



Janice Zahn Urbanist Questionnaire 2025

State Representative LD41, Position 1

Questions should be bolded here. E.g., Do you think Washington state should have an income tax (yes/no)? What are your top three priorities to achieve in your term?

As State Representative, I'm focused on delivering results that improve lives across our community. Housing stability is essential for strong communities. That's why I introduced House Bill 1899 to improve how we collect data on homelessness—so we can direct resources where they're needed most. I also support reforming the Real Estate Excise Tax to fund more affordable housing and infrastructure and introducing House Bill 1808 to start a revolving low interest loan program for developing affordable home ownership. Every student deserves a safe, inclusive learning environment. In the legislature, I advocated to strengthen school funding and introduced a bill to enhance protections for our students from discrimination by updating our K-12 civil rights laws. Safe, connected transportation systems that are multi-modal are vital for our region. I introduced House Bill 1992 for a safe system approach where WSDOT is required to partner with local jurisdictions to ensure alignment with local transportation infrastructure for overall safety and multi-modal choices. As Port of Seattle Chief Engineer, I bring a practical, equity-driven, solution-focused approach to infrastructure investments and capital budgets. I'm proud to serve a diverse, engaged district, and I'm committed to advancing policies that reflect our shared values of integrity, innovation and inclusion.

How will you boost housing options, particularly for families of all incomes to live where they work? How will you engage the public for new shelters, transitional



housing, emergency housing, permanent supportive housing? How do you weigh community objections with the housing goals for your jurisdiction, while encouraging engagement from neighbors?

Expanding housing options for families of all incomes is a top priority. We must ensure that people can live near where they work, learn, and raise their families. I support policies that increase affordable housing supply through zoning reforms, smart density, and public-private partnerships—while also preserving existing affordable units.

In my first session, I held over 200 community and legislative meetings, including town halls, “Chats with Janice,” and events with parents, educators, and students. These conversations shape how I approach housing—grounded in transparency, compassion, and collaboration.

When it comes to shelters, transitional housing, and permanent supportive housing, early and ongoing public engagement is key. I believe in bringing neighbors into the conversation—not just to inform them, but to listen. We must meet our housing and homelessness goals while addressing community concerns with facts, empathy, and a commitment to equity.

Balancing objections with long-term solutions means building trust. That's why I prioritize clear communication, data-driven policies like House Bill 1899, and working with local leaders to identify thoughtful locations and services. Housing is a shared responsibility, and I'm committed to inclusive engagement that builds support for solutions across the 41st District.



The Transportation budget became a hot topic this session with efforts to balance the budget on cyclists and tolling transit, as well as falling short on fast ferries. What are your thoughts on the approach of balancing the budget at the expense of non-drivers in the name of bipartisanship?

As someone who has spent decades working in transportation and infrastructure, I know we need a safe and equitable, multimodal system that serves everyone—whether they drive, bike, walk, roll, or ride transit or ferries. I was disappointed to see proposals that would increase costs for cyclists, transit users, and ferry riders while preserving highway expansions. This approach unfairly burdens those who are already making climate-friendly, congestion-reducing choices. Bipartisanship is important—but not when it compromises equity or sustainability. We must fund transit, bike, and pedestrian infrastructure as core parts of our transportation system, not as afterthoughts. I pushed back on efforts that would make transit less accessible or slow progress on faster, more reliable ferries. Our region's future depends on investing in alternatives to driving—especially as we work to reduce emissions and create safer, healthier communities. During budget negotiations, I advocated for smarter, more just transportation solutions that reflect our values and long-term goals like the highway use fee and road usage charge. I'll continue to fight for funding that prioritizes access, affordability, and climate action—because everyone deserves to move safely and affordably, no matter how they travel.

The legislature has tackled big housing policies in recent years: parking reform, transit-oriented development and middle housing. What still needs work?



I'm proud that Washington has taken meaningful steps on housing—reforming parking mandates, expanding transit-oriented development, and legalizing middle housing. These policies lay the groundwork for more affordable, walkable, and sustainable communities. But there's still more work to do. Implementation is critical. We need to ensure local governments have the resources and technical support to carry out these new laws effectively and equitably. That means investing in planning capacity, infrastructure, and community engagement—especially in areas where change has been long delayed. I was proud to support stronger tenant protections this session and will always prioritize greater affordability requirements, particularly near transit. New housing should serve a range of income levels, not just market-rate demand. I'm focused on advancing tools that ensure working families, seniors, and people with disabilities aren't left behind. Additionally, we must continue addressing racial disparities in housing access and ownership. That includes funding community land trusts, supporting first-time homebuyers, and preserving cultural communities at risk of displacement. I bring my background as an engineer and former local elected official to these conversations—grounded in equity, systems thinking, and collaboration. Housing is foundational, and I'm committed to building communities where everyone has a safe, affordable place to call home.

