



**Spokane Chapter
Washington Hospitality Association
Candidate Questionnaire**

Karen Stratton, City Council, District 3

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?

- *Continue to develop neighborhood centers and corridors with an infill housing component and transportation options (bike, bus, walk, drive). Residents should be able to work, shop, eat and live in their own neighbors if they so choose.*
- *Provide incentives for small businesses to locate in these centers and corridors.*
- *Increase police presence throughout the community.*
- *And, we need to continue to aggressively tackle the homelessness issue, which is clearly detracting from the appeal of our downtown core.*

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)?

- **Short-term goal:** *Continue to work on the revitalization of the West Central neighborhood to include a small business component, art district and the restoration of zombie houses.*
- **Long-term goal:** *I have just begun conversations with the Spokane Tribe of Indians to establish an Indian Village in the City of Spokane. This village would include affordable housing units, a retail area, food, areas for art and community celebrations (powwows, drumming, dancing, etc.)*

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

Most of the mandates that cost businesses time and money originate at the state and federal level. At the local level, the City's biggest impact on the hospitality

industry in particular, is the imposition of the hotel-lodging tax. However, the benefits of this tax –which helps fund community events and attractions -- far outweigh the tax burden.

The hotel-lodging tax is an investment in our hospitality industry and it works.

I also believe that the City, at times, can make any process more burdensome and complicated than it needs to be. We need to make it easier for individuals to pull permits, work with design review, code enforcement, obtain occupancy permits, etc. And, everyone should be treated equally throughout the process.

4. What approaches would you take to promote public safety and security in Spokane?

I was an early proponent of the public safety bond, which voters passed in February 2019. We need more police presence in the neighborhoods and on our streets. In addition, I remain a strong supporter of our C.O.P.S. program for continued community outreach and partnerships.

5. What is your approach to managing Spokane's growth?

I believe in the Growth Management Act which, when its positive aspects are embraced and utilized, results in more efficient in-fill and attractive centers and corridors. This not only makes the city more liveable and safe, but increases tax revenues that support public services that are essential to keep them that way.

6. What would you do specifically to address commercial affordability in Spokane?

I understand the term "commercial affordability" to refer to the environment for new business investment and growth in Spokane; i.e., the cost of commercial space to start-up or expand, the ability to attract and pay for skilled labor, the relative impact of business regulations on the bottom line. Compared to the I-5 corridor, Spokane is still very "affordable." The challenge is to keep it that way as the city continues to grow. This means aggressively pursuing smart growth and constantly funding necessary infrastructure.

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?

I was born and raised in Spokane. There was a time when government and business worked together to get things done because it was the right thing to do for the community and our citizens. Expo 74 is a great example of that partnership. The climate is different now. Often, we let our political or personal differences guide how we treat each other and how we make decisions. This is never healthy when establishing partnerships. We need to leave our egos, political stripes and

assumptions at the door, discover what we have in common and move forward in the best interest of the community.

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

The City of Spokane cannot solve the issue of homelessness alone. We will not find a successful path forward until we commit the time and effort to create partnerships with our hospitals, health care community, mental health community, higher education, non-profits, business and citizens. These entities have resources that can work for the good of the homeless and the community.

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

While I believe we have tried to manage the problem, I do not believe we have focused on any long-term resolutions. We have been in crises-management-mode since I joined the Council in 2014. As a result, we have no permanent solutions --- but we keep writing checks for temporary relief of the problem.

If we are truly interested in long-term solutions we have to involve other entities and what they can bring to the table. In the end, we should support one location for homeless services, to include mental health and substance abuse programs, medical and dental clinic, job training programs, emergency shelter, etc. We need to make sure that for those whom homelessness is not a choice, and they are the majority of the homeless, we must provide adequate resources to help them bounce back, For those who choose not to accept resources or to engage in criminal behavior (e.g., trespassing, waste, etc.) -- and they represent the minority of the homeless -- we need to make the environment here less welcoming.

I am also interested in the concept of expanding our Sit and Lie ordinance city-wide, as well as the panhandling ordinance.