

City Council Candidate's Questionnaire

The COUNCIL OF NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATIONS (CNA) is made up of leaders from the 35 City-recognized Neighborhood Associations (NA). The CNA's job is to foster effective communication between the City and its neighborhoods on a variety of issues such as land use planning, public safety, neighborhood services. The CNA does not take positions on issues but does advocate for meaningful, transparent, and timely engagement of neighborhoods in City activities and planning decisions.

The following questions related to neighborhood issues were submitted to the Candidate's for City Council so that they could respond. Please use the responses to help in deciding for whom you will vote in the upcoming primary election.

Questions & Responses

- 1. What are your thoughts about the role of neighborhoods in the City's planning and decision-making affecting their neighborhoods? How would you work with neighborhood associations to make our community a better place to live?**

City Council, Position No. 2

Robbi Kesler - No Response

Yen Huynh -

The City should be attentive to neighborhoods and the neighborhoods should have some effective means to communicate their concerns about issues to the City. Neighborhood associations should work to have greater demographic representation to include renters, people that live in different housing types, racially and ethnically diverse community members, and have a greater age distribution including some young people. It is particularly helpful when the CNA speaks out on issues that are common to the neighborhood association members and to encourage individual neighborhoods to speak out when there are issues unique to their neighborhood. I understand that it can be difficult for the CNA to represent all things for all neighborhoods, though it can be very helpful to voice things felt by all members. Most people live in recognized City neighborhoods and the City has designated neighborhoods because neighborhoods are important to people's quality of life. I would work to assure that the City gives proper notice to neighborhoods when there are issues coming up that will affect them and include neighborhoods early on to maximize their ability to have effective input. If you have suggestions for improvements, please let me know.

Bruce D. Wilkinson Jr. –

My general theory of decision making is a comprehensive participatory democracy model. In such a model the people have the most say about issues that affect them the most. A participatory democratic model relies on neighborhood councils as well as other more specialized councils for decision making processes. There is wide information sharing, many points of participation in every level of decision making from the vision to the strategy to the tactics. From the planning to the implementation. I'd like to see neighborhood associations not simply have decision making authorities but have their sleeves rolled up in delivering services, building and construction, maintenance and more. This way the project depends on the enthusiasm and the resources of a community as much as it's approval and input. In such a model the city isn't there to bring ideas to the people but to receive ideas from the people and offer guidance and resources in the people's decisions and the work that comes out of it. In this model there are shared responsibilities for accomplishing goals and plenty of redundancy and support in seeing them accomplished.

City Council, Position No. 4

Clark Gilman - No Response

Candace Mercer -

We need to have better communication. I lived through the current council's neglect of neighborhoods and understand how maddening it is to be shut out of the process around important changes to QOL. I live in the single family dwelling closest to 2828 Martin Way housing/shelter project.

Everything was a surprise to us and we had ZERO voice in our fate. We had meetings after the fact that were for show only. Our very reasonable concerns were not only ignored, but gaslit and denied. We tried to get a neighborhood advisory board on the project and have been ignored by the city and by Interfaith Works. It did unite us however and make us stronger as a group.

City Council, Position No. 5

Lisa Parshley - No Response

Wendy Carlson - No Response

Talauna Reed - No Response

City Council, Position No. 6

Corey Gauny –

I believe our neighborhoods are an integral part of the very fabric of Olympia, it is what makes Olympia so wonderful. Neighborhood associations are a key stakeholder in the decisions that craft how our city is to grow. As an elected leader in a representative democracy, I would want to build relationships with neighborhood association leaders so that we could have open honest conversations about the challenges and opportunities for our city. I could then represent those views at council.

Dontae Payne -

The City has a responsibility to include appropriate stakeholders in the decision-making process and in the case of neighborhoods it is important that a representative participates to ensure they have input on decisions that will affect where they reside.

Sarah DeStasio –

I believe that local control is essential to vibrant neighborhoods - buildings owned by people who live in them (housing cooperatives and housing land trusts), parks and art installations developed with public feedback - and that the City was strive to collect, meaningfully assess and make decisions based on neighborhood feedback.

City Council, Position No. 7

Jim Cooper - No Response

Spence Weigand - No Response

Tyrone Dion Brown - No Response

2. Do you believe there is value in preserving the character of single-family neighborhoods while the city pursues high density development?

City Council, Position No. 2

Robbi Kesler - No Response

Yen Huynh -

This is one of the greatest issues facing the City. There is a tension between preserving the character of single family homes with the need for infilling and providing a greater diversity of housing types so that more people can afford housing. We need to minimize sprawl and maximize the efficiency and costs per residential unit of urban services. To the extent that any modifications need to be made, the neighborhoods' perspectives should be taken into account.

