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Responses for Olympia Indivisible

Homelessness

Homelessness is a regional issue, but the impacts are very local. Olympia needs a crisis management plan that provides immediate relief, manages for change, and leads to permanent solutions. Our strategy must be based in accurate data so we can measure our progress and know that our approach is working. Because everyone is impacted by the issue, our response must include everyone. The city has several new programs in place, including a mitigation camping site, a tiny home village, a mobile mental health unit, and the downtown Clean Team. I would like to build on this work by incorporating performance measurement. We need to identify metrics so that we can monitor and evaluate our progress. If we measure our impact, we can know that we are headed in the right direction. The city also needs to develop a comprehensive communications plan to guide the conversation between the city and service providers and between departments of the city. This plan should also address how the city connects with the public about the causes of homelessness, the response from the city and region, and concerns from people in the community.

Environmental stewardship

As an environmental professional, I will bring an environmental lens for all decisions made by the Olympia City Council. From climate change to Puget Sound recovery, I will make decisions that are based in science. Climate change is real, human behavior is causing it, and we need bold actions to do everything we can for future generations. The city is currently working on a plan to reduce our impact on the climate through the Thurston Regional Planning Council. It is imperative that we develop a plan that is actionable, measurable, and supported by the city budget. Additionally, the city recently adopted a plan for sea level rise. I view this plan as a best-case scenario. We need to develop a “plan B” that can be put into action if we are unable to achieve the level of protection required by the changing projections of sea level rise. And as we plan for parks, neighborhoods, and transportation, I will weave environmental priorities throughout the city.

Public safety

Our public safety professionals, including firefighters, medics, and police officers, face a rapidly changing role in our community. Responding to the changing needs requires innovation and resources. I support the new programs that address the evolving issues, including the Crisis Response Unit and the Familiar Faces Program. Both programs provide a new layer of emergency response for those who face challenges with their mental health. I will support the development of new programs to address the opioid epidemic, such as the new Bupe Clinic and the expansion of Evergreen Treatment Services. I intend to track the progress of these programs so we can expand and improve upon what is working. I will advocate for the collection and incorporation of data from all first responders and service providers to better understand how public safety is evolving, and how we can better manage in a changing environment.

Economic development

I support family wage jobs, small businesses, and local workers in our community. We are failing our workforce by not having adequate housing. Olympia does not have enough housing for those at average median income, much less those below that level. This is problem spans many issues. Workers deserve to have the option to live where they work. Employers want to have businesses where they know a workforce exists. Our local economy does better when people who live and work in the community can spend their money locally. In the comprehensive plan, our city needs to establish more specific goals for housing and affordability across income levels, then develop a strategy to meet those goals.

Growth management

Olympia and the surrounding area are growing rapidly. Over the past few decades, we have lost a considerable amount of farmland, forest, and habitat to residential sprawl in rural areas. To prevent further environmental degradation, we must embrace the concepts of urban density. Olympia is expected to grow by 20,000 new people over the next 20 years. We need to incorporate these new residents in the urban to avoid further loss of rural lands. The city's comprehensive plan states that we should be concentrating growth in the urban density nodes, including downtown, near Capital Mall, and the far eastside of Olympia, and the density corridors that connect these areas. We also need to incorporate gentle infill into our neighborhoods. Through these strategies, we will make the best use of existing infrastructures, ensure better access to transit, and protect outlying areas.

Transportation

Transportation is an environmental and climate issue, as well as a social justice issue for those who cannot afford their own vehicle. Olympia is currently updating its Transportation Master Plan. Many of the goals outlined in this plan relate to multimodal transportation, which are transportation options other than single occupancy vehicles. We need safe routes for biking and walking. We need improved public transit. We need access to employment, grocery stores, and other basic needs that can be reached by alternative forms of transportation. For those of us that are limited to commuting in our personal vehicles, we need systems to be designed for optimal use, including operational changes that improve the flow of traffic. We also need regular educational programs that teaches safety to all users of the transportation system.

Diversity

Because our community is diverse, it is important that we develop our policies in a way that include everyone. I would like to see the formation of a Human Rights Commission, like what has been developed in Tacoma. This group would include people that can represent a comprehensive perspective of marginalized identities, including race, LGBTQ, immigration status, physical ability, and others. They would review Olympia's current and future policies with a lens for equity and inclusion. As incidents of hate occur in our community, they would help by assessing the situation and developing a trauma-informed response.