Of the progressive revenue options the state legislature considered this year that did not make it into the final budget proposal (or were vetoed by the governor), which would you fight for during the upcoming legislative session and why?

Progressive revenue reform is about building a future where everyone contributes and everyone benefits. This session, I was disappointed that several progressive revenue options didn't make it into the final budget. I'm committed to fighting for



more equitable revenue sources that allow us to meet urgent needs without placing the burden on working families.

I'll continue working with colleagues, advocates, and community members to push for policies that reflect our shared values of equity, opportunity, and long-term sustainability. This includes the wealth (intangible) tax for operating budget and the highway user fee and surcharge on higher cost vehicles and luxury boats to fund transportation. There are also some more tax loopholes that need to be closed, to bring more progressive revenues.

Do you support adding progressive revenue sources? Which ones would you support to fund your priorities? Or what cuts would you make to balance budgets facing increasing strain under Trump?

Yes, I support adding progressive revenue sources. I know we need to continue to invest equitably in our communities and we need the progressive revenue to do it, rather than overly relying on middle and lower income communities to pay a higher portion of their income in taxes. I would have supported a wealth tax if it came before me and did vote yes on the B&O tax bill that passed. I also support the highway user fee instead of increasing our gas tax for transportation funding. I also support closing the tax loopholes that we passed this legislative session. I also support the capital gains tax bill that added a higher tier tax for the most wealthy in the community.



What do you think is the most important strategy your jurisdiction can pursue to limit cost increases and make the region affordable to live in? How would you go about implementing that strategy?

One of the most important strategies to limit cost increases and keep our region affordable is to build more housing—especially near jobs, schools, and transit—and ensure that it's affordable across income levels. Supply alone isn't the full answer, yet without more housing, we'll continue to see costs rise out of reach for working families, seniors, and young people.

To implement this, we must align land use policies, streamline permitting and provide development funding to meet our housing and climate goals. That means fully supporting recent middle housing and transit-oriented development reforms, helping cities implement them effectively, and investing in infrastructure—sidewalks, utilities, transit access—to support that growth. I voted for the TOD and minimum parking bills this session, to lower the barriers to building more affordable housing now.

I also believe deeply in public investment. Expanding tools like the Housing Trust Fund, community land trusts, and local financing options can help create permanently affordable housing and limit displacement. I sponsored a bill to create a low income home ownership revolving loan program to help developers access funding to build, because we need both rentals and homes that are affordable.



Traffic deaths are rising across Washington state, with pedestrians composing an increasing share statewide. What is your approach to making our streets safer for all users?

Rising traffic deaths—especially among pedestrians—are heartbreaking and unacceptable. As a civil engineer, transportation professional and former local elected official, I approach traffic safety with urgency, data, and a commitment to equity. I sponsored HB 1992 to prioritize safe systems approaches that redesign streets to prevent deadly crashes. That means lowering speed limits, narrowing lanes, building more sidewalks and protected bike lanes, and investing in traffic-calming infrastructure—especially in historically underserved neighborhoods. We also must update state policies to shift from car-first to people-first design standards and provide stable funding for local governments to make these changes. Enforcement and education matter, but the most effective way to prevent crashes is to design safer streets in the first place. I voted for legislation to promote safer drivers with training enhancements, using technology for addressing speeders and speed enforcement. In this year's budget, I advocated for \$800,000 for pedestrian and bike improvements on SE May Creek Park Drive in Newcastle that we were unfortunately not able to fund this year. I was able to secure funding to complete the Mountains to Sound Greenway trail segment in Factoria, Eastrail segment in Woodinville and preserving multi-modal transportation project funding.

What is your approach to improving public safety over the next five years? How will you actualize it?

My approach to improving public safety centers on holistic, community-rooted solutions that address both urgent needs and long-term structural challenges. I was



proud to support HB 2015, which provides critical funding for local governments to invest in community safety resources—ranging from first responders to behavioral health professionals in addition to law enforcement—tailored to the needs of each community. We know that true public safety means more than emergency response. Over the next five years, I will work to expand mental and behavioral health services, ensure students and families have access to early intervention and support, and push for a comprehensive overhaul of our criminal justice system—one that focuses on accountability, rehabilitation, and reducing recidivism. Policies would include investing in diversion programs, housing-first strategies, and restorative justice initiatives. Safety comes from stable housing, good jobs, strong schools, and accessible care—and I will continue fighting for policies and budgets that make those a reality. By aligning state resources with local solutions and community voices, we can build cities that are safer, more equitable, and resilient for everyone to thrive.