



## **Clark County Association of REALTORS® Questionnaire**

### ***Vancouver City Council Questions***

**How do you see Vancouver growing or changing as you look ahead, and what can the Council do to guide the City in that direction?**

Vancouver is in the midst of a critical transition from being a small city to a mid-sized city. With that comes both opportunity and challenge. We have to work to maintain the culture and vibe that has made Vancouver a desirable destination: things like the Farmer's Market, Concerts and Movies in Esther Short Park, the rapidly growing number of local breweries and restaurants, and active neighborhood associations that provide citizens with a connection to City government. New employers like Banfield Pet Hospital, the new HP facility planned for Section 30, and the Waterfront Development bring jobs and recreational opportunities Vancouver did not have five years ago.

With that opportunity and change, comes challenges in the areas of transportation, homelessness, and affordable housing, and working toward a more equitable community. The impacts of COVID-19 were not the same to all members of our community. The pandemic hit our most vulnerable communities harder than most. The next several years will determine how Vancouver emerges from this transformation. We need leadership that can find practical and realistic solutions to the issues we face, and who can work collaboratively to turn good ideas into actual policy. I believe my experience as both an elected leader and active member of the community makes me the best candidate to fill this position and play a part in taking Vancouver into a great future.

**Whether a component of the Stronger Vancouver proposal or not, what is your position on a City-wide Business & Occupation tax? Are you aware of the negative impacts that it specifically has on REALTORS and the real estate community?**

Because B&O tax is based on gross receipts and does not factor in expenses, for certain small businesses like REALTORS, the effective tax rate is actually significantly higher than the nominal rate. Depending on the year, my businesses expenses have run 30% to 40% of my gross income. That means the State B&O Tax which is 1.5% on paper, is actually over 2% of my real, take home income. That is before paying income tax, self employment tax, social security and Medicare. We need to adequately fund our local government, but we should not do so on the backs of small business owners and other independent contractors.

As we move past the COVID-19 Pandemic, what are some immediate solutions City Council can work on to provide relief to those impacted by the pandemic?



I was thankful to see the City of Vancouver extend the Parklet program for restaurants. In addition to helping those businesses, which were some of the hardest hit during the pandemic, I think the outdoor eating options add to the quality of life for Vancouver citizens. As the City looks at how to spend the final wave of Federal COVID Relief funding, I would hope to see economic recovery for our local, small businesses at the forefront of those budget discussions. Looking at things like extending the business license fee waiver for an additional year along with the employee surcharge fee, advocating the County Public Health Department to waive the health fees for restaurants and breweries, and prioritizing any direct spending of those funds to projects that keep those dollars in the community would be high priorities. The funds lost from the fees can easily be backfilled with the Federal dollars.

**As you consider your vision for Vancouver's neighborhoods, businesses, parks, and schools, how could you see CCAR being a partner in helping move that vision forward?**

Over the past few years, I know CCAR has done extensive research and outreach to consumers about things like smart growth, sustainability, and affordable housing. As the city plans for redevelopment and growth I think that research can provide valuable insights about what people want from their local communities. I also appreciate that CCAR has been a consistent supporter with financial contributions for school bond and other ballot issues that support our local education system.

**Vancouver and our surrounding regions are facing a serious housing shortage which is driving up the cost of housing. What are your solutions to address this lack of supply issue in Vancouver?**

Many of the factors driving the increase in house prices are outside the city's control: the cost of building materials rose dramatically over the last 12 months, there is a national shortage of people going into the trades that has increased the labor costs of building new housing, and the pandemic itself temporarily halted the entire construction industry. Things the city can control, are working with our school districts and unions to support youth going into the trades, utilizing apprenticeship programs to build the construction work force in Vancouver, and looking at land use policy to increase the housing options in Vancouver.

The Council has taken some good steps in this regard, such as allowing for residential development or mixed use development on commercial land served by high capacity transit. This zoning change has allowed for several hundred units of housing along the Fourth Plain Corridor on previously vacant commercial parcels that for one reason or another were not likely to develop into a commercial use.



Looking for innovative zoning policies that can add housing supply without create more demand on our infrastructure is critical as we move ahead.

**Are you in favor of different housing type options and redevelopment of larger lots in the region?**

So much of Vancouver was developed in an era of urban sprawl where large lot subdivisions that relied on cars as the only means of transportation, redevelopment or areas like the quarry on 192<sup>nd</sup>, Section 30, the old HP complex that is now the Vancouver Innovation Center, and the Tower Mall are critical for creating the 20 minute communities that provide diverse housing options, opportunities to commute via transit, walking, or biking, and new business opportunities for retail, restaurants, and coffee shops. As these redevelopment projects occur, they also provide benefits to the surrounding areas by adding new destinations that previously required a longer drive.

It is critical that these development projects occur in a smart way – integrating transitions spaces and access points that flow with the existing development, but still meet the goals of being more walkable and sustainable, and providing new opportunities to live and work.