Bruce D. Wilkinson Jr. -

Yes. I live at 1215 Marion St. NE, a rental property in a single-family neighborhood. I grew up on a farm, but I spent about 8 years living in bigger cities that included apartments, duplexes and other living arrangements, like garages and attics. The house I am at right now has a real yard that I can grow plants in, my neighbor has chickens, my other neighbor has ducks. I have a driveway that I can work on my old truck which constantly needs work. I've got two storage sheds in back that I keep tools in for carpentry and mechanical work, but also my gear for tree work and my roommates gear for their landscaping businesses. I couldn't do what I do from an apartment, or be fully who I am considering my interests in tinkering and growing things.

I take some issue in calling it a single-family neighborhood because frankly there are a lot of homes that aren't. Over 10% of people live with roommates, such as myself. A good 35% are single moms or dads with kids and about 35% are two parents with kids. Plenty are retired people with kids who have moved out and some are intergenerational families with grandparents. I feel like the character evolves with time but devolves with outside money buying up properties for investments. For instance I'd like to see our neighborhood get some more little restaurants nestled in there and other small businesses like the San Francisco Street Bakery. I feel like the lacking of these little things which I found in older neighborhoods in other towns would improve the character. The Puget Pantry for example was interested in turning the gravel lot next door into something, but they heard the cost would be exorbitant. Well I think we need something there and why isn't the city working with them on making it happen? This is just an example where we need to be aware that we're trying to grow the character and add more value to the neighborhood in terms of quality of life for residences, what we're not

trying to do is sell it out and build for the sake of profits.

City Council, Position No. 4

Clark Gilman - No Response

Candace Mercer -

Yes! I feel the high density corridor plan is the best approach, it makes sense for many reasons, most notably public transportation and climate change. I feel we still need to protect key neighborhoods, keeping them single family zoning.

I do, however, like the idea of facilitating cohousing and making it OK for single family dwellings to house two families. I know of two young couples who are breaking rules by living together in one large house. It works though! They share resources, child care etc. There is still plenty of space for them because it is such a large house. This is efficient, reduces housing costs, and stress on the limited housing market.

City Council, Position No. 5

Lisa Parshley - No Response

Wendy Carlson – No Response

Talauna Reed - No Response

City Council, Position No. 6

Corey Gauny - No Response

My family are long time Olympians, my Dad, Grandmother and two uncles all live on the same street in Olympia. I do believe there is tremendous value in preserving the character of our single-family neighborhoods. At the same time, we need more affordable housing on the market, so we need to find ways to preserve and integrate affordable housing and maintain single housing neighborhoods. I have heard arguments for Not In My Backyard (NIMBY) and Yes In My Backyard (YIMBY). Like a healthy ecosystem we need to incorporate market rate and low income housing solutions and integrate them. I believe neighborhood associations need to be represented at the table for those discussions.

Dontae Payne -

Yes. However, I do support diversity within our housing supply, which includes ADU's, tiny homes, and maintaining the character of single family neighborhoods is important for homeowners and renters alike to attract potential buyers and allow people to invest in their properties.

Sarah DeStasio –

Yes, and I believe there are many innovative ways to do it - making conversions easier, commercial re-zoned as multi-use to allow more residential units while limiting infill into neighborhoods.

City Council, Position No. 7

Jim Cooper – *No Response*

Spence Weigand – *No Response*

Tyrone Dion Brown – *No Response*

3. What are your thoughts about changing Olympia Council's elections from at-large to district representation?

City Council, Position No. 2

Robbi Kesler – *No Response*

Yen Huynh –

In the State of Washington, this issue comes up when there is a longterm pattern of the people on the City Council having lived in only a few of the same neighborhoods and when there has not been adequate representation. It would be good to do an analysis of where City Council Members have lived over a long period of time and to see if the residential pattern is concentrated or not. I would be open to studying this. We would need to be careful of gerrymandering and other sorts of balancing efforts.

Bruce D. Wilkinson Jr. –

I'm not afraid of democracy, I passionately support real democracy. District representation makes it easier for real people, like me, to win a seat because the districts are smaller. I would prefer a bigger council, two representatives from each ward, 6 wards, 12 city councilors, like Aberdeen. Let's also look into a strong mayor.

City Council, Position No. 4

Clark Gilman – *No Response*

Candace Mercer –

I reject that. I feel the entire city should have a say on who sits on the council. There is too much at stake to balkanize our small city. I have seen how one radical member can take the entire council with them. Broad elections will be somewhat of a check on that. I also feel it is unifying, and our council is supposed to be nonpartisan, I feel districts would undermine that unity.

