

1. The idea for this forum came out of an experience that the Creston parent community encountered while supporting a school family faced with homelessness in the fall of 2021. This parent and child were #200 on the waitlist for shelter space. When they asked where they should sleep while they were waiting, they were told by the non-profit managing the homeless shelter (and contracted by the county) that they could provide a tent in the interim. We all know that the housing situation in Multnomah County is desperate, but it was an absolute shock to our community that the county was offering tents to single parents and their children rather than a safe shelter for the night. In the end, school parents raised funds to pay for motel shelter until a longer-term solution was found. It has been reported that there is a tension between the city and county in the preferred approach to housing policy with the county favoring a policy of prioritizing long-term permanent housing and the city pushing for short-term housing and shelters. How do you believe that this tension has contributed to the situation where single mothers cannot find temporary shelter in Multnomah County? What will be your approach to working with the City to ensure that every child in Multnomah County has access to a safe bed for the night?

When we look at the housing continuum I believe there are five main types of housing that must be included if we truly want to reduce homelessness.

1. **Emergency shelter** (usually congregate), motel rooms.
2. **Alternative shelter** like PODs, Dignity Village, Kenton Women's Village, safe rest villages, and safe car and RV camping - more individual units.
3. **Transitional housing** (up to 24 months to stabilize). Salvation Army's Bridgeway of Hope's residential program that offers job training, support and housing.
4. **Permanent supportive housing** for folks who may need services long term or for their entire life due to mental and/or substance abuse issues.
5. **Affordable housing.**

Each and every one of these elements is critical. But because our systems are so fragmented there are huge gaps in service like not enough women and family shelters, as well as a duplication of efforts.

It is important that we invest not only in all the right types of housing but more significantly in the appropriate amounts.

As chair, I will work more collaboratively to create an ecosystem to solve this crisis. I've been a longtime supporter of My Father's House, a homeless family shelter in Gresham that has been serving families since 2001 with an 80% success rate of permanently housing families. They know how to solve homelessness for families and I look forward to adopting that approach at the County.

It is imperative that we employ sound financial practices when implementing policy. So, let's do the math. We can choose to over invest in just one form of housing like emergency shelter that cost \$17 to 40K a year per person or we could more appropriately invest our limited funds that includes rapid rehousing and master leases that are one-time only costs and are 50-75% less than shelter. And by actually providing housing we can solve homelessness.

As a small business owner for nearly 30 years and a public servant for the past 12 years, I understand the intersectionality of sound, pragmatic business principles and how to implement them in the bureaucracy of government. And as your next chair, that is exactly what I will do.

2. Housing. Due to cost of living increases and other external pressures in Multnomah Co., many families are being displaced. This disproportionately impacts native people and communities of color. What sort of programs or policies do you support that would equitably address this problem?

My office helped remove the land use barriers faced by a new affordable housing development. Now we have begun to place residents in 224 units of workforce housing in Rockwood. Rockwood Village serves families earning 30%-70% of the area median income. Located with direct access to public transportation and parks; the complex also hosts a community gathering building/space, community garden, and larger units to meet the needs of larger families.

Without this creative approach to land use, legal barriers would have prevented the permitting and construction of the Village. And I am thrilled to see Hacienda offer culturally specific/relevant wrap-around services like financial literacy classes, workshops on health and wellness, and gardening. As well as after-school and early childhood education, homeownership classes, and small business advice.

3. Multnomah County is building an expansive Behavioral Health Resource Center in Downtown Portland. What do you see as the barriers to accessing resources at the center to residents who live in Eastern Multnomah County? What is your plan for helping overcome those obstacles so that more residents can be served by the new resource center?

In 2019 Multnomah County purchased the Bushong & Co building located at 333 SW Park Ave. This site will serve as our new Behavioral Health Resource Center in downtown Portland and is slated to open later this year. The center will prioritize services for people with mental health illness who are experiencing homelessness.

This comprehensive resource center will serve as a low barrier day space, mental health shelter, and transitional housing site for homeless individuals living with behavioral health issues. The day center will include access to showers, laundry, peer counseling, housing, medical care, and food. Other services will include resource connections for housing, employment and education, and culturally specific services.

A disproportionate percentage of people experiencing homelessness are people of color. By offering these resources to our most marginalized community members we can provide more accessible and equitable services.

This first location is just the beginning. My goal is to have a resource center like this in each of the four quadrants of the County.

4. Social Services. The county manages the administration of SNAP and TANF benefits. These benefits are lifelines to many families struggling to make ends meet, however, when a family has a question about their benefits or spots an error and needs to contact the county, the phone wait can be over two hours. As a result, many county residents are left confused and with unanswered questions about their benefits. How would you work to update the customer service at DHS so that clients are able to manage their benefits without spending entire days trying to work through the system?

Multnomah County's Department of County Human Services (DCHS) assists with applications for SNAP but once a case is established, DCHS doesn't have access to the State of Oregon's Department of Human Services (DHS) system. Our eligibility specialists can help navigate enrollment paperwork and get residents signed up for nutrition assistance. But I know there are significant challenges with DHS's system that impacts our ability to deliver these important services. I will create and foster a better working relationship with DHS so that we can partner with them to find solutions that will result in better customer service.

<https://www.multco.us/food-assistance/snap-food-stamps-multnomah-county/#SNAP%20case>

<https://www.multco.us/food-assistance/multnomah-county-snap-outreach-program>

The State of Oregon's Department of Human Services (DHS) system also handles TANF programming. Local offices are located in Multnomah County but partnerships are limited to:

- Workforce System Partnership (with WorkSystems Inc. and Oregon Dept of Education and others).
- SUN School project – Six DHS case managers outstationed in low-income area schools to help improve attendance rates for TANF kids.