**What are your thoughts on annexation and types of lands that should be annexed? Should annexation be considered for new developable land in the Vancouver area?**

Most of the area that Vancouver could annex lies to the north of the current city boundary and has already been developed as part of unincorporated Clark County. The City needs to work with the County to create an annexation plan that contains a balance of residential and commercial annexation. The City also needs to continue to have input into the County's Growth Planning. The County recently made decisions on the Vacant Buildable Land Model that are not in line with the original recommendations of the VBLM Task Force and cater to the development community, who had a large role in the work of that task force. The public record on this matter does not favor or support those recommendations and has a high potential for landing the County in litigation. The city needs to be a voice for growth policies that are in line with the guidelines of the State Growth Management Act.

**What are some solutions you'd provide for communities of color and low-income families to afford the down payment of a first-time home?**

There is a tremendous gap the home ownership rate between whites and communities of color. Homeownership is one of the primary ways to build generational wealth and is an important policy issues to address systemic racism. Two key programs I am supportive of are the Proud Ground program, which provides assistance to low-income families to reduce the down payment barrier to homeownership, allows them to build wealth through appreciation of the property, but also creates permanent affordable housing stock and ownership opportunities by placing certain sale requirements at the time resale.



Another local policy option is bringing back credit counseling services that can work to improve the credit barriers that are another obstacle to homeownership. Having good credit expands the type of loan opportunities available, which broadens the opportunity for home ownership.

The last item, which is a state issue that I would encourage the city to support with our local legislators, is funding the Washington Bond program which provides down payment assistance. This has been a very successful program for many families in Vancouver to help them buy a home, but requires ongoing support from the state.

**What are your solutions to address homelessness in Vancouver and reduce the number of homeless camps in our community?**

We need a homeless response that addresses both the needs of our community who are experiencing homelessness, but also addresses the concerns and impacts that the growing number of homeless in our community has on neighborhoods and businesses.

I'm supportive of the City's sanction encampments as a temporary policy while moving forward on more permanent shelter options. I also believe we need to focus on finding solutions for the causes of homelessness, including things like behavior health and substance use.

Partnerships are another key to addressing this issue. The City cannot solve the problem alone – it needs support from the local non-profit community, the State and Federal government, as well as Clark County. As a member of the Clark County Council I was a part of putting together the City/County Executive Council on Homeless, the first policy committee formed to help unify local government's response to homelessness. That was formed in 2020 and I look forward to seeing how that new collaboration can help us respond to this crisis more efficiently.

**Are there any aspects of City operations or priorities that you believe need to be reconsidered? Why?**

The last year have been an anomaly in so many ways, including City government. I think it is important to move as quickly as can safely be done toward in-person meetings. Virtual meetings have been a necessary stop gap over the last 15 months, but the public engagement and communication is hampered by this format.

I also think the City needs to consider how they engage and facilitate two-way communication with citizens. There have been several high profile examples where citizens felt they did not have the ability to have their voice heard. With the start of planning for the new Operations Center, Vancouver is taking a different approach toward engagement by starting with a Charter that lays out the policy objectives and commitments to the community. That document, that will be drafted with public input, will guide the decision making process over what will be the largest public project in Vancouver's history.

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**Sometimes, great intentions have unintended consequences. How do you deal with decisions you made but later realize didn't work out as intended?**

This starts by having a clear objective in mind when a policy is created or a decision is made. There needs to be a clear purpose or goal in mind. Without that, it is impossible to measure whether or not the policy succeeded. Once a policy is enacted, it is important that Council continue to ask questions of staff and monitor both the progress toward the goal and any unintended consequences.

If, during that monitoring, the realization is made that the policy is not achieving its objectives or is causing harm in other areas, it needs to be reevaluated. This takes humility and a willingness to admit the mistake. Whether in my professional or personal life, I evaluate people or businesses not on whether they make mistakes, but how they deal with them when they do. Government should strive to make the right decisions, but it is not a realistic expectation that every decision will always be 100% correct and not require some modification. I think citizens understand that and will respond positively, if there is transparency and clear communication.

**What do you see as the Council's vision in working with other cities in Clark County and the County Council as a whole?**

This is critical in providing the best and most efficient services to Vancouver. The County is, by law, the primary service provider in areas of Public Health, Behavior Health, and Homeless Response. But, the City can't simply defer to the County in these areas. As part of the County Council, I helped form the Joint City/County Executive Board on Homelessness that will help the two jurisdictions better coordinate their response to homelessness. Those types of partnership are critical to dealing with not only homelessness, but also challenges around transportation and affordable housing.

**What are your three main priorities while running for City Council? What is your overall campaign strategy to win your respective election?**

My priorities while running are first to gather a broad coalition of support. I am grateful to have received endorsements from the Mayor, as well as Councilors Lebowsky and Glover, Port Commission Jack Burkman, State Legislator Paul Harris, the Fire Fighters Union, and over 100 more individuals from our community. Next, is engaging with constituents, neighborhood associations and other community groups to share my qualifications and why I believe I am the best qualified, but more important to hear from them about their concerns and what they think the city is doing well. Finally, I want to get my message, focused on pragmatic, common sense leadership, out in as many ways possible.