

## 2024 Portland City Council Questionnaire

**Candidate Name:** *Daniel DeMelo*

**Candidate Contact:** *Annika Albrecht, (503) 935-4504, [annika@ripple-fx.com](mailto:annika@ripple-fx.com)*

**Phone #:** *Daniel DeMelo 503-806-2257*

**Email:** [connect@demelo4portland.com](mailto:connect@demelo4portland.com)

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

Yes.

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

I understand that ending unsheltered homelessness is not just a priority – it's an urgent necessity for the health, safety, and prosperity of our city. My approach to this critical issue is rooted in experience, data-driven solutions, and a commitment to measurable results.

I bring a unique perspective to this challenge, having chaired the Joint Office of Homeless Services Community Budget Advisory Committee. In this role, I've overseen and provided the community's input on the county and city's \$400+ million annual homeless services budget, giving me both an insider's and outsider's view of what works, what doesn't, and where we need to improve.

One of the most crucial lessons I've learned is that *we cannot hope to end unsheltered homelessness without first committing to reducing it*. When we asked the county and city to commit to a plan that would lead to "at least one fewer persons sleeping on our streets," they refused. This lack of commitment to tangible results is unacceptable, and it's why I'm running for City Council.

My plan to end unsheltered homelessness in Portland is clear, actionable, and designed to show results within two years:

1. **Rapid Expansion of Alternative Shelter Sites:** I propose building out "alternative shelter sites" – pod-based shelter units – to bring at least 2,000 units online over a two-year period. These sites will be easier to place once we're on a path towards making the sites unnecessary given outflow.
2. **Leveraging Existing Resources:** With the city's current spending on just the Joint Office, we have the financial capacity to build enough shelter to end unsheltered homelessness within two years. This doesn't include operational costs or additional services, which should continue to be led by the County and State with city oversight.
3. **Realistic Goals Based on Data:** City data shows a 15% monthly turnover at existing city-run sites, with approximately half returning to homelessness and half moving on to housing. This means every new bed we bring online represents not just one less person

sleeping on the street, but at least one person able to move forward in their housing journey.

4. **Addressing the Broader Impact:** Experts in homelessness reduction have found that when addressing a large unsheltered population, we don't need to build shelter for every single unsheltered person. Once we get sufficient shelter online, about one-third will relocate, and another third will find shelter independently. This insight allows us to maximize the impact of our resources and provides an optimistic target: building capacity to shelter 50% of our present unsheltered will have a much larger impact than merely removing 50% of our unsheltered off the streets.
5. **Coordination with Social Services and Law Enforcement:** In line with United for Portland's priorities, my plan includes coordination with expanded social services – including Portland Street Response – to assist those in need, alongside a law enforcement response to ensure public safety.
6. **Pathway to Permanent Housing:** While focusing on immediate shelter needs, we'll continue to work on long-term solutions. This includes supporting Governor Kotek's statewide homelessness state of emergency and pushing for accelerated creation of affordable housing, including creative solutions like converting commercial office space.
7. **Addressing Public Safety Concerns:** My plan recognizes the link between homelessness, addiction, and mental health issues. We'll work to ensure that those suffering from addiction or mental illness have adequate access to treatment, while also empowering law enforcement to require treatment when behavioral health challenges become a public safety threat.
8. **Support for other Shelters:** Ending unsheltered homelessness will require a variety of approaches. The success of the Bybee Lakes Hope Center demonstrates this clearly. The city should prioritize construction of pod-based shelters, but support a variety of shelter approaches to ensure that we continue to respond to innovations and support a diversity of tactics.
9. **Accountability and Transparency:** I commit to regular, public updates on our progress, including specific metrics on shelter creation, unsheltered population reduction, and successful transitions to permanent housing.

This comprehensive approach addresses not only the immediate need for shelter but also the broader issues of public safety, economic development, and quality of life that are crucial to Portland's future. It's a plan that recognizes the urgency of the situation while also laying the groundwork for long-term solutions.

As your City Council member, I pledge to bring the same level of scrutiny and demand for results that I brought to my role overseeing the homeless services budget. We can end unsheltered homelessness in Portland, but it requires clear goals, decisive action, and unwavering commitment. With your support, we can make Portland a city where everyone has a safe place to sleep at night and the opportunity to thrive during the day.

### **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?**

Portland's housing crisis demands bold, decisive action to meet both our current and future needs. I am committed to a comprehensive approach that will dramatically increase our housing supply while ensuring a diverse mix of options for all Portlanders.