- Action for Prosperity and Housing Works partnership. Specialized DHS case manager working with County, Home Forward and WSI staff.
- Mobile Housing Team – Two DHS staff working with partners to provide in-field services to homeless families.
- Family Employment and Stabilization Team - Specialized unit with lower caseloads to work with Child Welfare and community partners on highest risk families – most with history of Child Welfare or domestic violence.

As you can see, Multnomah County has a long standing partnership with DHS, school districts, and other youth/family-serving agencies. And county staff from our health department, department of community justice, and DCHS are connected to a regular meeting of partners via a memorandum of understanding (MOU) to align communication, operations, and supports for youth and their families. This group endeavors to work through many of the bureaucratic barriers that can make accessing these systems frustrating for families. But we need to do better.

As Chair, I will reinstate the County's Life Success Committee and assign a policy advisor to attend the jurisdictional meetings to keep me updated directly. I will also reconvene the jurisdictional Leadership Roundtable which brought electeds and administrators from these systems together to problem solve barriers to benefit families.

5. Local elections are managed by the elections office which is a division of Multnomah County. Increasingly across the country, the validity and integrity of our elections has been challenged and election officials are being harassed. In parts of our country, state legislators are passing laws that restrict access to voting. What risk do you see for both the integrity and the accessibility of elections in Multnomah County? And what policies do you support to ensure safe access to free and fair elections in Multnomah County.

I am incredibly proud of our vote by mail system and the motor voter act.

I have complete confidence in our Elections Office and would encourage anyone who would like a tour to do so. All you have to do is contact them and ask for a tour. It's important that constituents have trust and faith in the electoral process and seeing how they operate helps alleviate misconceptions.

6. Would you consider introducing bridge tolls on city bridges to pay for addiction services or other underfunded services in the county?

It would be challenging to divert bridge toll revenue to addiction services or other areas. But I am excited about the impact that Ballot Measure 110 has to fund drug treatment and recovery services.

7. Multnomah county residents and small business owners have become regular victims of crimes such as car theft, vandalism, break-ins and petty theft. What would be your approach as chair to addressing the issue of crime in Multnomah County?

To reduce crime, we have to analyze what the drivers of crime are. Recently I had the opportunity to do a ride along with our Multnomah County Sheriff's Office and was stunned to see the impact that fentanyl is having on our community.

Tragically, last month we lost two youths who thought they were taking oxycodone and percocet, but they were laced with fentanyl.

According to Families Against Fentanyl, Fentanyl poisoning is the #1 cause of death among Americans age 18-45 surpassing COVID-19, suicide and car accidents.

In its purest form fentanyl is the size of a grain of salt and that amount can kill you. Because of its small size and potency it is more easily transported and smuggled and is extremely profitable.

The reality is that often drugs and crime go hand in hand. And I am told that the fentanyl crisis is fueling crimes like car and catalytic converter thefts, break ins and other property crimes. I believe there is a relationship between drug use, people who are experiencing homelessness, gang activity, and the unprecedented increase of gun violence.

While I support Ballot Measure 110, the measure recently passed to decriminalize drugs and fund more services, I worry about the unintentional consequences that our community is experiencing. We don't yet have an intervention system and we don't have a recovery-oriented system of care. Order of operation is important.

One model I want to adopt is Portugal's approach. They treat possession or use of any drug as a health issue, not a crime. But drug dealers are still jailed. If you have less than a 10-day supply you get mandatory medical treatment. They have found this approach to be less expensive than incarceration. And their drug induced death rate has plummeted to five times lower than the European average.

In our upcoming budget, I will also advocate for the continued funding of our mobile Gun Violence Behavioral Health Team. This response team includes mental health clinicians and people with lived experience who provide support at gun violence scenes, respond to a hospital if a victim needs help, or a family member can also call and request support.

8. The position of county commissioner and county chair more specifically can be seen as a stepping stone in a political career. This can lead to office holders choosing strategic, politically-wise decisions over making difficult, sometimes unpopular decisions. What does success in this position look like to you?

Given the depths of the multiple crises we face, it's time we quit waiting for status quo leadership and elect someone who will implement immediate, real solutions to address crime, reduce homelessness and increase

affordable housing. I am the only candidate that has implemented real world solutions and I am ready to bring those solutions to the entire county.

Many of us are frustrated with the state of our county. It is imperative to implement immediate solutions. As a Gresham City Councilor and County Commissioner I have brought landlords and nonprofits together to house people experiencing homelessness, I am redeveloping nearly 90 acres of county owned property that will include a workforce center, housing, and green space, and I have fought for and received funding for community policing models.

That's what I have done as a Gresham City Councilor and a County Commissioner, and I will never stop working for a better future.

9. I love that so many animals are rescued and cared for in my community. How will you work to make sure that animals continue to be cared for in Multnomah County?

I will make sure that our Animal Services Division continues to be properly funded. And I am excited to build a new building for them potentially located at the Vance Properties development.

10. In December 2021, WW reported on the delay in issuing Emergency Housing Vouchers to Multnomah County Residents. Home Forward, a Multnomah County Partner agency, is responsible for issuing the vouchers. How do you plan to improve oversight and transparency to ensure that residents have access to services and benefits they are eligible for?

That funding came from the Federal government and went directly to Home Forward. We were not a part of the distribution of those vouchers. But Home Forward is our local housing authority and we are committed to

working with them to ensure that residents receive services and benefits in a timely manner.