City Council, Position No. 5

Lisa Parshley – No Response

Wendy Carlson – No Response

Talauna Reed – No Response

City Council, Position No. 6

Corey Gauny –

I was actually shocked when I learned that elections in Olympia were “at-large”. This is not the first time I have been asked this question. There are several arguments for and against changing from at-large to district representation. My original position on this issue has actually changed. Pro for the at-large system: People are not picking districts to live in based on political or ideological beliefs; our communities are integrated like a healthy ecosystem. Additionally, the council gets elected by the populace decision. Pro for the district representation: The voices of our neighborhoods would be represented equally at council and this would ensure that there are checks and balances and that there would be better representation of our districts at council as opposed to just a populace vote. I am for district representation. I say this knowing that I would likely not be elected, as the district I live in would likely vote for someone that has a different political and ideological views than I do.

Dontae Payne –

I believe there are pros and cons to each approach. My interest is in increasing voter turnout to avoid having a small number of residents deciding who’s elected to represent the entire city regardless of the election approach we use.

Sarah DeStasio –

While I would like to explore this question more, I see virtue in public servants who are obligated to constituents who live where they do.

City Council, Position No. 7

Jim Cooper – *No Response*

Spence Weigand – *No Response*

Tyrone Dion Brown – *No Response*

4. Would you support allowing a representative from a recognized neighborhood association to participate as a voting or non-voting member in the deliberations of City Commissions and Committees?

City Council, Position No. 2

Robbi Kesler – No Response

Yen Huynh –

The CNA does an excellent job of making their perspectives known. The City Council does currently take into account neighborhoods where people live when making appointments to City boards and commissions. There are many different categories of boards and commissions associated with the City that are made up of community members. Anyone can apply during the annual appointment process. We could explore the possibility of creating an official neighborhood advisory commission to the Council. I would be happy to discuss further.

Bruce D. Wilkinson Jr –

City Commissions and Committees should be opened to maximum participation. Maximum participation. I applied to a committee twice and was denied. I've known others, even former city council members, be denied. I mean why? I have a college degree (not that that should matter), I've been involved in community groups on a deep level for over a decade, I've been engaged in the sort of work the committees do, what made me and others get rejected?

Well, call me crazy, but I think if a citizen of a city wants to volunteer their time and energy on a committee, they should be able to. If so many people want to join, that's fabulous, bring them all together and divide the work into smaller chunks and say thank you very much, we could use even more people if you have friends, family members or high school kids available. And we make it a great experience for all.

S, yes, representatives of neighborhood associations should participate fully in these groups, they can be liaisons. That absolutely makes excellent sense.

City Council, Position No. 4

Clark Gilman -

Candace Mercer -

This is an idea that merits consideration, though I feel I would fall on the side of nonvoting as that person would not be democratically chosen and that would undermine a core principle of democracy that I believe in.

City Council, Position No. 5

Lisa Parshley - No Response

Wendy Carlson - No Response

Talauna Reed - No Response

City Council, Position No. 6

Corey Gauny -

I would encourage and support recognized neighborhood association members in the deliberation of City Commissions and Committees. I need further consideration as to whether those should be in the capacity of voting or non-voting members. Our city currently encourages community members to volunteer to sit on commissions and committees and provide recommendations to the city council. I have applied to several positions myself, but have yet to be selected.

Dontae Payne -

Yes, I support including a representative as a non voting member because I believe that representation is crucial in the decision-making process. For voting privileges, an individual should apply to be appointed to a commission or committee.

Sarah DeStasio -

Yes.

City Council, Position No. 7

Jim Cooper - *No Response*

Spence Weigand - *No Response*

Tyrone Dion Brown - *No Response*

5. Home ownership is declining in Olympia but remains a goal for many individuals and families and contributes to income equality. What would you do to facilitate new opportunities for home ownership?

City Council, Position No. 2

Robbi Kesler - No Response

Yen Huynh –

I would support the State Legislature in changing State laws to encourage more condominiums. I understand that the State has a program to support first time home buyers and the City should look into this and encourage its use. Currently the Land Use and Environment Committee that I am on, has commissioned a housing feasibility study that will include exploring options to increase home ownership opportunities.

Bruce D. Wilkinson Jr. –

Yeah I'm one of those individuals that would love to own a home! I'm 40, I have lived a life I am proud of with no glaring mistakes or huge misfortunes. I'm lucky. I also can't buy a house.

I went back to college at 26 after finishing two years of Americorps doing environmental restoration and trail work. Soon after I started the Great Recession hit hard. I decided then and there that I needed to understand deeper what was happening so I switched from environmental studies to political economics. I learned a lot. One of my favorite things to do is explain with statistics, facts and figures how much harder it is for the current generation to have the basic security that the previous. Figuring out what to do about it is much tougher, but I have come across many great ideas and models.

