



Homeless Voices for Justice Candidate Questionnaire 2021
Answers from Roberto Rodriguez
Candidate for Portland City Council At-Large

Introduction: Can you tell us why you are running for City Council and what you will do, if elected, to address homelessness in our city?

This is a time of change and transition in Portland. I'm a strong believer that policy should have broad systemic impact. In my five years on the school board, I've represented Portland's diverse communities and diverse needs. We passed historic budgets advancing equity with strong support from the community, developed by centering the voices of those most affected. The issues keeping many of our students and their families from thriving are large societal problems that the schools cannot solve alone. I want to apply that experience, as well my lived experiences as father and husband, a current small business owner, a physical therapist assistant with over 17 years experience including home health care in Greater Portland, to address the most pressing issues we face in our city, including homelessness.

Shelter Referendum: Portlanders will vote this November on whether they want to cap the size of homeless shelters. What is your position on the Shelter Referendum question and why?

I have concerns about delaying the availability of services if the proposed Riverside shelter plans are stopped. The current need for housing is at such a critical point and needs are already going unmet, so we must act with urgency. This is the main reason I voted C on the referendum question. Moving forward, we must create systems focused on maintaining continuity of care and strong interdisciplinary team communication while centering the voices of the homeless in those decisions.

Low Income Housing: Before and during the COVID19 crisis, we have seen rents skyrocket in Portland, which is pushing more and more people into homelessness. What would you do to combat the housing crisis in Portland and how would you make housing more accessible for low-income Portlanders?

Produce housing for all income levels, for example by updating zoning to allow for more multi-family development while at the same time preserve the current stock of affordable housing. We must also put in place anti-displacement policies and enforce current ordinances limiting short term rentals in order to maximize our current housing stock. We must prioritize investments and projects that ensure residents are able to stay by choice and reap the benefits of new amenities, increased accessibility, and newly added resources.

COVID19 & Shelter: Right now, Portland is sheltering hundreds of families and individuals experiencing homelessness, including many asylum seekers, in hotels throughout the Greater Portland area. The federal funding that pays for those hotel rooms is scheduled to



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end on December 31, 2021. What is your plan to provide shelter for these people once this funding goes away?

The lost federal funding would have to be covered within the current operational budget in order to continue sheltering those families. I will also work with my colleagues on the Council to advocate for increased GA reimbursement to make up for as much of that lost revenue as possible.

Racial Equity: We know that Black, Indigenous, and People of Color experience homelessness and poverty at disproportionate rates, including here in Portland. Where do you see systemic racism in our city government or city services? How do you plan to incorporate racial equity, access, and inclusion in your policy making as a City Councilor?

The murder of George Floyd in 2020 and the protests that followed drew increased attention to the experiences of black and brown people in our society. Portland responded by making commitments to advance racial equity, including forming the Racial Equity Steering Committee. I support the recommendations that came from the committee, such as establishing an effective civilian police oversight board and building a more robust alternate crisis model. We need to have high expectations and reliable systems of accountability that support all of our Diversity, Equity and Inclusion goals.

Inclusion: How do you plan to incorporate unhoused people and people in poverty into your decision-making as a City Councilor?

We must think broadly about inclusive governance, for example by expanding the use of community forums and leveraging community partners who have effective systems of engagement with homeless people. In the schools this meant creating a family engagement policy modeled after the Parent and Family Engagement Manifesto developed by Portland Empowered. Also by putting in place a Family Partnership Engagement Committee (FPAC) which meets monthly to provide input on issues that the school board is working on at the time. I've served on the FPAC since its inception and have gained great insight on how to create inclusive governance.

Shelter Access: If you are elected to City Council, will you work and vote to uphold the city of Portland's long standing (35 year) commitment to provide emergency shelter to every person in our city who needs it?

YES.