professional experiences to move our city forward at this critical juncture.