My feeling is that the city could really facilitate home ownership for young families especially. It wouldn't take that much work to try and bring incentives to younger local families and levy disincentives for out of town money. Plus let's just end the whole idea that people or businesses can buy houses sight unseen as an investment they turn over to a property management firm. No thanks corporations!

City Council, Position No. 4

Clark Gilman - No Response

Candace Mercer –

This is the biggest equity issue in Olympia. We must open up development at all levels to solve this pressing problem. My platform is built on three main issues, homelessness, affordable housing and public safety. I will be relentless looking for creative Olympia centric solutions.

City Council, Position No. 5

Lisa Parshley - No Response

Wendy Carlson - No Response

Talauna Reed – No Response

City Council, Position No. 6

Corey Gauny –

Right now homeowners represent 52% of the housing in Olympia. I would like to see more people own their homes. The reality is that our community is being impacted by increased housing prices, pricing many Olympians out of reach of the dream of home ownership. There are many reasons for this, increased telecommuting options for people from Seattle, Tacoma and Portland where housing prices have increased, a lack of available housing on the market and Olympia being ranked in the 10 to cities in the United States just a mere four years ago. These aforementioned externalities plus the fact that Olympia is open, accepting and tolerant of all people and their identities has drawn many people to our City. There are very few options to provide the option of homeownership to our residents as we do not control loan approval, interest rates or market access. One option we can do is find ways to provide more units in our housing market; our current housing stock is vastly under supplied. Providing a healthy safe, vibrant downtown where small businesses can survive and people can make a living that would support purchasing a home would be a goal of mine.

Dontae Payne –

We should collaborate with real estate companies to offer homeownership workshops in partnership with the City to educate prospective homeowners.

Sarah DeStasio –

The housing land trust model puts homeownership within reach for many people who might not otherwise be able to afford it.

City Council, Position No. 7

Jim Cooper - No Response

Spence Weigand - No Response

Tyrone Dion Brown - No Response

6. The City maintains a great deal of information in GIS format that would be valuable for neighborhoods. Would you support organizing this information at a neighborhood or subarea level and opening the City's GIS data to better public access?

City Council, Position No. 2

Robbi Kesler - No Response

Yen Huynh –

This is a good idea and I would happy to support this. It should be done with caution about protecting any sensitive information. It would be good not to duplicate efforts of the data available through the Thurston Regional Planning Council.

Bruce D. Wilkinson Jr. –

Well it should already be public technically but I do understand what you mean. This feels like the work of a new citizen committee. We have so many awesome big data wranglers in this town who know exactly how to make this happen. I'd love to open it up to such a committee.

City Council, Position No. 4

Clark Gilman - No Response

Candace Mercer –

Absolutely. I see no downsides. I would go even further, and suggest training workshops to allow citizens to access and use the data.

City Council, Position No. 5

Lisa Parshley - No Response

Wendy Carlson - No Response

Talauna Reed - No Response

City Council, Position No. 6

Corey Gauny –

I believe transparency is an important part of governing. With that said, my fear would be that those neighborhoods with civil engineers, lawyers and the skill sets to put together projects would be recommending improvements to their neighborhoods and the middle to low income neighborhoods would be disproportionately negatively impacted by such a move. I would want to know the real value to neighborhoods as well as any additional potential risks before answering with a hard yes or no on my position on this. I would also want to ensure that there were little to no additional costs to the city on such a decision.

Dontae Payne –

I'm open to expanding broader access, but it would depend on the purpose and a commitment to use it ethically.

Sarah DeStasio –

Based on the principle of accessible and transparent government, yes.

City Council, Position No. 7

Jim Cooper - No Response

Spence Weigand - No Response

Tyrone Dion Brown - No Response

7. Would you support a way for neighborhoods to have a greater voice in prioritizing how City money gets spent? If so, in what ways?

City Council, Position No. 2

Robbi Kesler - No Response

Yen Huynh –

If the City does not have good ways for people to participate in the budget process, improvements should be made. The Finance Committee meetings are now conducted virtually with opportunities for attendees to learn about the budget and participate in public comment. The City should continue to make the Finance Committee meetings available online to increase accessibility and transparency. The City should be sure that neighborhoods are informed about decisions that may affect them. The City could possibly organize its information about proposed budgets with a little more attention to impacts on neighborhoods.

Bruce D. Wilkinson Jr. –

Well participatory budgeting is a concept that I support and has worked in many places. It is not easy. It takes a lot of time, education, patience and engagement. Getting to a true participatory budgeting process though can be a step by step move with gains in understanding that get us to the next level in the process. We can do more and more.

