



Menka Soni Urbanist Questionnaire 2025

Redmond City Council, Position 6

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

1. Affordable & Diverse Housing 2. Compassionate Public Safety & Homelessness Solutions , 3. Equitable Economic Growth & Small Business Empowerment

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?

To ensure Redmond remains a community where families of all incomes can live where they work, I will champion inclusive housing policies that expand affordable, workforce, and family-friendly housing options across neighborhoods. I support zoning reforms that enable diverse housing types—such as duplexes, triplexes, and townhomes—and will advocate for incentives for developers to include affordable units. Preserving existing affordable housing is equally critical to prevent displacement.

Engaging the public is key to successfully siting shelters and supportive housing. I will prioritize early, transparent community outreach, provide clear data on need and impact, and host collaborative town halls that center both facts and empathy. Public



concerns must be acknowledged, but they cannot be a barrier to providing basic human shelter.

As a housing advocate and Founder of AmPowering, I've seen firsthand the success that comes when neighbors are informed and empowered—not excluded. I will lead with compassion and communication, bridging gaps between housing goals and community voices, so that Redmond can grow equitably and remain a city where all families are welcomed and supported.

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 to fund community priorities like affordable housing, public safety, transit, and climate action—without burdening working families. I would support tools like real estate excise taxes, lodging and tourism taxes, and graduated utility or business fees. I'm also open to exploring commercial linkage fees, a vacancy tax, or an employer head tax on large corporations to fund workforce housing and transportation needs.

If permitted, I'd consider a local capital gains tax or Transportation Benefit District fees to support sustainable infrastructure. I also believe in cost-saving measures like regional cost-sharing, using surplus public land for housing, and participatory budgeting to ensure spending reflects community priorities.



Budgets must reflect our values. If cuts are necessary, I would prioritize preserving frontline services, explore administrative efficiencies, and avoid regressive measures. I will lead with transparency, equity, and accountability—ensuring every dollar moves us toward a more resilient, inclusive Redmond.

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 important strategy Redmond can pursue is expanding affordable and diverse housing options—this directly addresses rising living costs and keeps families, workers, and seniors in our community. Housing impacts everything: workforce stability, traffic congestion, school enrollment, and small business survival. To reduce costs and improve access, I support zoning reforms that allow for more duplexes, triplexes, ADUs, and missing-middle housing. I'll advocate for fast-tracking permitting for affordable and workforce housing, and creating public-private partnerships to build on underused public land.

As a real estate professional and board member of South King Housing and Homelessness Partners, I understand both market drivers and policy levers. I would work with regional partners to implement fee-in-lieu flexibility, preserve existing affordable units, and expand transitional and supportive housing. Community engagement will be key—ensuring residents understand how smart growth enhances affordability without sacrificing neighborhood identity. By leading with transparency and collaboration, Redmond can be a city where all people can afford to live, work, and thrive.



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?

Traffic deaths are rising, especially among pedestrians, and Redmond must act urgently to protect all users. I support adopting a Vision Zero goal to eliminate traffic fatalities and redesign streets for safety. This includes expanding protected bike lanes, safe crosswalks, and traffic-calming measures like curb extensions and raised intersections. We must prioritize vulnerable users—children, seniors, people with disabilities—and invest in Safe Routes to Schools, pedestrian lighting, and safer transit access. Speed reduction is key: I support lowering limits in dense areas, using design to slow traffic, and enforcing safety equitably through tools like automated speed cameras. Data must drive our priorities. I'll advocate for targeting high-injury corridors first and ensuring that underserved neighborhoods are not left behind. Community voices—especially those who walk, bike, or rely on transit—must shape these plans. As VP of OneRedmond Foundation and a leader on community safety, I've worked closely with local police and neighborhoods. I'll bring that collaborative approach to council—leading with compassion, equity, and prevention to make Redmond's streets safe for everyone.

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

My approach to public safety centers on prevention, trust-building, and equitable response. Over the next five years, I will work to expand community policing, mental health crisis response teams, and diversion programs that connect individuals to services—not jail. We must address the root causes of crime, including housing



instability, addiction, and lack of access to behavioral health care. As VP of OneRedmond Foundation and member of Renton's Inclusion Task Force, I've worked closely with Redmond and Bellevue Police Departments to promote community engagement and safety education. I will build on that work by advocating for cultural competency training, youth engagement programs, and trauma-informed response practices. To actualize this plan, I'll champion data-driven resource allocation, strengthen cross-sector partnerships with nonprofits and health providers, and ensure city policies reflect the needs of all residents, especially underserved communities. Public safety must be rooted in trust, accountability, and compassion, and I'm committed to building a Redmond where everyone feels safe, supported, and heard.

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 is evolving—from a collection of suburbs to a dynamic, interconnected region facing real urban challenges. To shape its future, we must embrace a people-first vision of urbanism that balances affordability, mobility, and community identity. This means building complete neighborhoods where residents of all incomes can live near jobs, schools, and transit—without being displaced. I support zoning reform to allow missing-middle housing, mixed-use development near transit, and policies that preserve affordability as the region grows. We must invest in multi-modal transportation—expanding light rail access, improving first- and last-mile connectivity, and ensuring pedestrian and bike infrastructure keeps pace with development. As someone deeply involved with housing and economic boards across the Eastside, I know collaboration is key. Cities must work together on regional planning, while honoring local culture and diversity. Urbanism doesn't mean



high-rises everywhere—it means thoughtful growth, inclusive design, and vibrant public spaces that bring people together. Let's build an Eastside that's affordable, connected, and uniquely ours—a region where suburban roots and urban innovation coexist to create resilient, thriving communities.

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

I do not support blanket camping bans or sweeps, which criminalize poverty and push people experiencing homelessness further into instability. These approaches fail to address root causes and often destroy what little stability people have—like documents, medication, or contact with outreach workers.

Instead, I support a housing-first, services-first approach grounded in compassion and accountability. As Founder of AmPowering, I've worked directly with unhoused individuals, providing meals, interim shelter, and wraparound services. I've seen that real change happens when we meet people where they are and build trust.

If elected, I will advocate for policies that prioritize housing navigation, mental health and substance use support, and expanded emergency and transitional shelter options. I support coordinated outreach teams that can offer services and referrals before any enforcement is considered. If relocation is necessary, it must come with dignity, transparency, and access to alternatives—not punishment.



We need regional solutions that reflect both urgency and humanity. Everyone deserves safety—housed or unhoused—and I'm committed to building systems that uplift rather than displace.

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

Redmond's Comprehensive Plan provides a strong foundation, but it must go further to meet the challenges of rapid growth, affordability, equity, and climate resilience. I would push for a more bold, inclusive, and future-ready vision that centers people, not just development.

First, we must strengthen the housing element by promoting missing middle housing, affordable housing mandates, and anti-displacement protections. I'd advocate for clear implementation timelines and metrics to track progress, ensuring housing goals translate into real outcomes.

Second, the plan should prioritize mobility beyond cars—expanding bike and pedestrian infrastructure, last-mile transit connectivity, and safe routes to schools and transit hubs. With light rail arriving, we must ensure land use near stations supports walkable, transit-oriented communities.

Third, I'd enhance the equity lens by embedding racial and social equity impact assessments into all major policies and investments. Community voices—especially from renters, youth, and historically marginalized groups—must shape future planning.



Lastly, I'd push for stronger climate goals—requiring green building, preserving open space, and integrating urban tree canopy growth into planning decisions.

As a councilmember, I will bring my grassroots and regional experience to ensure Redmond's future is sustainable, inclusive, and community-driven.