First and foremost, we must build, build, build. The shortage of 10-15,000 units identified as immediately required is unacceptable, and we need to be prepared to construct housing at an unprecedented rate when economic conditions allow. To achieve this, I propose the following actions:

1. **Streamline the permitting process:** We need to implement a fast, accountable permitting system. This includes securing stable funding for the Bureau of Development Services to ensure adequate capacity during economic upswings and fully realizing the potential of our "one-stop shop" for permitting. By reducing bureaucratic hurdles, we can accelerate housing development and reduce costs.
2. **Reduce financial barriers:** For at least the duration of the housing supply crisis, we should consider reducing or eliminating permitting costs and system development charges. This will incentivize developers to build more units and help make projects financially viable.
3. **Implement broad upzoning:** I support relaxing zoning restrictions, particularly in the Central City, to allow for denser and taller housing construction. This will maximize land use and create more housing opportunities in high-demand areas.
4. **Reassess inclusionary zoning:** While well-intentioned, our current inclusionary zoning or inclusionary housing (IH) policies have had unintended consequences, such as the decline in condo construction – often the most affordable homeownership option for many Portlanders. IH has encouraged development of 19-unit-or-less buildings on sites that could easily have supported even more units. We need to reevaluate these policies given that they may be hindering overall housing production.

To address the diverse housing needs of our community, we must focus on creating a mix that includes:

1. **Affordable rentals:** By cutting red tape and accelerating public support and incentives, we can spur the creation of more affordable rental units, addressing a critical need in our community.
2. **Middle-income housing:** We need to ensure that medium-income individuals aren't priced out of the market. This may involve incentivizing the construction of "missing middle" housing types like duplexes, triplexes, and small apartment buildings.
3. **High-end units:** Surprisingly, our Housing Needs Analysis indicates a deficiency in luxury housing as well. By meeting this demand, we can prevent high-income individuals from outbidding others for medium-quality housing, thereby preserving more options for middle- and low-income residents.

4. **Homeownership opportunities:** We should encourage the development of condos and other affordable homeownership options to help more Portlanders build wealth and stability.

Looking to the future, we must remain flexible and responsive to changing demographics and economic trends. This means:

1. Regularly updating our Housing Needs Analysis to stay ahead of emerging trends and needs.
2. Investing in infrastructure and public transportation to support new housing developments and create complete, livable communities.
3. Collaborating with regional partners to ensure a coordinated approach to housing across the metro area.

Lastly, we must recognize that addressing our housing crisis is intrinsically linked to other key issues facing our city. By increasing our housing supply and affordability, we can make significant strides in addressing homelessness, improving public safety, and creating a more vibrant local economy.

As your city council member, I pledge to work tirelessly to implement these strategies, always keeping in mind that a diverse, accessible housing market is essential for Portland's future prosperity. Together, we can create a Portland where everyone has access to safe, affordable housing, supporting our shared vision of a thriving, inclusive city for all.

#### **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?**

Public safety is the cornerstone of a thriving community, encompassing not just the absence of crime but the presence of a sense of security that allows residents and businesses to flourish. As a city council member, I am committed to ensuring that all Portlanders not only are safe but feel safe in their neighborhoods and business districts.

I'm proud to have earned the endorsements of both the Portland Police Association and Portland Fire and Rescue. These endorsements reflect my commitment to supporting our first responders and ensuring they have the resources they need to keep our city safe.

We must address the critical staffing shortages in our police and fire departments. Currently, Portland has only about 800 sworn police officers, a 33% decline per capita since 2005, despite facing higher crime rates. This shortage hampers our ability to respond to emergencies, investigate crimes, and maintain a visible presence in our communities. As your city council member, I will advocate for increasing our police force to at least 950 officers – a 20% increase – to ensure we have the personnel needed to reduce response times, conduct thorough investigations, and build stronger community relationships through beat patrols.

Similarly, our fire department is stretched thin. Portland Fire and Rescue is responding to three times as many calls as they did 20 years ago, with virtually the same number of firefighters. The 2022 Portland Fire and Rescue Service Delivery and Staffing Study recommends at least two new stations in East Portland and a total of six citywide to meet the National Fire Protection

Association's goal of 90% of responses taking less than four minutes. I fully support this expansion to ensure the safety of all Portlanders.

