

Bruce Harrell responses

Below are the unedited, full-length answers from Bruce Harrell submitted in response to the Georgetown Gazette's questions. Harrell is a former City Council President now running for mayor. A version of these responses was edited to fit the Gazette's October print edition. For more, see his campaign website: bruceforseattle.com

Early voting begins Oct. 15 and the general election is Nov. 2.

Georgetown Gazette: About half of Seattle's unhoused residents live in RVs or other vehicles. As mayor, how will you address this population and the related parking issues in neighborhoods like Georgetown?

Bruce Harrell: It's true that while the bulk of attention goes to those living in tents, there are many suffering from homelessness living in vehicles who may not be as highly visible but share similar needs. Those living in vehicles deserve real housing—an RV or car is not a place to thrive. One thing is for sure in the immediate—we need to stand up and provide more equitable, public, 24-7 access to bathrooms, showers, water fountains, and other critical personal hygiene resources, for all unhoused residents.

This summer, I toured the SoDo neighborhood with small business owners and learned of a City-sponsored RV dumping station that is inadequate for the number of RVs seeking to use it, resulting in illegal dumping in alleys and adjacent parking lots and ancillary issues like garbage and dumpster contents emptied into sidewalks and rights of way. This is an example of good intentions gone wrong. As Mayor, it would be my priority to bring programs like this to scale—programs that would provide adequate garbage and other sanitation facilities and create housing options, so we don't create additional public health and safety challenges in our neighborhoods.

Further, this is an example of securing not only the right facilities, but the right locations. Our solutions must alleviate the tension between businesses, neighbors, and those who are just trying to find a safe place to park and live. Arbitrary parking regulations and uncertainty around where it is acceptable for people using their vehicles as housing to park benefits no one.

Permitting and focusing parking to distinct areas will be helpful for providing streamlined services and resources where they are needed. This would be helpful in bringing clarity to businesses and homeowners, and would help to prevent unnecessary and unfair intrusions and aggravation toward those who are homeless. If we can place parking in close proximity to transit lines, we can also help RVs stay parked, further reducing the strain of large vehicles coming and going, hunting for adequate parking spaces and locations.

Most importantly—while these kinds of lots will provide stability, they should not exist permanently. We need to be urgently creating real supportive housing, so we can offer demonstrably better housing options to those currently living in vehicles.

Gazette: During your tenure on the City Council, what actions did you take or support that most improved Georgetown’s quality of life? Looking forward, what do you think Georgetown’s most pressing issue is now and how will you address it?

Harrell: Below is a list of actions that I took or supported on behalf of Georgetown residents. This list represents just a few of the most pressing issues that I was called to lead on. I will continue to work urgently and collaboratively with Georgetown residents and community leaders. It is my hope that Georgetown residents—who continue to advocate for quality of life—will continue to demand of elected officials that our city persist in becoming a great place to live, raise children and grow old.

Legislative actions & support for Georgetown residents

1. Responded to the community's request to develop micro policing plans for neighborhoods, which included a Micro Policing Plan for Georgetown.
2. Sponsored Statement of Legislative Intent [213-1-B-1](#) to convene a Public Safety Task Force of Georgetown residents to formulate and report to Council recommendations regarding the public safety and vitality of that neighborhood. [Link to report.](#)
3. Added \$600,000 in 2018 appropriations to the Seattle Department of Transportation for a new Georgetown to South Park Trail CIP project. [Link to budget action document.](#)
4. Prioritized investments toward Georgetown Playfield in the Seattle Park District.
5. Prioritized transportation investments, including the Georgetown to Downtown and Georgetown-South Park Trail route identified in the Bicycle Master Plan.
6. Worked to address the dust issue near the recycling facility.
7. Worked to address the issue of truckers parking in the Georgetown Industrial neighborhood.
8. Added \$62,250 to DON’s Community Building budget to support updating the historic resource surveys in the Georgetown neighborhood. [Link to budget action document.](#) The proposed surveys would allow Georgetown and the City to determine whether designation as a “conservation district” was appropriate.

This is our opportunity for a new start. My commitment to improve Seattle has never wavered. The energy is here, so let's seize the opportunity. Together, we can reimagine the future of Georgetown. I have a record of policy work and legislation that has helped to improve the quality of life for not only Georgetown residents, but all Seattle residents. I welcome you to learn more about my [legislative and policy record](#).

Gazette: How do your plans for the Seattle Police Department better protect and improve public safety?

Harrell: In the event of a public safety emergency, far too often, neighbors tell me they're unsure not only *when* police will respond — but *if* they will respond at all. This is completely unacceptable — every person in every community has the absolute right to feel safe.

Rising rates of crime and gun violence, and the City's current aimless and negligent approach to public safety, should concern us all. My steadfast commitment is to restore public safety, ensure maximum seven-minute response times, and build community trust with law enforcement.

Further defunding and department attrition is not a solution. We must restore staffing to national best practices, invest in stronger de-escalation and intervention programs, root out bias with internal culture change, and build a more responsive, representative police force.

