

Michael Cathcart---District One City Council Candidate

1. If elected, what investments would you encourage the City to make to ensure restaurants and hotels continue to open, operate, and thrive in Spokane?

- It's incredibly important that we continue to invest in a smart, strategic and cost effective manner in our roads, bridges, and other infrastructure projects. When we do have construction projects, we need to carefully plan to ensure our employers are impacted as minimally as possible. I was one who was very concerned about the Monroe Street Project and while I'm not overly satisfied with the finished product and generally I don't think it's a great idea to narrow our roadways with as much growth as we are seeing, I do believe that because of the public attention, the City did a good job on this project. The lesson here is that we all have to be vigilant.

If our roads are no good, people will be reluctant to travel outside of their work commutes, which would have a negative effect on restauranteurs and would be off-putting to tourists who may choose not to return.

More than just spending money on infrastructure projects we also need to ensure that our tax and regulatory policies are good for employers and the jobs they create. More on this in #3.

2. If you are elected, what are the one or two short-term goals you want to accomplish and get started on immediately? And, what is a longer-term goal (i.e. by the end of your term)?

- If we don't get a handle on the crime and addiction rampant on our streets in the immediate future then we're going to have a very long term problem that we may never get under control. Our immediate need is to maintain and return vibrancy to our City, our Downtown, business centers, and neighborhoods. We have a right to live in a safe community and I will fight every day to protect that right.

A longer term goal is to focus on economic opportunity. I want Spokane to be the best place in Washington State to startup, expand, or relocate a business. We need to emphasize the creation of jobs that provide wages above the median household income so that we can pull people out of poverty and create more opportunity for everyone.

3. Please share your thoughts on Spokane's business regulatory environment. What steps would you take to reduce or streamline the regulatory burden?

- Improving our regulatory environment is key to the long term goal I described in #2. If we are going to make our community desirable for employers who are

already here or for those looking to move-in, we have to show them that they are valued. This means not overburdening them with onerous taxes and regulations. We have to have a very friendly regulatory environment so that we can be competitive across the State. This is why I am a strong supporter of the Smart Reform policy prohibiting any income based taxes in Spokane. This would include B&O taxes as well. We have to send a strong signal that we are not Seattle and that we are open for business.

4. What approaches would you take to promote public safety and security in Spokane?
 - We have to prioritize law enforcement in our City's budget. The recent levy that passed was full of false promises regarding law enforcement. The funding isn't going to be there to hire the new officers as promised, so I will strongly advocate that we reconsider budget priorities to ensure we have the officers needed. We have to put more law enforcement downtown and we need to expand the program of pairing social workers with officers out on patrol to more cost effectively deal with individuals struggling with addiction and mental health issues. I would also adopt a zero tolerance policy for activities such as shooting up drugs in the open, trashing public spaces, and harassing individuals and families. This cannot be tolerated. We will also need to have a community conversation around the new jail and what sort of costs will be supported by the public as we work to better protect both jail staff and our entire community.
5. What is your approach to managing Spokane's growth?
 - My concern is that we are over-managing growth right now. We have over burdensome land use regulations in the City—limiting badly needed in-fill development and an Urban Growth Area (UGA) Boundary that is artificially small, which means a lack of suburban growth options as well. We can be smart about growth, without holding ourselves back, but we must encourage stronger residential growth to combat the housing crisis and to support our employers in and around the City of Spokane.
6. What would you do specifically to address commercial affordability in Spokane?
 - With modest commercial vacancy rates right now office/commercial real estate affordability may not be our most immediate concern (16% office vacancy and 8.4% retail vacancy downtown for example), but as we allow for more uses such as more neighborhood commercial, and as we increase residential capacity creating a more captive audience for local employers that could change. However, that's the market at work. What we can do to ensure more affordability is limit the number of regulations and taxes on our employers. I will always work to limit regulations to ensure small (or big) snags don't obstruct a good business from starting or growing. If there are pockets where commercial real estate is especially unaffordable or a problem I would love to learn about this and discuss ways we could improve the situation.

7. What would you do to improve the relationship between the business community and City Hall? In what ways do you think we can best partner to address the most critical issues facing the City?

- If elected, I will work to bridge the business community and City Hall like no one has been able to do for quite some time. As the Executive Director of Better Spokane, which is heavily focused on improving our local business climate, I am in a strong position to bridge this divide.

In addition, I believe I can also help bring together leaders from Spokane Valley and Spokane County to help our region work in solidarity on issues impacting us all.

8. How would you seek to address the homelessness issue in our community?

- See #4.

9. What do you think the City is getting right on this issue, and what would you do differently?

- The City is actively enabling the behavior we need to prevent. The housing first strategy isn't improving mental health and addiction, which are the most prevalent issues around homelessness. Instead, its creating more drug abusers and pushers as those who are not using drugs are housed with those who are. We need accountability. The City is compromising our right to live in a safe community and that should never be an option. We do need to provide hope to those in need and a pathway to success for those willing, but we seem to be burying our head in the sand with regard to how bad the problem has become.