However, public safety is not just about increasing numbers. It's about smart, efficient use of our resources. That's why I support expanding the Portland Fire and Rescue Community Health Assess & Treat (CHAT) program. This initiative allows us to target incidents with appropriate resources, ensuring we don't send a full engine to situations like overdoses where a smaller, specialized team would be more effective.

The Portland Street Response program is another crucial component of our public safety strategy. This innovative approach helps address non-emergency calls related to mental health and homelessness, freeing up police and fire resources for more urgent matters. I support expanding this program to respond to more incidents while also exploring county funding options, given that 66% of its clients are experiencing homelessness – a regional issue that requires a collaborative approach.

As we work to improve our emergency response capabilities, we must also address the root causes of crime and disorder in our city. This includes tackling the homelessness crisis, which is closely tied to public safety concerns. I support Governor Kotek's statewide homelessness state of emergency and advocate for a rapid expansion of safe, clean, and secure temporary shelters and approved camping sites, coupled with a ban on unauthorized camping throughout the city.

Additionally, we must address the addiction and mental health crises that often underlie public safety issues. I support increasing access to treatment programs and, when necessary, implementing measures that allow law enforcement to require individuals to seek treatment when their behavioral health challenges become a public safety threat.

A comprehensive approach to public safety also includes creating well-maintained, well-lit public spaces that deter crime and promote community engagement. This means investing in our parks and sidewalks to ensure they are clean, safe, and inviting for all Portlanders.

Lastly, we must recognize that public safety is intrinsically linked to economic vitality. A safe city attracts businesses, creates jobs, and fosters a thriving community. As your city council member, I will work to streamline processes for small businesses, reducing red tape and creating an environment where entrepreneurs can start and grow their businesses with confidence.

My approach to public safety is comprehensive, data-driven, and community-focused. By increasing staffing for police and fire, expanding innovative programs like Portland Street Response and CHAT, addressing root causes of crime, and creating a business-friendly environment, we can make Portland a safer, more prosperous city for all.

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

Portland's economic engine has evolved significantly over the years, and as we look to the future, we must build on our strengths while addressing new challenges and opportunities.

Historically, Portland's economy was built on its strategic location as an inland port on North America's second-largest river and watershed. This geographic advantage continues to serve us well, with Portland remaining a crucial hub for grain and lumber exports, as well as auto importing and exporting. These traditional industries have provided a solid foundation for our city's growth and prosperity.

In recent years, Portland has emerged as an attractive destination for young professionals and startups, thanks to our relatively affordable cost of living compared to other major West Coast cities like Seattle and San Francisco. This influx of talent has diversified our economy and brought new energy to our business community. However, we must acknowledge that currently, the only sector experiencing significant employment growth is government – a trend that is not sustainable in the long term.

Looking ahead, I believe Portland's economic engine should be built on three key pillars:

1. **Talent Attraction and Retention:** We need to double down on our ability to attract and retain top talent. Portland offers what has been called a "second paycheck" – an unparalleled lifestyle that combines urban amenities with easy access to nature, a thriving food and cultural scene, and a strong sense of community. We must leverage this unique selling point to continue drawing skilled professionals and innovative businesses to our city.
2. **Tech and Startup Ecosystem:** Portland has the potential to become a major player in the tech industry, particularly for startups. However, we're currently losing ground to cities like Austin due to our tax structure and business environment. We need to take decisive action to make Portland attractive to tech. This involves streamlining regulations, offering targeted incentives, lowering taxes, and fostering a supportive ecosystem for entrepreneurs.
3. **Clean Energy and Sustainability:** As a city known for its commitment to sustainability, Portland is well-positioned to become a national leader in clean energy jobs. By investing in this sector, we can create new employment opportunities, particularly in low-income communities, while also addressing the climate crisis.

To achieve these goals, we must address several key challenges:

First, we need to make Portland more business-friendly, especially for small businesses and startups. Our city is currently one of the hardest places in the country to start a small business. We must cut red tape, simplify permitting processes, and provide better support for entrepreneurs navigating the startup process.

Second, we must tackle the issues that threaten Portland's quality of life and, by extension, its economic appeal. This includes addressing the homelessness crisis, improving public safety, and ensuring our parks and public spaces are clean, safe, and well-maintained. These efforts will not only make Portland a more attractive place for businesses and workers but will also improve the lives of all residents.

Third, we need to invest in our infrastructure and housing to support economic growth. This means accelerating the development of affordable housing, exploring creative solutions like converting commercial office space into residential units, and ensuring our transportation systems can efficiently move people and goods.