I'm very interested in this. One thing is that the current city budgeting process seems to be led mostly by the city manager and staff. The city councilors really don't seem to hold the reins. I think the staff does a fine job as professionals in their departments but like all government bureaucracies, they need the democratically elected leadership to keep them lean and focused on what matters. As a city council member I'd like to help change that and bring in neighborhood voices as a part of that change.

City Council, Position No. 4

Clark Gilman - No Response

Candace Mercer –

According to the recent Community Values survey, which can be found at the meeting packet link here, and would be of interest for your group, well worth the read, Olympia is not happy. <https://olympia.legistar.com/MeetingDetail.aspx?ID=833004&GUID=173607B6-37D7-427A-936F-B1C9C1305CAD&Options=info|&Search=>

According to this survey, only 14%, FOURTEEN PERCENT, of Olympia feels Council hears their concerns. This ratifies what I have been reporting on for the past four years. This council is tone deaf on all the issues that matter most to Olympia.

This has to change. I HAVE listened more than any other candidate. My doctrine and platform has been built on the hundreds of stories I have heard. I will place a great priority on REALLY listening, not just holding meaningless feel good forums to check a box and then ignore the good faith feedback given.

I have been the recipient of this treatment, and it feels like the city is my enemy, not my ally. So many residents and businesses have been treated poorly. One of the most egregious was the situation with the Eagles, who Nicole Mercier was the advocate with the city. The city would not allow them to put in a door to keep homeless people from starting fires in their vestibule. They cited the fire code. A hypothetical was given preference over REALITY.

City Council, Position No. 5

Lisa Parshley - No Response

Wendy Carlson - No Response

Talauna Reed - No Response

City Council, Position No. 6

Corey Gauny –

Ideally my answer would be Yes. And yet we currently have systems of governance to ensure that our neighborhoods have voices in the prioritization of city funds. Those voices are managed through the election process of our council members who have the power to reject and or make recommendations to adjusting the budget. Our city manager answering to our elected officials and manages our city departments. Neighborhoods have access to all of the council members to make recommendations to the budget. We have paid staff who conduct analysis in each department as to how funds are allocated. Changes in the roles and responsibilities of our staff would have impacts on our collective bargaining agreements. Implementing question 3 would accomplish the goal of the intent of this question. Perhaps one way we could accomplish this also, is have staff propose the budget, have neighborhood representatives approve disapprove, provide comment. The city council would then review and have ultimate authority to accept one, some or none of the recommendations by a 2/3 majority vote.

Dontae Payne –

Individuals or representatives are free to testify at council meetings and again I support representatives being part of the decision-making process. However, it's important to maintain the same level of participation and input for stakeholders on any given issue.

Sarah DeStasio –

I support participating budgeting models where citizens get more direct feedback into how money is allocated.

City Council, Position No. 7

Jim Cooper - No Response

Spence Weigand - No Response

Tyrone Dion Brown - No Response

- 8. Many times, local government will focus on large or regionally significant projects and under-value the impact relatively small amounts of money can have in neighborhoods. What would you propose the City do to ensure that neighborhood-level benefits are balanced with commitments to large/regional projects?**

City Council, Position No. 2

Robbi Kesler - No Response

Yen Huynh –

This is something that city council members should always do. I am committed to going out and looking physically at property before making any land use decisions. The City Council could make this a category of consideration by the Hearings Examiner. Additionally, the ordinance distance for the staff to reach out to neighborhoods could be expanded.

Bruce D. Wilkinson Jr. –

I think that smaller neighborhood projects are where the greatest impacts can be in many cases. What is difficult is that when a government is geared in resources and staffing for large projects in a way that makes sense, those same apparatuses can turn smaller projects into nightmares. The city needs to have a simpler, faster and more organic process for small projects. One that probably skips some of the administrators in the city and goes straight to the workers in the parks and public works departments, who actually are the ones that may show up with the equipment and skills to help. Also small grants, say less than \$1,000, should be easily gotten with very little oversight. If at the end people did what they said they would then great! A relationship is formed of trust. If the project didn't quite meet its goals, well, chalk it up as a learning experience and let's do better next time. I think a citizen led project that engages volunteers to solve a small problem is never a bad investment.

City Council, Position No. 4

Clark Gilman - No Response

Candace Mercer –

I am a resourceful person and I will encourage low cost high impact projects and organizations that draw on Olympia's long DIY tradition. It is one of our greatest strengths. Healing and housing Olympia is not going to be easy, but I am confident with our creativity, generosity and willingness to work we can get it done. We must have leadership to inspire and transform our community!

