



Jessica Johnston Urbanist Questionnaire 2025

Tacoma City Council, Position 6 (At-Large)

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

1. Strengthening public safety and rebuilding trust between the community and first responders. 2. Expanding housing and homelessness solutions that meet people where they are, including supportive services for mental health and addiction. 3. Growing Tacoma's economy by supporting small businesses, reducing red tape, and creating more opportunities for good jobs.

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?

I believe housing is a foundation for stability, and we need a range of options so families of all incomes can afford to live near where they work. I support transitional housing, tiny home villages, and repurposing vacant buildings into shelter or supportive housing. I've worked with property owners who want to be part of the solution but face too much red tape. Public engagement matters. Neighbors should be part of the conversation early and often, not just after decisions are made. I've seen successful models where supportive housing includes community spaces, art, and gardens that help integrate people rather than isolate them. I will lead with transparency and compassion while making clear that homelessness is not solved by encampments. It's an issue solved by safe, stable, and dignified housing options paired with services.



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 that ensure our tax system is fairer and less burdensome on working families and small businesses. I would look at options like a payroll tax on large corporations that have the capacity to contribute more, while protecting small and mid-sized businesses. At the same time, I will push to make sure every dollar we already spend is transparent and accountable. People in Tacoma need to see where their money goes and feel confident it reflects their priorities.

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 biggest driver of cost is housing, so expanding housing options is key. We need to reduce barriers that slow down building and create incentives for affordable units near jobs and transit. At the same time, we must invest in workforce development so more residents can access family-wage careers. I will partner with nonprofits, trade programs, and businesses to open career pathways while cutting red tape that drives up costs for housing and business alike.

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?

Safety on our streets means slowing cars where people walk, improving crosswalks, and making sure sidewalks and lighting are well maintained. It also means listening



to neighborhoods about where the risks are and responding quickly. I'll advocate for infrastructure that protects pedestrians, cyclists, and drivers alike, while ensuring public input drives the priorities.

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

Public safety starts with trust. I'll work to rebuild relationships between neighbors and Tacoma Police through more community-based engagement, youth outreach, and unarmed neighborhood safety teams. Hiring more officers is part of the plan, but equally important is culture change and accountability. I'll also advocate for mental health crisis response teams so not every 911 call relies on police. If elected, I will push for steady investment in both sworn officers and alternative responders, while supporting community programs that prevent crime before it happens.

How have federal funding cuts impacted your jurisdiction and how do you plan to address those impacts?

Federal cuts have left our city with fewer resources for housing, mental health services, and infrastructure. We see the results in longer wait times, more people struggling without support, and gaps in basic services. I plan to address these impacts by building stronger local and regional partnerships, leveraging state resources, and making Tacoma competitive for grants. I'll also advocate for progressive local revenue options so we're not left vulnerable when federal priorities shift.

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



Simply moving people from one block to another doesn't solve the problem and often makes it worse. I support policies that connect people directly to services and housing instead of just clearing camps. This means investing in low-barrier shelters, transitional housing, and supportive services so people have real alternatives. I will push to streamline the process for repurposing vacant buildings and to expand tiny home villages that integrate people into the broader community.

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

Tacoma's comprehensive plan should do more to align housing, transportation, and jobs. I'd like to see stronger commitments to affordable housing near transit and workforce training built into economic development strategies. We should also expand how we engage residents by making planning conversations accessible to those who can't attend City Hall meetings. By grounding the plan in equity and real community feedback, we can make sure Tacoma grows in a way that includes everyone.