Lastly, we must continue to nurture the unique character and creativity that sets Portland apart. Our city's reputation for innovation, sustainability, and livability is a significant economic asset that we should protect and enhance.

By focusing on talent attraction, fostering a vibrant tech and startup ecosystem, and leading in clean energy innovation, we can create a thriving economy that benefits all Portlanders. As a city council member, I will work tirelessly to implement policies that support this vision and ensure that Portland remains a great place to live, work, and do business.

**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?**

As a candidate for Portland City Council – and one of the few District 3 candidates with private sector managerial experience – my leadership style is rooted in my experience as an engineering manager and my commitment to data-driven, transparent, and collaborative decision-making. I believe these qualities are essential for addressing Portland's most pressing challenges, from homelessness to public safety and economic development.

My approach to leadership is characterized by:

1. **Data-Driven Decision Making:** As an engineer by trade, I prioritize using data and metrics to guide policy decisions. This approach ensures that we can measure the effectiveness of our initiatives and make informed adjustments as needed. For example, when addressing the homelessness crisis, I would push for comprehensive data collection on shelter usage, housing placements, and program outcomes to ensure our efforts are truly making a difference.
2. **Transparency and Accountability:** I firmly believe that good governance requires openness and accountability. I commit to making city processes more transparent, whether it's in budgeting, policy-making, or program implementation. This transparency will extend to our efforts in expanding affordable housing, improving public safety, and supporting small businesses.
3. **Collaborative Problem-Solving:** My experience in engineering has taught me that I don't know everything – and as such I understand the value of diverse perspectives in solving complex problems. As a council member, I will actively engage with constituents, interest groups, and experts to develop comprehensive solutions. For instance, in addressing the public safety crisis, I would bring together law enforcement, mental health professionals, addiction specialists, and community leaders to create a holistic approach that balances enforcement with compassionate intervention.

4. **Efficiency and Action-Oriented Meetings:** I have a reputation for running efficient, goal-oriented meetings that focus on "getting stuff done." This skill will be crucial in expediting decision-making processes, particularly in areas that require urgent action, such as expanding temporary shelters for the unhoused or streamlining permitting processes for affordable housing development.
5. **Bridging Expertise Gaps:** I recognize the importance of seeking expert knowledge in areas where I may not have deep expertise. This approach will be particularly valuable in working with small business owners to understand their challenges and in collaborating with environmental experts to position Portland as a leader in addressing the climate crisis.

When it comes to working with constituents and interest groups, I will:

- Actively seek diverse perspectives to ensure comprehensive understanding of issues.
- Maintain open lines of communication to foster trust and collaboration.
- Leverage the expertise of local businesses, community organizations, and residents to inform policy decisions.
- Regularly hold town halls and community meetings to stay connected with the needs and concerns of Portlanders.
- Addressing disagreements within the new council will be crucial for effective governance. My approach will include:
  - Promoting a culture of respectful dialogue and active listening.
  - Using data and evidence to guide discussions and find common ground.
  - Focusing on shared goals and the overall well-being of Portland residents.
  - Implementing structured decision-making processes to ensure all voices are heard and considered.
  - Being willing to compromise when necessary, while always maintaining transparency about the reasoning behind decisions.

In practice, my leadership style will translate to action on key issues facing Portland:

- **Homelessness:** I will push for rapid expansion of safe, clean temporary shelters while simultaneously working on long-term affordable housing solutions. My data-driven approach will ensure we're tracking the effectiveness of these interventions and making necessary adjustments.



- **Public Safety:** I'll work collaboratively with law enforcement, social services, and community groups to develop a comprehensive strategy that addresses both immediate safety concerns and underlying issues like addiction and mental health.
- **Economic Development:** Drawing on my experience in managing complex projects, I'll work to streamline processes for small businesses, reducing red tape and creating a more business-friendly environment in Portland.
- **Climate Action:** I'll leverage Portland's innovative spirit and collaborate with environmental experts to develop and implement sustainable policies that also create clean energy jobs in low-income communities.

My leadership style combines analytical thinking, collaborative problem-solving, and a commitment to transparency and accountability. I believe these qualities, along with my willingness to seek out and incorporate diverse perspectives, make me well-suited to address the complex challenges facing Portland and to work effectively within a new city council. My goal is to drive meaningful progress on the issues that matter most to Portlanders, always keeping the long-term success and livability of our city at the forefront of every decision.