City Council, Position No. 5

Lisa Parshley - No Response

Wendy Carlson - No Response

Talauna Reed - No Response

City Council, Position No. 6

Corey Gauny –

Our city's number one priority should be to ensure that we provide safety, security and stable infrastructure to our residents. Our city is \$300M incorporated business; the funds that we spend should be focused on meeting safety, security and infrastructure as well as meeting our strategic goals. We need to work with our external stakeholders as well (regional projects), but not at the detriment of meeting our own objectives. Without a thorough analysis of how funds are spent, or how taking jobs and functions away from our city workers would impact our collective bargaining agreements, I would support a review of how we could better allocate resources to benefit our neighborhoods.

Dontae Payne –

As a homeowner in a single- family neighborhood, I'd advocate for neighborhood level requests and invite appropriate parties to be part of discussions on how and where to spend dollars from the beginning of a project proposal to make sure those interests are represented.

Sarah DeStasio –

I propose that the City use varied methods of collecting and analyzing feedback from neighborhoods, participatory budgeting models

City Council, Position No. 7

Jim Cooper - No Response

Spence Weigand - No Response

Tyrone Dion Brown - No Response

9. The City's Comprehensive plan established a Subarea planning process. The purpose is to increase collaboration with community members early in City planning processes. The City is starting its next Comprehensive Plan update. Should the city continue subarea planning in the next Comprehensive Plan update and if so, how would you improve the process?

City Council, Position No. 2

Robbi Kesler - No Response

Yen Huynh –

Subarea planning is very important, especially for addressing neighborhood issues. The process could be improved with more time for early preparation by:

- adding the subarea planning on the CNA work plan a few months prior,*
- reaching out to City staff for any information needed on particular topics of interest, and*
- providing advance information to neighborhood associations for them to discuss prior to their representative bringing a summary of neighborhood discussions to the CNA.*

Bruce D. Wilkinson Jr. –

Well to improve subarea planning we need to evaluate how it went. Did it make awesome ideas become awesome projects or did it insert delays and unicorns into projects that would have been easier and just as good? If it was the former, great! If it was the latter, well we certainly can't give up on local control over local projects, so how do we improve this situation? The thing I've discovered in a long time organizing in the grassroots, is that we are not very united and are not very skilled at cooperating. It needs to be taught and people need to feel camaraderie to accomplish things as a whole.

City Council, Position No. 4

Clark Gilman - No Response

Candace Mercer –

I cannot speak specifically to this other than I preference transparency and collaboration. Relationship building is VERY important to me, and how I have always organized as an activist and lived my life personally. I do know we must have better intercity and county

relationships. My reporting has revealed the current groups have not always been cooperative and I have seen buck passing that concerns me.

An example is, after THREE YEARS, we still do not have an RV park for campers. That is not right. If the government cannot get this done we are going have to look at privatizing urban camping. If we are going to have urban camping, we need to control it.

The city has some constraints, private campsites could be a real solution as they could be better at setting boundaries, as well as allowing for sober sites for those who are in recovery. People who are struggling with substance abuse are harmed by the current low barrier status of publicly funded sites.

City Council, Position No. 5

Lisa Parshley - No Response

Wendy Carlson - No Response

Talauna Reed - No Response

City Council, Position No. 6

Corey Gauny –

I am not educated on the current process, so I cannot say how I would improve it. I would continue to support the subarea planning in the next Comprehensive Plan update. I can tell you my professional experience and values are focused on transparency, stakeholder engagement and continuous improvement. We can always work on ways to more efficiently complete work. The focus should always be on added value to our residents, not creating additional layers of bureaucracy.

Dontae Payne -

Yes, subarea planning should be included in the next Comprehensive Plan update and the City should promote and hold town halls and issue surveys for community input.

Sarah DeStasio –

Yes, I believe a subarea planning process is valuable. Process can be improved by paying attention to all neighborhoods, not just those who make biggest economic contributions.

City Council, Position No. 7

Jim Cooper - No Response

Spence Weigand - No Response

Tyrone Dion Brown - No Response

10. Public safety is an important issue for neighborhoods. What would you do to address the safety and security concerns of residents in neighborhoods, the downtown and parks?

City Council, Position No. 2

Robbi Kesler - No Response

Yen Huynh –

I would encourage the continuation of having the designated neighborhood police officers periodically attend the CNA meetings to engage in discussions about public safety. The City could sponsor public safety seminars and tips on how to improve personal safety which could be presented at the CNA meetings and available on the City webpage & to present in the CNA meeting.

I am excited about the recent expansion of the Clean Team and the Downtown Ambassadors programs. These programs have proven to make a difference in our downtown.

