



John Hines Urbanist Questionnaire 2025

Tacoma Mayor

What are your top three priorities to achieve in your term?

My top three priorities are building more housing at all income levels, creating a safer and more accessible transportation network, and advancing a green, inclusive economic development strategy. As a City Councilmember, I led on passing Home in Tacoma, one of the boldest land use reforms in the state, and expanded the Multifamily Tax Exemption to incentivize affordable housing production. As Mayor, I will continue pushing for zoning and investment strategies that increase density, deliver more housing choices, and address homelessness with urgency and compassion. Second, I've been a champion for safe streets—working closely with Councilmember Kristina Walker to advance Tacoma's Vision Zero goals. I'll prioritize investments in sidewalks, bike infrastructure, and traffic calming to make our neighborhoods safer and more connected for everyone, whether they walk, bike, roll, or ride. Finally, I will continue supporting Tacoma's Green Economic Development Strategy. My goal is to grow living-wage jobs in sectors that are climate-aligned and future-focused—ensuring the people who live here can also thrive here. That means investing in training pathways, clean infrastructure, and policies that center equity and sustainability in our economic recovery.

How will you boost housing options, particularly for families of all incomes to live near where they work or study? How will you expand shelter, emergency housing, permanent supportive housing? How do you weigh community objections with housing goals for your jurisdiction, while encouraging engagement from neighbors?



As a Councilmember, I helped lead the passage of Home in Tacoma, one of the most ambitious zoning reforms in the state. I also led the reform and expansion of our Multifamily Tax Exemption (MFTE) to align with our new zoning and offer stronger incentives for affordable housing across more of the city. Combined with our updated bonus structure, we now have a powerful set of tools to increase housing supply at a range of income levels.

I've supported investments in our shelter system and helped pass the 1/10th of 1% sales tax for affordable housing, using Housing Trust Fund dollars to support permanent supportive and transitional housing.

As mayor, I'll convene nonprofit and for-profit developers, labor and construction trades, and lenders to identify barriers to building and ensure policy aligns with financing and delivery. This collaborative approach was key in our MFTE reform, and I'll expand it to accelerate new housing. I'll also continue direct engagement with residents—grounded in shared values—to ensure we grow in a way that is inclusive, equitable, and community-driven.

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 exploring progressive revenue sources, but Tacoma isn't Seattle—we're a more working-class city, and many state-level tools like income or capital gains taxes won't generate as much here. What Tacoma needs most is



increased investment and business development to grow our local revenue base in a way that aligns with our values.

That's why I've prioritized sustainable growth: attracting new housing, advancing green jobs, and expanding our tax base through equitable economic development. Our green economic development strategy positions Tacoma to lead in the next generation of job creation while generating local revenue to fund key public services.

If federal funding is threatened under a future Trump administration, I would protect core services like public safety, infrastructure, and public health. I'd seek efficiencies, work with regional partners, and advocate for more flexibility and support at the state level to ensure our budget reflects community priorities while protecting our most vulnerable.

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?

To make Tacoma more affordable, we must focus on the three biggest drivers of household costs: housing, transportation, and utilities.

I helped lead the passage of Home in Tacoma, updating our zoning to allow more infill and affordable housing near transit. We aligned our bonus structure to incentivize affordability and expanded the Multifamily Tax Exemption to encourage



income-restricted units. We also eliminated parking minimums near high-frequency transit before the state required it—cutting costs for developers and future residents.

As a Pierce Transit Commissioner, I've prioritized expanding reliable, frequent transit so people can live car-free or car-light, reducing household transportation costs. We're aligning transit investments with where people live and work to support that vision.

Tacoma also owns its utilities. I've supported expanding bill credit assistance and affordability programs for low-income households, helping stabilize utility costs.

Affordability depends on how we align the systems we control. As mayor, I'll continue to integrate land use, transportation, and utility decisions to reduce household costs and ensure Tacoma remains a livable, thriving city for all.

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?

Making our streets safer starts with slowing vehicles and prioritizing people. That means redesigning dangerous corridors with road diets, narrower lanes, lighting upgrades, and high-visibility crosswalks. We also need accountability for reckless driving. I've championed expanding automated enforcement, including Tacoma's successful speed camera pilot on East Bay Street—once one of our most dangerous corridors—where crashes and fatalities have dropped to nearly zero.



As a councilmember and Vision Zero advocate, I co-authored the renewal of Tacoma's Transportation Benefit District with Councilmember Kristina Walker, dedicating 15% of revenues to multimodal improvements like sidewalks, bike lanes, and pedestrian safety. I also support using speed camera revenues to reinvest in the same corridors—improving infrastructure so the cameras become unnecessary.

