



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: Ben Hufford
Campaign Contact: Ben Hufford, Ben4Portland
Phone #: 503-819-8153
Email: ben@ben4portland.com

Candidate Signature:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ben Hufford", is written over a horizontal line.



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

Yes, I do. I am an architect and small business owner deeply involved in Portland's successful food and beverage businesses. I know how to create places where people want to be, and that's not a good description of Portland anymore. I'm running not because I want to be in politics, but because we have too much to do to leave it to the politicians.

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

We need to stop conflating the two problems of homelessness. The first is *what drives people into homelessness*, and the data shows conclusively that it is about an adequate and economically diverse supply of accessible housing. I believe I will be a clear thought-leader and policy-leader in that space on City Council. The second problem is *what to do once people become tied to living unsheltered on the street*. At the center of that solution must be mental health and drug treatment services, two County led systems in particularly serious disrepair in Portland. Portland needs to provide a lot more options, and those options need to meet our homeless population where they are: the solutions to helping people on the streets are as varied as those people themselves.

The right number of unsheltered homeless is 0. But I would like to make the Boise and now the Grants Pass rulings irrelevant for Portland, by making sure that shelter options are available, as soon as possible.

Ultimately, we need to stop seeing our public safety system as the enemy and instead work to integrate law enforcement with essential services, ultimately to leverage those sanctions to get people into treatment. Addicts especially can't be expected to just choose not to be addicted - it's against the very nature of addiction itself. We ultimately need to enforce the laws that we have, and that includes the rules around public camping. To enforce the camping ban, there needs to be many more off-ramps before criminal penalties.

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?

I am an architect, and I understand that homelessness and an affordable housing market are inextricably linked. While homelessness is a top priority for many Portlanders, we have to learn that ONLY adequate housing availability and higher vacancy rates will bring the cost of housing under control.

Portland has 10 year old outdated permitting and tax policies, from an era when we were the developers' darling, that now discourage housing development to the point of preventing it. Portland needs by all accounts 6,000 new units per year, but in 2023 there were only 1,484 new housing units brought to the market. In 2024 it is projected to be less than 600 – less than 10% of our needed target! ALL housing production is important, and Portland can only effectively have affordable housing if we have enough housing. A housing shortage leads inevitably to unaffordability.



Our Housing Emergency has been in place since 2015. But our government actions do not reflect the urgency that is upon us. This is our most pressing and existential threat as a city. I testified at City Council on our Housing Production Strategy on August 28, and have been advising multiple mayoral candidates on housing production.

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?

Portland needs to put the *public* back into public safety. We deserve a quality public safety system that reflects our values. I am 100% supportive of growing our sworn officer police capacity, but we need to recruit, train, and use our people much better. The problem is Portland has a history of problematic policing including discrimination and excessive use of force. The reactionary ACAB response only created a downward spiral that makes both sides less willing to do what we must to bring the community together for safety.

Every Portland neighborhood, regardless of income, race, wealth and income supports quality public safety, and yes, policing. Within our Public Safety system, Portland should fund systems that recognize that there are many calls that should not be responded to with two police officers with guns. There are important roles for other groups within our public safety system, including Portland Street Response (PSR), and PSR will not be going away any time soon because it responds to a Justice Department requirement. PSR has additional potential to take pressure off of 911 calls, Portland Fire and Rescue, and Police calls, and that benefit should be appreciated as a cost effective safety response.

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

Small business growth and development, creative capital and available, affordable business space are the core of what drives the economic engine of Portland. I chose Portland 30 years ago as a young architect whose professional work could have been anywhere. Portland's economic engine is US! - our creativity, energy, quirkiness - those of us born here and those of us that chose Portland as our place, because this is where our lives were to happen.

What we had was a creative, optimistic energy in a city that was still relatively affordable, and this led to successes in our creativity and quality of life. The creativity around us, in the arts, in shoes, in music, in bikes, food carts and beer halls. And we are still here!

While we have the basic structure of a great city, our energy has been tapped, and we are looking in the rear view mirror for the Portlandia of 15 years ago. The human capital we have here, the creative energy that still peeks out every day in Portland, is our ticket forward to the future.

In that future - I see responding to our housing crisis in a Portland way - with higher density, sustainable development along transit corridors - a place that preserves our neighborhoods *BY* increasing density on our collectors. I see a change in transportation modes and the shape of our



city by moving away from the gasoline powered car to yield a City unthrottled by traffic and parking. I see the promotion of Portland as the NEW CITY in ways that we cannot predict. And I charge Portland State University and the Arts in Portland blossoming as drivers in our new era.

Most of all, I see the need for a local government renewal to restore a sense of real partnership and possibility that now is lacking. That's why I'm running, and why I want United for Portland's help to change the city we love.

With the right leadership, we are up to the challenges in front of us. Portland's problems are real, but I still believe our best days lie ahead of us. Portland can be the best City in America.

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 you can tell from my answer to question 5, clients hire me as an architect because I get very excited about the potential of a new project, a new building, a new place in our City. I bring energy, joy and commitment to the things I work on. But then clients keep me because I deliver on that energy to make places that people want to be.

Of the City Council candidates, I am an expert in building, permitting, and projects including housing. Already on my campaign, many candidates have turned to me as a resource on housing and permitting. I believe that a council of 12 people should have people with dedication and specialties, and already I am distinguishing myself on housing ideas.

In my architecture practice, I have extensive experience bringing people together, including very difficult people, to understand the collective values on a project and that success is not a zero-sum game. Anyone who has worked with me professionally over the last 30 years has seen first-hand my ability to discuss and solve challenging problems, make the most out of limited funds, and work with diverse and sometimes conflicting viewpoints to achieve results.

Most of all, I believe the point of seeking public office is not to BE something, but to DO something. That's the only measurement of success.

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

When you have one of the highest marginal tax rates in the nation, it's easy to say that taxes are too high. They are. But lowering them alone won't spur investment and job growth until we focus on getting value out of whatever taxes are levied. Right now, we have the worst of both worlds.

Many people in my district and social circles are complaining about Portland's taxes, and they are not wrong. Yet it seems like whenever we are asked to contribute our money through taxes or bonds, Portlanders sign up.



But our incapacity to deliver results despite having the funds is getting to Portlanders, maybe even changing Portlanders. We need to see some results on our commitments and our spending.

So: I would start there. Thank Portlanders for committing shared resources and then show them what they are getting in return. Homeless services, downtown cleanliness, early childhood education - you name it - Portland needs to deliver progress in the form of measurable, demonstrable results. We don't expect perfect, but we expect something good for our efforts.

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).

Why is your particular experience valuable to the new council?

We'll never change what comes out of City Hall if we don't change who we elect to office. We need to start electing people who want to DO something, not just be something. That's why I'm running for Portland City Council. No one in my district has similar experience or policy expertise. Many candidates are currently, or are retired from, government and non-profit positions. I am a practicing architect and a partner in many Portland bars and restaurants. I have permitted and built more housing than anyone on city council or who is running. I have set aside my professional practice – closed shop – to bring this experience to the city.

As an architect, I have a history of building places where people want to be; I have experience delivering projects on-time and on-budget, I am a straight talker, and I know how to get things done. I care too much for this city to stand on the sidelines and watch what's happened to the city I love. I am committed to making measurable progress for Portland, not just generating more talk. I hope you are, too.