



Shilpa Prem Urbanist Questionnaire 2025

Kirkland City Council, Position 3

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

(1) Building a community for all by providing more housing options and increasing affordability, 2) Creating an adequate infrastructure for growth, including making transportation convenient and sustainable and (3) ensuring Kirkland continues to be safe.

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 Kirkland remains a place where people of all income levels can live where they work, I support expanding zoning for missing middle housing—like duplexes and courtyard apartments—along with infrastructure to support growth. I also back inclusionary zoning and tax incentives for affordable housing in market-rate developments.

Community engagement is critical for shelters and transitional housing. I will prioritize early outreach through town halls, pop-ups, and online forums to build trust and share clear, transparent information. Highlighting local success stories and



partnering with experienced nonprofits will help show how supportive housing reduces homelessness and improves neighborhood stability.

My approach balances empathy with action. We'll create real opportunities for community input while keeping projects on track. I will counter misinformation with data. Every neighborhood must share in the responsibility of meeting our housing needs.

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 believe we need to take a serious look at how we raise revenue, with an eye toward fairness and long-term sustainability. There are responsible ways to ensure our tax system reflects shared priorities and asks more of those who are most able to contribute. If we want strong public schools, provide housing options, create state of the art infrastructure, and meaningful climate action, we need the resources to fund them—and that means exploring options that make our system more equitable.

Before naming specific revenue sources or cuts, I want to fully understand the current budget landscape—where funds are going, what's working, and what's not. We need to make evidence-based decisions that reflect community needs and real-world impact.

Budgets are under strain, in part due to Trump-era policies that prioritized tax breaks for the wealthy over investment in people. I believe in rebalancing those



priorities—not through harmful austerity, but by ensuring we're funding what matters most. If cuts are needed, they should target waste and inefficiency, not essential services.

My commitment is to a budget that reflects our values: equity, opportunity, and shared responsibility.

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 to limit cost increases and make our region more affordable is to expand affordable and middle-income housing near jobs, transit, and services. Housing costs are the single biggest driver of financial strain for individuals and families, and we must treat this as both a social and economic justice issue.

I would support zoning reforms to allow more missing middle and multifamily housing. Implementation starts with bold leadership and community engagement. I would work to build coalitions—with local governments, nonprofits, labor, and employers—to align on shared affordability goals. We also need to leverage state and federal funding and advocate for regional housing targets.

Affordability isn't just about housing—it's about access to transit, childcare, and good-paying jobs. By treating housing as infrastructure and centering equity in our policies, we can build a region where people aren't priced out of the communities they help sustain.



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?

Improving street safety is a top priority. I support a Vision Zero approach that prioritizes eliminating traffic deaths through safer street design, lower speeds, and community-centered planning. We need to invest in protected bike lanes, well-lit crosswalks, traffic-calming measures, and sidewalk improvements, especially near schools, transit, and high-foot-traffic areas. I would also push for lower speed limits in residential and high-pedestrian zones, combined with better enforcement and public education. Safer streets don't just prevent collisions—they also promote walkability, accessibility, and healthier neighborhoods. Data should guide our efforts. By analyzing where and why crashes occur, we can target the most effective improvements and ensure equity in safety investments across all Kirkland neighborhoods.

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

Over the next five years, I will focus on a public safety strategy that prioritizes prevention, accountability, and community trust. This means investing in approaches that address the root causes of crime while ensuring timely and effective emergency response. I support expanding mental health crisis response teams to reduce reliance on police for non-violent incidents. I'll work to improve 911 call triage so the right resources—whether officers, social workers, or health professionals—are dispatched based on the situation. Building community policing efforts is also key, including officers engaging proactively with neighborhoods to build trust and



improve response. I will advocate for data transparency and performance tracking to ensure public safety policies are equitable and effective. By coordinating with city staff, community groups, and regional partners, we can secure the funding and alignment needed to actualize this vision.

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 has a unique opportunity to shape a model of urbanism that reflects both our suburban roots and our growing need for connected, inclusive communities. We can embrace a vision, where residents can access jobs, schools, parks, and services within a short walk, bike ride, or transit trip. To get there, we need to concentrate growth near transit hubs, while preserving green space and neighborhoods. This means building mixed-use, walkable centers with diverse housing types—so people of all ages and incomes can live and thrive here. Transit connectivity must be a priority, including frequent, reliable bus services that bridge gaps between neighborhoods and major job centers. We also need safe, people-first street design to support walking and biking.

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

Addressing homelessness requires compassionate, long-term solutions that prioritize the dignity and well-being of our neighbors. I believe our focus should be



on expanding housing-first programs, increasing access to permanent supportive housing, and providing robust mental health and social services.

Policies should protect the rights and belongings of people experiencing homelessness, ensuring any outreach or necessary clean-up is done respectfully and in coordination with service providers. Displacement without alternatives only deepens instability and trauma.

I would work to strengthen partnerships between the city, nonprofits, and community members to create safe, supportive environments and clear pathways into housing. This includes investing in emergency shelters, transitional housing, and resources tailored to individual needs.

Ultimately, the solution lies in addressing systemic issues—such as the lack of affordable housing, economic inequality, and gaps in healthcare access—while centering the voices and experiences of those affected. By focusing on humane, equitable policies and meaningful support, we can build a community where everyone has the opportunity for safety and stability.

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

Kirkland's vision articulated in its 2044 Comprehensive Plan is a future city that is a "place where all people are valued," that is "accessible to all people," and "sustainable," "resilient and livable." To achieve this vision, we must proactively pursue the policies laid out in the various comprehensive plan elements. We need to



prioritize our sustainability goals and consider sustainability in all the work our city does.

The housing element, in compliance with HB1220, outlays the housing needs in Kirkland across the income spectrum, with a significant need for those earning low and very-low income levels. I support actionable policy that addresses how we are going to partner and fund this housing to actually be built, not just planned for and accommodated. I will push for policy that shapes complete, affordable communities, not just affordable housing.

I also support policies that prioritize transportation options other than single-occupancy vehicles. We need to create complete, safe, enjoyable ways for people to bike, walk, roll, and ride transit around our city and region.

We additionally need to acknowledge the intersection of housing, sustainability, transportation, economic development, and equity. I'd push for clearer goals in our strategic plans to address these intersections and tie those policies into Comprehensive Plan updates.