



Kevin Nichols Urbanist Questionnaire 2025

Issaquah City Council, Position 6

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

My top three priorities are: 1) establishing an Issaquah-specific public-private development partnership to increase affordable housing in Central Issaquah, 2) partnering with schools to create compact, multi-use community hubs that anchor growth, and 3) implementing dedicated transit corridors that immediately improve emergency response times while addressing regional traffic. First, I'll establish an Issaquah-focused private-public development entity to address our housing crisis. We need dramatically new approaches with only 54 affordable units built in the past six years. This partnership leverages HB 1491's funded inclusionary zoning and private capital for public benefit, proving affordable housing can be profitable while gathering real data to inform policy. Second, I'll activate the Comprehensive Plan's Compact Schools policies (LU-D.9-13) by advocating for close partnering with the Issaquah School District to co-locate new schools with parks and community facilities in Central Issaquah. These community hubs will naturally attract focused development where we want it. Third, I'll advocate for dedicated bus lanes connecting North and South King County through Issaquah. With 45% AM pass-through traffic (80% at key intersections), these corridors will immediately improve emergency response, getting ambulances through congested intersections faster. Residents will see life-saving benefits today while building support for future Sound Transit partnerships.

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?

Issaquah needs a paradigm shift in housing production. I'll work to establish a community-focused public/private development partnership that builds diverse housing types specifically for Issaquah, from permanent supportive to workforce to market-rate, ensuring mixed-income neighborhoods in Central Issaquah. This model will keep development profits within our community while accelerating production beyond what traditional developers are currently incentivized to deliver.

For supportive housing engagement, I'll advocate for a three-phase approach: education about housing continuum needs, early involvement in site selection, and ongoing community liaison programs. By leveraging HB 2015's new funding streams for behavioral health co-responders, we can demonstrate how supportive housing paired with services enhances neighborhood safety.

When balancing community input with housing mandates, I will aim to follow evidence-based decision-making while respecting neighborhood concerns and emphasizing the benefits to our community of responding appropriately. Our housing shortage affects everyone, from seniors downsizing to young families seeking starter homes.

The state's Growth Management Act requires us to accommodate our share of regional housing needs. I'll advocate to ensure we meet these obligations through



community-beneficial development that enhances rather than detracts from Issaquah's character, creating places where multiple generations can afford to live.

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?

I support strategic revenue approaches that ensure growth pays for infrastructure while distributing costs equitably. My priorities include:

Public benefit value capture mechanisms through my proposed community development entity, where profits from market-rate housing subsidize affordable units and public amenities, essentially creating a revolving fund for community benefit.

Reforming our Transportation Benefit District (TBD) which currently relies solely on sales taxes. I'll advocate for reducing the sales tax proportional to increased progressive revenue sources including a speculation tax on properties flipped within 1 year and a land value tax on undeveloped sites in Central Issaquah. These approaches discourage harmful speculation and incentivize productive land use while shifting transportation funding away from working families.

Regional partnership leveraging to maximize state and federal grants, which are often funded through more progressive revenue sources. My professional experience securing federal funding positions me to understand the importance of



pursuing funding opportunities like EPA grants for Complete Streets, if available, and HB 2015 public safety grants.

Rather than cuts, I will advocate for focusing on strategic investments that generate long-term returns. Dense development in Central Issaquah produces more tax revenue per acre than sprawl, creating fiscal sustainability.

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?

The most critical strategy is dramatically accelerating housing production through transit-oriented development in Central Issaquah, combined with regional transportation solutions that reduce the cost of commuting.

Implementation requires three coordinated actions:

Immediate activation of funded inclusionary zoning opportunities under HB 1491 through a new public-private partnership development entity. By creating our own public-private partnership, we can utilize property tax exemptions to ensure projects pencil out with an internal rate of return sufficient to be profitable, though lower than traditional development approaches. This entity will build mixed-income housing faster than traditional approaches while reinvesting returns into more affordable units.



Strategic infrastructure investment in dedicated transit corridors serving dual purposes: reducing commute costs for residents and attracting TOD funding. Data showing 80% pass-through traffic at key intersections, such as Front St. during rush hour, demonstrates clear need for regional solutions.

Regulatory streamlining, particularly for Central Issaquah development, reducing time and uncertainty costs that ultimately get passed to residents. This includes pre-approved designs for missing middle housing and expedited permitting for projects meeting affordability targets.

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?

