



EVERETT CITY COUNCIL CANDIDATE QUESTIONNAIRE

Candidate Information

Name: **Ben Zarlingo**

Candidate for: Everett City Council, District 5

Background

As part of our mission to support a vibrant downtown core, the Downtown Everett Association provides leadership and awareness to the issues impacting our downtown community. We've created this candidate questionnaire – which aligns with our [mission](#) – to help voters understand the 2025 Everett City Council candidates' vision and priorities for Downtown Everett. The Downtown Everett Association does not endorse candidates; we encourage the community to read the candidates' responses below to learn how they would support a thriving downtown.

All candidates were invited to respond. Candidate responses are posted in their entirety. Typos and grammatical errors are their own.

Questions

Public Safety

Do you believe current policies, such as the service provider buffer zone ordinance, help accomplish the City's goals of promoting public safety in the downtown core? What other policies do you believe would help meet this goal, and how?

Yes I do. Public safety is essential for the success of businesses in our downtown core, and the attraction of residents that are a part of that success. Service providers and other businesses can be compatible, and buffer zones assist in maintaining that compatibility. We've implemented other measures in some areas, including the SODA ordinance and the combination of no-sit/no-lie and Pallet shelters to handle needed services while handling their impact. I'm open to other measures and policies (including modification of our enforcement efforts) but need to learn more from those in the DEA about what the most effective ones might be.

How do you believe the City can create a safe space for all members of the downtown community? How would you prioritize these measures?

First, review our existing policies and measures and associated enforcement to see what is effective and to find gaps in the form of unsafe places and situations. The lack of safety should be assessed in terms of both statistics and perceptions.

I am aware of some of the very considerable self-help that the DEA already engages in, and very grateful for it. However, as with question 1 above, I need to learn more first-hand before making specific additional recommendations. My district (5) and my familiarity with the details of the current and potentially expanding downtown core mean that I need to learn more.



Economic Vitality

How do you believe the City can help make Downtown a more attractive location for new businesses?

The most important actions are those that bring more customers downtown, both visitors and residents. The Council and Administration have worked to enable more residential density, approving various types of housing in/near downtown, and improving the permitting and inspection process. We've budgeted and hired more, but there is additional work to do in this area.

Another major effort is the extensive work on an outdoor recreational facility (the proposed stadium) that will represent a large investment from multiple private and public entities and will bring local and regional visitors to downtown businesses on many more days and evenings.

How can the City support existing businesses – from small to large?

As mentioned above, we can continue to focus on statistical and perceived safety, both for customers and the staff of local businesses. We can make permitting and inspections for business improvements as responsive and pain-free as possible, recognizing the practical situation of our many aging buildings.

As with the earlier items/questions above, we (and I especially) should work to learn more about the real-world situation and challenges that our Downtown businesses are coping with. They are prime drivers of Everett's prosperity, livability, and image.

Public Spaces

What steps can the City take to improve Downtown Everett's public spaces, such as streets, sidewalks, parks, and places where people spend time and gather?

We can start by learning from, and leveraging what the DEA is already doing. Those efforts are informed by deep, practical awareness of the functioning of those spaces and the associated challenges. That is knowledge that I do not have.

It's a bit of a chicken-and-egg situation but bringing more customers and residents downtown will make the spaces mentioned above more hospitable for the kind of gathering that we want to encourage. However this self-reinforcing cycle is not automatic and I am very interested in learning what measures might be the most effective in fostering it.

Transportation

How can the City increase accessibility to Downtown and help people feel more connected to our neighboring communities? What are your priorities in regards to bicycle infrastructure, public transportation, pedestrian experience, parking, etc.?

I spent a couple of years representing Everett on the Everett Transit/Community Transit "Joint Policy Committee" studying potential consolidation that would have approximately doubled bus routes/service. However that consolidation would have doubled the associated sales tax for



Everett residents and customers from 0.6% to the 1.2% paid by County residents, and that impact weighed heavily on our decision to set aside further consideration for now.

With respect to bicycle infrastructure and the pedestrian experience, this is an evolving situation primarily because of the rapid increase in electric bicycles and scooters and their interaction with pedestrians. The additional mobility is encouraging but we have been experiencing some problems reported between pedestrians and electrified mobility devices.

As far as I know (and from limited experience) the parking resources for customers are adequate but there have been some concerns expressed about parking for staff/employees. This deserves a closer look but I do not know enough to suggest changes. Another chance for me to learn.

Historic Preservation

In your view, how important are Downtown Everett's historic buildings to its social vibrancy and economic vitality, and why? What would be your approach be to incentivizing the preservation of these buildings?

There are some buildings of historic significance but only a limited number seem to contribute to social vibrancy due primarily to their history. I am extremely gratified to see the success of the Apex center and its preservation, for example.

A number of buildings are historic but their contribution to economic vitality is bound by their condition and structure. For example the Interurban Terminal Building at the corner of Pacific and Colby is genuinely historic but may not have a practical future because of multiple issues.

The Culmback building also has significant issues, and others are similar. I can't speak in detail here but would generally focus preservation incentives where ongoing use of a building has the potential to be economically practical.

Additional

With the Everett 2044 Comprehensive Plan and Development Regulations going into effect, describe your related approach to zoning, density, allocation of city resources, and the priority for growth in the downtown core.

The downtown core continues to have high priority in the Comprehensive Plan and Development Regulations, taking a heavy share of the anticipated population growth. That translates to taller buildings, higher density, more City resources per square mile. The clear intent is to focus the highest growth on Downtown and the major arterials, to support the transit and increasing walkability that will keep these areas livable.

Is there any additional information you would like to share about your candidacy that would be helpful for downtown residents, workers, and visitors to know?

My district and my background are generally suburban, and this area of southeast Everett has something of its own separate identity. I am not a natural urbanist but have worked hard to



learn about the functioning of all of Everett, and am acutely aware of the essential role Downtown plays in the prosperity, image, and livability of the City as a whole.