I would also be interested in consulting with the CNA members to learn how neighborhoods want to be kept safe. I would be interested in consulting with the Parks, Arts & Recreation Department to learn about how we can increase safety and the perception of safety in our parks. There are different categories of safety: safety of infrastructure and equipment, inappropriate human behavior, maintenance of trails, etc. One suggestion may be to see if there is a need to increase the amount of time that parks staff spend at parks.

Bruce D. Wilkinson Jr. –

Public safety is an important issue, it always has been, and it's a complicated issue ruled by emotions more than facts. If we based our understanding of public safety off of Nextdoor posts alone we'd be sitting in our homes holding a shotgun with a state of the art alarm system staring at our security camera footage. Too many people are guided by this sort of endless fear mongering that leaves our communities untrusting of strangers, neighbors and often even our friends and relatives. I am someone who challenges the fear mongering with facts and positivity.

Part of the reason for this increasing fear I feel came when former Police Chief Ronnie Roberts came to town and started listing every single petty crime in reports to the neighborhood committees every week. Quickly people went from thinking they were safe to feeling like they weren't even though statistically nothing changed. Then, lo and behold, the OPD pushed a levy through adding four new officers because people agreed to tax themselves.

It's not all in our heads but Olympia is a safer city than most. I lived for about 5 years in Richmond VA, I moved there the year after it was called the number 2 murder capitol of the US. We had to have street smarts and many of us carried knives quite honestly but we weren't afraid. We understood that trouble usually only comes to those that are looking for it. This is a very true statement. Random acts of violence are exceedingly rare for example, most violence is between two people who know each other. I never want Olympia to be unsafe but when I walk around Olympia even downtown late at night, I just don't share the fear and it's because of my relative experiences and knowing facts,

Another thing I will say is that our city has a lot of police. We have the OPD but we also have the WSP and the Thurston County Sheriff. The call times are short, they get there fast and they are generally speaking very professional compared to most places. That said, there is a lot of room for improvement. I see the need for improvement in areas many people don't.

For one thing, as much as people love the walking patrol, they are more for public relations than useful. Seriously, take them off the walk and put them in a patrol car or on bikes so they can do actual police work, get to areas quicker and stop wasting time chatting up baristas at coffee shops. Yeah I said it. Also the police don't need any public relations workers in their department, the city should handle any public relations the police need. Why is this important? Because the police need to focus on being professional and doing their jobs well and having someone ready for positive spin is a disincentive.

I think it's also fairly ridiculous that the city shares the same building as the police department and yet they use a security guard in front. Maybe just have a button for the people at the front desk and a real police officer can take ten seconds to walk down the hall if there is a problem. Not that I have anything against the security guard, he's great, maybe he can just be a greeter or something.

Next is that the city parks had zero full time park rangers before 2017 and now they have three. That's a quarter million roughly a year out of park projects for security that was never deemed necessary before. Did crime skyrocket? No. The parks department decided their own solution for dealing with homelessness and I love people who work for the parks but they are not social workers or police men, so why are they pretending to be? This creates disunity in our attempts to deal with homeless people. Because the parks decided to basically drive all the homeless out and shut down the bathrooms homeless flooded store fronts and found other places to use the bathroom. It was a terrible idea completely unexamined by the city council or the city manager. The parking lots of the parks can be patrolled by the OPD.

Downtown has a homeless problem and there are a lot of mostly harmless people with severe mental illness routinely shouting. I feel a lot of compassion for these people and they are deserving of human rights, which is something we fail to do. I don't think

getting rid of all benches in the city was a smart way to deal with the issue. I don't think making cute parks in parking spaces with city money and then removing them a year later was a smart thing to do either. In neither case did a homeless person disappear, instead they lay on the ground in front of businesses. The city failed for years in addressing homelessness and it is starting to change but it needs to go further.

City Council, Position No. 4

Clark Gilman - No Response

Candace Mercer –

I would make sure public safety, including OPD and OFD were fully funded to our needs. I support Crisis Teams and Ambassador/Friendly Faces programs. We cannot allow open drug use and dealing in our public areas. The erosion of norms has affected all of us.

In 2017, 92% of Olympians felt safe according to a Community Values Survey. Today, the recent survey presents 77% of Olympians do not feel safe DT at night. This is not acceptable. The council has no plans on what to do and are spending a year to “reimagine” public safety which means another year of victims. The unhoused are the biggest victims of crime, so if it's an equity issue, the lens should be there.

We must get tougher on shoplifting, property crime and other theft. It has become normalized. This not only helps our community, it often will help the individual who offended. Currently our drug court, with 27 programs to access, and a great success rate is at less than 10% capacity. I have interviewed many former substance abusers who credit an intervention like this for saving their life. I am working with one young gentleman, named Phil Eckhart, who is one, and who is helping others. He has been a key adviser.