Street safety requires fundamental redesign using Safe Systems principles, assuming human error and engineering forgiveness into our infrastructure. I will advocate for an integrated approach that addresses both local safety and regional traffic patterns: Dedicated transit corridors as safety infrastructure serving triple duty: separating buses from traffic conflicts, providing emergency vehicle access during congestion, and reducing overall traffic volumes. With 80% pass-through traffic at critical intersections, these bypasses directly improve safety by reducing conflict points. Focus development to reduce trip necessity by creating truly walkable neighborhoods in Central Issaquah where daily needs will be accessible without driving. This systemic approach reduces exposure to traffic dangers while supporting climate goals under HB 1181. Implement Complete Streets design prioritizing vulnerable users, especially around schools and commercial areas. This means protected bike lanes, enhanced crosswalks with refuge islands, and traffic



calming that naturally reduces speeds. Unlike approaches that rely solely on enforcement or education, infrastructure changes create lasting safety improvements. By integrating safety considerations into all transportation decisions, from development review to capital projects, we systematically reduce risk for all users.

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

Effective public safety requires addressing root causes while modernizing our response systems. I will advocate for: Expanded alternative response capacity by aggressively pursuing HB 2015 grants to establish behavioral health co-responder teams. These civilian-led teams provide appropriate care for mental health crises while freeing officers for crime response. Housing as crime prevention through my community development initiative, creating stable housing options that reduce property crime and disorder. Research consistently shows housing stability as fundamental to public safety, I'll make this connection explicit in our approach. Regional coordination recognizing that crime doesn't respect city boundaries. I'll advocate to strengthen partnerships with neighboring jurisdictions for information sharing and coordinated response.

The Eastside faces unique challenges when it comes to affordability, transit connectivity, and suburban versus city identity. What are your thoughts on how we can envision the future of urbanism on the Eastside?



The Eastside must forge its own path, neither mimicking Seattle's density in every situation, nor clinging to unsustainable sprawl. For Issaquah specifically, this means: Concentrated excellence in Central Issaquah: building a genuinely walkable neighborhood with diverse housing, local businesses, and cultural amenities, all within walking distance of transit. This isn't about density for density's sake, but creating complete neighborhoods where car ownership, particularly multiple per family, becomes optional if desired, not mandatory, and our beautiful hillsides are only a short hike away. Strategic school placement as urban catalysts: positioning future new elementary, middle, and the next group of high schools within Central Issaquah as multi-use community hubs. This will create facilities that anchor neighborhoods and justify the density needed for affordability. Regional transit innovation, acknowledging our polycentric reality. The Eastside needs grid-like transit connections. North-south transit corridors through Issaquah will provide limited immediate relief in the form of improved emergency response times while demonstrating our ability to partner for future high-capacity transit.

Do you support camping bans or sweeps? If elected, how would you adapt or change current law/policies to protect and support our neighbors?

Criminalizing homelessness through bans and sweeps fails both morally and practically; it merely displaces visible suffering without addressing the causes. I support evidence-based approaches that treat housing as a right while maintaining community standards.

I believe we should advocate for:



Immediate expansion of shelter capacity including low-barrier options that don't separate families or require non-housing-related criteria as entry conditions.

Accelerated permanent housing production through my community development entity, specifically including permanent supportive housing with wraparound services. By building our own, we ensure these facilities are designed for success rather than warehousing.

Robust outreach before any necessary relocations, with trained social workers offering real alternatives. When camps pose genuine health/safety risks, intensive engagement must include housing offers, secure property storage, and connection to services, never just displacement.

Address root causes by expanding behavioral health services through HB 2015 funding and strengthening crisis intervention. Many experiencing homelessness need mental health or addiction treatment; criminalizing their condition helps no one.

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

While Issaquah's 2044 Comprehensive Plan provides a solid framework, it needs stronger implementation mechanisms and bolder integration of innovative solutions:



Operationalize the housing element by explicitly incorporating private/public partnership development models as implementation strategies. The plan identifies the need for 3,500 units, but relies on traditional approaches. I'll push for amendments recognizing public-private partnerships as novel delivery mechanisms, with specific targets and timelines.

Strengthen school-growth linkage by expanding Compact Schools policies (LU-D.9-13) to explicitly position schools as catalysts for focused development. The plan should help to operationalize the inter-governmental body coordination that will be required to establish specific Central Issaquah sites where co-located schools, parks, and community facilities will create mixed-use neighborhood anchors.

Bold transportation transformation acknowledging that 80% pass-through traffic at key intersections requires regional solutions. The Transportation element needs explicit policies for dedicating road space to transit, creating grade-separated crossings, and establishing interim bus rapid transit using exclusive lanes, not waiting decades for light rail.