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

We must strike a delicate balance between maintaining our progressive ideals and ensuring Portland remains an attractive place for businesses and residents alike.

For years, Portland has prided itself on its progressive taxation system. However, we must acknowledge that the landscape has changed. In an era where capital and people are more mobile than ever, and the tax disparity between Portland and neighboring counties is at an all-time high, we need to rethink our approach. This isn't about abandoning our values; it's about adapting to ensure we can continue to fund the services and programs that make Portland special.

We're facing a concerning trend: the loss of high-income individuals and businesses. This exodus is unsustainable and threatens the very foundation of our city's economy. It's crucial that we address this issue head-on, as it directly impacts our ability to fund essential services and progressive initiatives. We cannot afford to discount or wave away these concerns. The reality is that without a strong tax base, we'll have no funding for the services our community desperately needs.

That's why I'm committed to a "No New Taxes" policy, at least until we have made significant progress on one of our most pressing issues: unsheltered homelessness. I pledge to work tirelessly to bring unsheltered homelessness under control, with a clear path to a 95%+ reduction compared to the 2023 Point-in-Time count. This aligns with United for Portland's priority of making faster progress on the homelessness crisis through rapid expansion of safe, clean, and secure temporary shelters and approved camping sites.

In the long term, we need to ensure that Portland's tax structure is not only competitive nationally but also proportionate to neighboring counties. This balanced approach will help us retain and attract businesses and high-income individuals, creating a stable tax base to fund our city's needs.

When it comes to spending, Portland often shops at Whole Foods when we should be shopping at Winco. We need to focus on getting the most impact per dollar spent. This means:

- Streamlining our bureaucratic processes to reduce waste and inefficiency.
- Prioritizing spending on essential services and programs that directly benefit our residents.
- Implementing rigorous cost-benefit analyses for all major expenditures.
- Exploring public-private partnerships to leverage resources and expertise.

By optimizing our spending, we can address critical issues like affordable housing without relying solely on tax increases. We'll build a city that attracts businesses, supports its residents, and remains a beacon of innovation and inclusivity.

**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 questions.**

While the previous questions have covered many crucial issues facing Portland, there are several additional areas that I believe deserve our attention and action. As a city council candidate, I'm committed to addressing these challenges with a practical, results-oriented approach that will restore Portlanders' trust in local government.

First and foremost, we must tackle the issue of deferred maintenance. Portland is billions of dollars behind on essential upkeep, and while it may not be the most exciting topic, it's critical for our city's long-term health and functionality. I propose a comprehensive plan to systematically address this backlog, ensuring that our infrastructure remains safe, efficient, and capable of supporting our growing community.

Closely related to this is the state of our parks. Portland's parks are not just recreational spaces; they're the heart of our communities. We need to commit to making our parks clean, safe, and well-maintained. This means not only addressing deferred maintenance but also investing in proper lighting, regular upkeep, and security measures. By doing so, we'll create inviting spaces that enhance our quality of life and provide safe areas for our children to play and learn.

Climate change is another critical issue that demands our attention. As Portlanders, we have both an immediate responsibility to ensure our city's resilience against climate-related challenges and a long-term obligation to reduce our greenhouse gas emissions. However, we must approach this issue with fiscal responsibility and accountability. I propose implementing clear metrics for our climate initiatives, ensuring that every dollar spent on resilience and emissions reduction achieves maximum impact. By prioritizing cost-effective solutions, we can make meaningful progress on climate change while being responsible stewards of public funds.

At its core, my approach to governance is about nuts-and-bolts, bread-and-butter issues that directly impact Portlanders' daily lives. We must make meaningful progress on unsheltered homelessness, public safety, and housing affordability. These aren't just important issues in their own right; they're crucial for rebuilding trust between local government and the people we serve. Portlanders need to see that their government can effectively address the challenges they face every day.

By focusing on these fundamental issues and delivering tangible results, we'll be in a stronger position to pursue visionary projects that can elevate Portland's status as a world-class city. This could include initiatives like high-speed rail connections or bringing major league baseball to our community. However, we must earn the right to dream big by first proving our ability to manage the basics effectively.

My commitment to Portland is rooted in a pragmatic approach to governance that prioritizes action over rhetoric. By addressing deferred maintenance, revitalizing our parks, taking responsible action on climate change, and making real progress on homelessness, public safety, and housing affordability, we can restore faith in local government and pave the way for Portland's bright future. Together, we can build a city that works for everyone – a city we can all be proud to call home.