Here is my full report on the survey and council response.

<https://candacemercer.medium.com/87-of-olympia-residents-unhappy-with-citys-homeless-response-1b3bc7a852d1>

City Council, Position No. 5

Lisa Parshley - No Response

Wendy Carlson - No Response

City Council, Position No. 6

Corey Gauny –

This is one of the greatest threats to our neighborhoods. Safety and security have major impacts on people accessing our parks, our small businesses downtown and especially our elderly and our children. I recall riding the bus all around town when I was a young teenager and roaming safely and freely downtown and through our parks. We do not see that anymore and it is going to lead to a continued decline to the fabric of our community. This is my number one priority. We need to get help to those who are struggling with substance abuse disorder and mental health as those suffering from those challenges make up the greatest number of our offenders. Additionally, political violence, vandalism and riots need to be addressed. I support everyone's right to protest and civil disobedience as we all need to be able to freely express ourselves, but the destruction of businesses and vandalism will not be supported by me. Violent actions in protest only perpetuate the concerns of safety in our downtown and parks.

Dontae Payne –

On public safety, I'll take the following action:

Allocate funding for body cameras for police officers. Body cameras provide another level of transparency and accountability in policing, which is lacking in our community.

Adequately fund social services, mental health, and addiction programs.

Ensure firefighters and first responders receive adequate funding for training, equipment, and workplace safety. First responders often deploy to homeless encampments and they play a crucial role in public safety and emergency response.

Work to expand the City's Crisis Response Unit to address the needs of our residents struggling from complications with mental health and/or addiction.

Work with the county and state government to end political violence and extremism in the streets of Olympia by improving coordination between Olympia Police and the County Sheriff and State Patrol.

Sarah DeStasio –

Provide permanent/transitional housing and wraparound services to unhoused people

Sufficiently fund programs like the Crisis Response Unit that can address behavioral concerns in the community

Encourage programs that create strong connections between neighbors and within the community for an organic safety net for individuals and families

City Council, Position No. 7

Jim Cooper - No Response

Spence Weigand - No Response

Tyrone Dion Brown - No Response

11. Currently, the Comprehensive Plan calls for creating neighborhood centers. What would you do to address the gap between the vision for Neighborhood Centers and making them happen?

City Council, Position No. 2

Robbi Kesler - No Response

Yen Huynh –

I am supportive of neighborhood centers and I would like to see more. I understand that neighborhood centers have long been a goal of the Comprehensive Plan and am interested in how we can take action towards this goal. As a member of the Land Use and Environment Committee, we have requested to begin this work in the fall. The topic of making it easier for neighborhood centers to be developed will come before the Planning Commission, then to the Land Use and Environment Committee, and finally, to the full Council with many opportunities for public input at each step.

Bruce D. Wilkinson Jr. –

I think that's going to take deeper involvement. I also think we can stepping stone it. How about we ask the community if someone can volunteer to host a neighborhood temporary neighborhood center? The Oly Food Co-op for example started as a food sharing network out of people's garages. Maybe that is the path for neighborhood centers? Start it humbly, then build around it interest and then expand it.

City Council, Position No. 4

Clark Gilman - No Response

Candace Mercer –

I need more information on this. See my earlier answers on outreach that discuss my general philosophy. I see centers as a positive force for community building. The neighborhood should have a say in the vision.

City Council, Position No. 5

Lisa Parshley - No Response

Wendy Carlson - No Response

Talauna Reed - No Response

City Council, Position No. 6

Corey Gauny –

Having lived in Europe for many years, I am a huge proponent of neighborhood centers. I think they are vital to growing stronger neighborhoods and a more resilient community overall while reducing the need to travel outside of neighborhoods (reducing environmental impact from excessive travel). I would work with the city manager and my fellow council members to find out what our roadblocks to implementation of this plan. I would work to ensure we address and remove those barriers so that we can build these centers. I know that recently the Swantown Inn had challenges with our city in an attempt to provide these very kinds of services in a local community.

Dontae Payne -

There may be an opportunity to partner with the small business sector and nonprofits to incorporate these centers and prioritize analysis of the areas that would benefit from such centers the most to determine where to open the first centers.

Sarah DeStasio –

I would look at how neighborhood centers could be combined with other small-scale commercial development - locally-owned, union or worker-owned - for long-term viability. The community needs to feel served by these centers to offset concerns around noise, traffic etc., so should be involved in the design and tenant selection process. Ideally, the building should be owned by people who live in the neighborhood.

City Council, Position No. 7

Jim Cooper - *No Response*

Spence Weigand - *No Response*

Tyrone Dion Brown - *No Response*