We'll review every situation involving a gun and badge, determining when and where uniformed officers are needed. Alternative responses to situations like mental health crises and nonviolent disputes can address issues without escalation, while police focus on calls they're best equipped to address.

Finally, investigative and detective units need resources for thorough, effective investigations — solving homicides, hate crimes, domestic abuse, gun violence, and other serious crimes, holding perpetrators accountable and reducing crime long-term.

Gazette: The City Council enacted law last year to tax corporations and high-earning individuals. Do you support this measure and why?

Harrell: Washington's regressive tax system is incredibly unfair to working class and low-income Seattleites — as the city's hands are tied by our inability to implement progressive taxes on the most wealthy. As we work to maintain public services and programs and expand our efforts to address homelessness, COVID recovery, climate change, and other priorities — we must review all revenue options.

Thinking about additional revenue streams, I believe the wealthy and big business must pay their fair share in our efforts to tackle immediate crises such as homelessness and address the unsustainable inequities in our economy and society. That is why I am supportive of

JumpStart, as a clearly defined tax funding needed investments and allowing large profitable corporations, many of which have thrived during the pandemic, to pay their fair share. I am open to new progressive revenue with a clearly defined plan for how it can be used to address the challenges we face, and so we can reduce our reliance on sales taxes, property taxes, and others that disproportionately affect seniors, working families, and the most vulnerable.

Gazette: What is your favorite Georgetown small business? As mayor, what will you do to support it and those like it?

Harrell: I recall many meaningful experiences with Georgetown’s small business community. There are a number of favorite Georgetown small businesses that I have supported over the years. In particular, there is one small business whose products I have shared with my colleagues and friends over the years—**Cakes of Paradise Bakery**. Cakes of Paradise has been there for me, my family, and colleagues at City Hall—Mary Buza-Sims and her family always came through. They brought joy during retirements and public celebrations, i.e., the kickoff of the City of Seattle’s 150th birthday, and more. I will never forget the amazing 25th anniversary cake they made for me, my wife Joanne, and guests. I would be honored to continue to support Cakes of Paradise Bakery.

As Mayor, I look forward to helping small businesses like Cakes of Paradise. The pandemic [gazette: What is your favorite Georgetown small business? As mayor, what will you do to support it and those like it?](#) has transformed our city and our small businesses in the last year and a half. Economic recovery will not happen overnight, and small businesses throughout our city—especially those owned by women and Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC) entrepreneurs—risk falling farther behind. I will protect short term, dedicated resources to help these businesses not only get back on their feet, but expand and take advantage of the opportunities ahead to create more jobs. The City of Seattle will establish new “business to business” partnerships to ensure that smaller businesses and BIPOC entrepreneurs enjoy the ancillary revenues and success of many larger businesses. I have direct expertise in developing these models.

Additionally, few sectors of our economy have been as hard hit as our city’s dynamic – and critical – arts, music, food and nightlife economy. Let’s re-imagine how we support these critical small businesses and nonprofits—from preservation of historic buildings and venues, to exploration of sustainable revenue to support organizations that advance equity, inspire and teach, and provide a stage for the next Quincy Jones, Macklemore, or countless other creative voices in our community.

As Mayor, I will also examine additional resources and partnerships to further advance [grant opportunities](#) for cultural organizations, art groups, and individual artists.

Gazette: Would you drink a glass of water or eat the fish from the Duwamish River?

Harrell: I remember as a child the signs along Lake Washington warning people to not swim or eat the fish, and then walking home to see the people most impacted by loss of a place to cool off and recreate on a hot summer day, and the families unable to supplement their limited food budget.

These memories have always informed my commitment to protecting water quality for all who depend on it—these memories continue to inform my decisions, including my voting record on City Council, support for a bold climate agenda, including infrastructure improvements to reduce runoff and pollution.

While the lake is clean and safe today, there are still waterways in our city that need and deserve ongoing cleanup and mitigation, for those human and non-human populations who live in, on, and near pollution and suffer its impacts. I'll be an advocate for continued action on this work, with robust outreach to communities and support for city agencies studying and coordinating pollution and its clean-up efforts.

The Cleanup Plan for the Lower Duwamish Waterway Superfund site, as announced by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, was expected to remove 90 percent of the pollution in the river with an estimated project cost of \$342 million. The remaining 10 percent of the pollution is simply unacceptable. We can do better.

Gazette: What should we know about you that we haven't seen or heard about already?

Harrell: As a former City Council President, I was known for my candor and accessibility. I have always made myself available to various communities. As an at-large and districted member, I sought to ensure my office had robust constituent services that could respond urgently to the needs of all our neighbors. For many years, I was the only person of color in elected City government and, as a result, my office received a disproportionate share of calls, emails, and requests. My small staff did remarkable work managing the workload, and I personally responded to thousands of calls, emails, and text messages from constituents from all walks of life.

As Mayor, I will model accessibility and my cabinet members, department heads, and City employees will embrace a spirit of accessibility and accountability. I'll have a larger staff, thankfully, and will make sure that no matter your zip code or station in life, you have an open door to the Mayor's office.