



Michael Baumgartner | U.S. Rep. Congressional D-5

Professional licenses or experience: U.S. Representative (2025-current); Spokane County Treasurer (2019-2024); eight years in the Washington State Senate; former State Department officer in Iraq and counternarcotics adviser in Afghanistan. Economics degree, Washington State University; Master in Public Administration, Harvard Kennedy School.

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Help us get to know you, what is your favorite event or small business downtown?

Bloomsday – I first ran it as a child and now love to take part with my family. (It's getting harder to keep up with the children!)

Cultivate Commercial Activity: Downtown depends on attracting investment, supporting businesses, and creating a place where people want to live, work, shop, and visit. What policies or investments would you prioritize to strengthen downtown's economic vitality?

Our community is struggling with a drug and behavioral health crisis. Homelessness and the nexus with illicit drug use is a complex problem that is tremendously challenging for businesses and our economic vitality, as well as causing terrible human suffering. We have many great local business owners and innovators, but problems of safety and persistent vandalism make it much more difficult for them to build and thrive. Local and state governments are really at the forefront of efforts to take action - but at the federal level we have had some real success in securing the southern border and slowing the flow of fentanyl into the US. Fentanyl overdose deaths have significantly decreased, and crime is down. We need to keep building on that progress. In terms of investments, I was personally a strong advocate for the new downtown stadium, which brought our first professional soccer team to Spokane and has helped establish a world class sports tourism center, with the nearby Podium as well. We also now have a strong health and education hub adjoining downtown Spokane, and I was proud to play a part in that by helping bring the new WSU medical school to Spokane, and supporting funding for the U-District Gateway Bridge. It has really transformed that area adjacent to the downtown core. Spokane has an amazing natural jewel in our beautiful falls around which the city was built, and in future it would be great to see even more investment to showcase the river and highlight our history.





Enhance a Vibrant Experience: Maintaining public spaces, investing in infrastructure, and enhancing accessibility contribute to downtown's long-term success. What role will your office play in maintaining and enhancing the public spaces and infrastructure that support a vibrant downtown?

Downtown's public spaces should be clean, safe and easy to reach. Riverfront Park, the mall, our sidewalks and our transit connections help bring people together and support local businesses. These are primarily the responsibilities of local government, but along with my Congressional staff we have worked to stay informed about plans and have sought to provide assistance where possible. There are areas where federal funds can directly impact downtown: for example, earlier this year the Spokane Police Department accepted a Department of Justice grant to hire more officers to tackle gun violence, and federal funds through ARPA have also been provided to the Downtown Spokane Partnership for cleanup of downtown. My office will seek to help resolve federal agency delays and identify opportunities within existing transportation and community-development programs. These are initiatives that can have a real positive impact for the people of Spokane and if I am re-elected to Congress I'll continue to work in a bipartisan manner with local leaders to advocate in support of our city.

Build and Expand Housing Options: A growing downtown population supports economic vitality and community resilience. Achieving our goal of 3,000 new housing units over the next 10 years will require reducing barriers to development and expanding housing options. What policies or actions would you support to build more housing downtown?

We need more homes people can afford. I support downtown's goal of 3,000 additional housing units over the next decade. I voted for the bipartisan House housing package that helped form the 21st Century ROAD to Housing Act, which became law in July. It provides tools to simplify federal reviews, support office-to-housing conversions and expand housing options. For downtown Spokane, I support converting suitable vacant buildings, building infill apartments and making approvals faster and more predictable. My office can help the city navigate existing federal programs while local leaders remove unnecessary costs and delays. Private investment should be central to adding homes.

Improve Public Safety: Improving public safety requires balancing enforcement, prevention, and long-term community investment. How would you approach those priorities in supporting a safe and welcoming downtown?

Everyone should be able to walk downtown without being threatened. I support visible policing, prosecution of violent offenders and drug traffickers, and more consistent enforcement against theft, open drug use and vandalism. In terms of federal policy, I have highlighted the need to stop fentanyl at the border and ports of entry. CDC estimates show deaths involving synthetic opioids such as fentanyl have fallen about 21% in 2025. Nationally, murder fell 18% and violent crime fell 9%. Those gains should strengthen our determination to address the scourge of fentanyl and make Spokane safer. We must continue to support our federal law enforcement agencies working to disrupt trafficking networks .



I appreciate the work of the Safe & Healthy Spokane Task Force to address the drug and mental health crisis our community is facing; it was an encouraging example of different groups working together regardless of politics to look for solutions. That path forward must include enforcement of the law and accountability, but as the task force report has emphasized we also need ways to strengthen behavioral health and crisis services and to improve collaboration and communication. We should judge progress by what people experience: reduced crime and property vacancy, fewer victims, fewer overdoses and fewer people repeatedly cycling through jail, emergency rooms and the street.

Support Funding, Facilities, and Services for People to Get the Help They Need: Addressing homelessness, behavioral health, and substance use requires coordination across multiple levels of government. Recently, the Safe & Healthy Spokane Task Force released a set of recommendations to improve public safety, behavioral health, housing, and system coordination. If additional public resources become available, what investments related to the Safe & Healthy Spokane Task Force recommendations would you prioritize?

These investments are largely outside of the role of the federal government - however, the Task Force recommendations highlighted the challenge of high utilizers of the criminal justice and health systems, with a small number of individuals cycling through those systems and driving outsize costs for our community. It makes sense to focus on how we address that while still ensuring those individuals are accountable, so we're not just enabling those problems. Coordinating management of those cases between the courts, justice, healthcare, and homelessness systems - in real time - makes a lot of sense. Adding capacity to our detention facilities is also very much needed. We must enforce our existing laws. In general, as with any use of taxpayer dollars, we must be good stewards. That means coordinating existing budgets, avoiding duplication and sharing results so we can see what is working and what is not.

Setting the Foundation: Public resources are limited, and elected officials are often required to balance competing priorities when making investment decisions. How do you evaluate competing funding priorities, and what principles would guide your decisions when investments affect downtown Spokane?

We should be seeking public input, assessing the cost vs benefit of any investment, ensuring transparency and accountability, and making decisions based on public priorities, which for downtown is really making sure we have safe and clean streets that are welcoming and that allow businesses to thrive.

Is there any additional information you would like to share about your candidacy that you were unable to provide in the above responses?

My family and I live close to downtown Spokane, and care deeply about its safety and success. If I am re-elected to Congress, I will continue to be an engaged partner to local community members, working on these issues and providing support with related federal agencies.

