



## **Janice Zahn Urbanist Questionnaire 2023**

Bellevue City Council, District 5

**Bellevue is one of the most expensive cities in the state. Beyond what the city is already doing, what policies should Bellevue enact to create more deeply affordable housing?**

While Bellevue has been working on our 2017 Affordable Housing strategic plan, we need to be act with more urgency - to enable the creation of more deeply affordable housing (in the under 30% AMI range). At our last progress report, data showed no affordable housing projects in the pipeline in this deeply affordable range. We must focus on this in our funding and policies. While I believe removing barriers to building micro-housing (300 sf units) can help with units at the 30% AMI, that does not produce 2 and 3 bedroom units to help families in this income level afford to live in Bellevue. I have advocated for bonding against future revenues for Bellevue's 1590 housing/services fund so that more projects can be subsidized to be built now instead of waiting. I've also pushed for offering super bonus density in our land use coding (policy C-1) for affordable housing on religious properties, public owned and nonprofit owned properties. Right now we are looking at religious properties, we must also offer super bonus for these two ownership types. We must move forward with ADU, DADU, while also focused on preservation of naturally affordable units. We must look at inclusionary zoning that will offer enough benefits for developers to build with affordable units. We must look at our permit process, fees and ways to streamline and make it easier and less costly to get permits/build in Bellevue.

**How can we expand the housing types legal to build in every Bellevue neighborhood?**

We must implement the elements within HB 1110 as part of our current Next Right Work/2044 Comp Plan update. Educating the community about how other cities have successfully created many housing types is important - so they can see that ADUs, Townhouses, qualplexes, cottage housing can fit into the neighborhood, be architecturally compatible in form and make our neighborhoods even better.



**Do you support the slate of tenant protections proposed by A Regional Coalition for Housing (ARCH) Committee in April 2022? What additional policies do you believe are needed to protect tenants in Bellevue?**

I support protections for tenants while addressing the concerns with landlords. I would like to better understand how the ARCH proposed protections will help the tenants and at the same time look into how to fund rental assistance. There's been some discussion that these 3 policies alone would not protect tenants. One thing we could consider is whether our Conflict Resolution Program staff could continue to support tenant-landlord mediation to find a workable path forward for renters who experience hardships to paying the rent on time. More policies are needed that encourage landlords to rent to tenants who are more vulnerable and housing insecure, like the Housing Connector organization.

**What steps would you take to ensure a citywide bike network is built out as quickly as possible?**

I fully support the Bike Bellevue program and moving with urgency to build out connected and protected bike lanes. Our transportation system will continue to be strained until we have the multi-modal infrastructure that is safe for bicyclist to ride through Bellevue. Adding more funding is also important. More rapid implementation of pilots will help socialize how the bike infrastructure is key solution to our traffic congestion and make progress on our climate goals. We must also advocate for the state and king county to fully fund the EasTrail that will also be part of our citywide bike network. There is also federal funding available through the Bi-partisan Infrastructure Law for vision zero/safety projects in the Safe Streets for All grant. We should be looking at projects that fully connect the Mountains to Sound Greenway and also advance the Bellevue College Connection. We should also look for other private partners for funding.

**Would you support a higher minimum wage for Bellevue workers, similar to actions recently taken by voters in Tukwila and Seatac?**

I believe Bellevue businesses will continue to struggle in hiring workers for lower income jobs unless we raise the minimum wage. With Dick's Burgers offering \$21 per hour as the starting wage, they are raising the bar for wages to be able to recruit and retain workers. I would like to see the data on wages to better understand if a city



mandated minimum wage is appropriate or if the market is already indicating a higher minimum wage.

**What is the best way for the Council to promote public safety? What programs would you like to see added or expanded?**

When we talk about public safety, I believe we have to approach city policies from the standpoint of safety of all our community members. Recognize that behavioral health crisis is not a crime and needs alternative approaches to support those in crisis. The council needs to reframe how we talk about public safety solutions that is an interconnected system of police, fire and behavioral health resources. We must advocate for state and federal funding (which I have done as part of the National League of Cities board of directors) as well as regional collaboration to align services and resources. More behavioral health and substance use disorder treatment beds is essential to support public safety. While we now have a CCAT program, we should also add a program that has medical professionals/social workers/counselors that can help those in need, that are not criminal behaviors. Mason County Fire, Tempe AZ and many other cities already has such a program beginning. We must look at what other cities are doing, learn and consider adding these programs as another tool in our city toolbox.

**The Eastgate men's shelter will open shortly, but only after years of delay and significant neighborhood opposition. What will you do to help Bellevue create adequate services for unhoused people more quickly?**

The success of homeless shelters absolutely depends on having the appropriate supportive services. It will also depend on paying shelter staff living wages for recruiting and retention of these workers. As a board member of The Sophia Way, I understand that our very shelter staff are one step away from being a shelter client themselves and funding providers like Bellevue and other public agencies/funders must include higher pay for workers. I would also make sure that our Bellevue's 1590 housing/services fund is being distributed to help fund for adequate services. We must also partner to grow the pipeline of workers toward shelter services and commit to the funding.

**With East Link light rail potentially opening in 2024, how can Bellevue encourage more people to ride transit?**



I am so excited for the opening of EastLink to Bellevue. As a regular transit and light rail rider, I understand the importance of getting out of our cars and not contribute to traffic congestion. One thing I tell people is how much I get done on transit that I can't do when I am driving. The time that I gain back when not stuck in traffic. All that to say, Bellevue can partner with Sound Transit and King County Metro to promote the convenience and benefits. We can partner with employers and leverage our commute reduction programs to ensure that workers know the choices of transit to get to work. We also want employers to offer free orca cards to make it even easier and offer financial benefits. Lastly I think Bellevue can lead by example, in encouraging our own staff to ride transit and work through barriers to that happening.

**What are the key policies you support to help the city achieve its goal of reducing emissions by 50% by 2030?**

We know that 40% of our greenhouse gas emissions is from buildings and 40% from transportation. I support and have successfully advocated for increased funding of 5 more staff in the Environmental department, added \$10mil to green our city fleet/solarize City Hall and community programs like the heat pump conversions. We have 77 policies in our Environmental Stewardship Plan and we must move with more urgency in implementing all of them. I know from my work at the Port of Seattle that retro-commissioning of existing building has a quick payback period and greens our buildings. We must make sure any new city building is net zero, which I understand we will have with the new Fire Station 10. We must push for our private and other public sector organizations to do the same. Our wedge analysis shows that we are not on track to achieve 50% reduction so more investments are needed. With the Inflation Reduction Act, there will be funding available through the tax code that cities can pursue. Bellevue must position ourselves to successfully pursue those funds along with those from the state and the county. As a member of the K4C, collaboration with the county and other cities and private partners is another policy we can take to get even more done.