In the long term, we must fully rebuild our arterial network to serve all users—not just cars. That means investing in a connected, safer system for walking, biking, and rolling. As a parent who, until recently, was pushing a stroller through Tacoma's streets, I know how important this work is. As mayor, I'll keep street safety at the center of our transportation strategy and make sure everyone can move safely through our city.

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

My public safety strategy balances effective emergency response with upstream investments that address root causes of crime and crisis. That starts with fully staffing our police and fire departments and ensuring they have the tools and training to respond quickly. But true safety means sending the right responder to the right call.

As a councilmember, I've championed alternative response models like our HOPE team (behavioral health), HEAL team (homeless outreach), and Community Service Officers (non-emergency calls). These programs free up emergency personnel and



ensure compassionate, targeted responses. I'll continue to scale and strengthen these models as mayor.

As a longtime educator, I know prevention matters. I've pushed to use our Equity Index to direct investments in historically under-resourced neighborhoods—supporting youth programs, community groups, and infrastructure that foster safety and stability. I believe in giving young people real opportunities and families the support they need.

Regionally, I've led on coordinated approaches as co-sponsor of the Pierce County Opioid Task Force and through my work on homelessness. As mayor, I'll expand these efforts, ensure our strategies are grounded in equity and data, and build a public safety system that reflects the complexity—and dignity—of those it serves.

In what ways could your city's comprehensive plan go further, and what would you push for to improve it during your tenure?

I'm proud of the work we've done in Tacoma to strengthen our comprehensive plan—especially aligning land use, housing, transportation, and parks. As a councilmember, I helped advance the Home in Tacoma zoning updates, integrated our Transportation Master Plan, and partnered with Parks Tacoma to align the parks element. We've built a thoughtful, future-focused plan.

But good planning is only the beginning. We now need to deliver on it. As mayor, I'll lead a focused effort to identify and remove barriers in our code—like stormwater manuals, building standards, and site development costs—that often slow or block



equitable, transit-oriented growth. We must align our regulations with our vision for affordability, sustainability, and livability.

I also plan to convene a coalition of nonprofit and for-profit developers, labor, the construction industry, and financing institutions to understand what's keeping housing from being built—and how we move from zoning reform to real projects. I want to lead the next phase of implementation so we don't just plan for the future—we build it.

What is your approach to finding common ground between slow growth advocates opposing change in their neighborhoods and pro-housing advocates pressing to meet broader community needs?

My approach starts with grounding the conversation in shared values. In Tacoma, we've long believed in being a place where working families can afford to live, where neighbors stay connected, and where the next generation can build a future. I remind people that we're at risk of losing that stability if we don't act.

I often connect housing policy to personal stories—how someone bought their first home, what they hope for their children, or what kind of neighborhood they want to grow old in. These stories create space to show that thoughtful, well-planned growth isn't a threat—it's a way to preserve what we value and make Tacoma more inclusive, walkable, and livable.

I believe strongly that our future depends on building more housing at all income levels. Density brings vibrancy, supports local businesses, and helps us tackle



climate change and affordability head-on. I've found success by leading with empathy and facts—and I'll continue building coalitions that unite our values with the housing growth we need.

Planned upcoming expansions to Sound Transit services will reshape the transportation and connectivity of the region. How would you, as mayor, support this regional effort to expand multi-modal transit? How will you foster a positive relationship between Sound Transit, local businesses, and residents?

Tacoma's future depends on strong regional transit, and Sound Transit's expansion is a generational opportunity. As mayor, I'll ensure Tacoma is a proactive partner—engaging early with Sound Transit, local businesses, and residents to align investments with our city's needs. I've already begun meeting with staff and impacted businesses to ensure they're supported as major projects like the Sounder extension move forward.

As a Pierce Transit commissioner, I'll continue working to integrate local transit with regional service so people can move seamlessly through the system. I'll also push for aligned land use—building on my leadership with Home in Tacoma—to ensure more housing and jobs near transit.

Sound Transit's success depends on regional coordination, and I see myself as a key regional leader, working with electeds across Pierce County to make sure we are maximizing the value of these investments. That includes fighting for equity, minimizing displacement, and supporting small businesses during construction.



This expansion can reshape Tacoma for the better—and I'll work to ensure we're not just getting new infrastructure, but building a more connected, affordable, and sustainable city that delivers for everyone.