

Michael Cathcart | County Auditor



Professional licenses or experience: Elected Experience (Current) Spokane City Councilmember, elected 2019/re-elected 2023; Chair, Spokane Regional Health District; Chair, Northeast Public Development Authority; Boardmember, Spokane Transit Authority. (Previous) Chair, Growth Management Steering Committee; Council President Pro Tem; Chair, Police & Fire Pension Boards; Finance Committee Chair; Public Safety Chair; Member, Budget Committee; Boardmember, Broadlinc Regional Broadband Development Authority Other Professional Experience Executive Director, Better Spokane; Director of Government Affairs, Spokane Home Builders Association; legislative staff, Washington State Senate. Education Bachelor's, Montana State University (2006).

Campaign Website: www.cathcartforspokane.com

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

Favorite Event: Spokane's Lunar New Year Celebration at the Spokane Convention Center | Favorite Small Business: First Avenue Coffee | Favorite New Restaurant: Izzies K Dogs.

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?

Downtown needs to be a place of positive growth. A place where people want to live, invest, open or maintain a business, visit, and spend time. This has been an emphasis of mine throughout my terms on the Spokane City Council. In fact, it has been my pleasure to represent Downtown Spokane and I have thoroughly enjoyed serving on the Downtown Spokane Partnership board. During that time, I have pursued policies and investments aimed at making downtown safer, cleaner, more accessible, and economically stronger. As County Auditor, my direct contribution to downtown's economic vitality will be different from my work over the last seven years on the Spokane City Council. The Spokane County Auditor does not play a substantial role in determining investments in Downtown Spokane. The Auditor does not set zoning or land-use regulations, public safety or housing policy, transportation priorities, or capital investments outside the office's functions. Instead, the office, which touches thousands of residents and businesses on a regular basis, administers elections, recording, financial services, and motor vehicle licensing.





The role of County Auditor isn't entirely disconnected from the work that has to take place to realize economic growth. In fact, the Recording Office and maintaining an efficient and effective recording system are crucial to realizing those investments. When property is bought or sold, financed, refinanced, or prepared for redevelopment, the Recording Office preserves the record of those transactions or changes. Deeds, liens, maps, plats, surveys, and other real-estate documents all pass through the system. Early in 2027, a key priority of mine will be to oversee the implementation of an upgraded recording system. The new platform will provide a more user-friendly experience, including an improved online interface, and will introduce a recording alert system, allowing users to be notified when transactions have been made in their name or affect their property records. That same commitment extends beyond the Recording Office. Throughout the Auditor's Office, I am committed to continuous service improvements. I want our office to be transparent, efficient, responsive, and easy to work with. Residents, businesses, and other public agencies should be able to access clear information, receive responsive service, and complete necessary transactions without unnecessary delays or obstacles. Government does not make economic growth happen on its own, but it can stand in the way. I will work with our employees and listen to their perspectives on how we can do better and we will engage our customers and other stakeholders on a regular basis to identify gaps or inefficiencies, including whether office hours or other practices affect the ability of those in either the private or public sector to complete their work. While the Auditor's role is different, nearly seven years on the Spokane City Council gives me a substantial record of working directly on the issues that shape downtown's safety, accessibility, and economic vitality.

Just as I am focused on pursuing measures within the Auditor's Office that build public confidence and trust, I have worked to do the same in my role on the City Council. Public safety is crucial in this regard.

My advocacy has ranged from clamping down on open-air drug use, requiring effective good-neighbor agreements aimed at reducing the impacts of service programs on businesses, residents, and public infrastructure, placing more emphasis on investing in treatment for those struggling on our streets, and supporting neighborhood policing programs that put officers on foot or by bike Downtown and across the city. This creates a visible presence, serves as a crime deterrent, and enables more engagement and relationship-building with community members.

Last October, I championed the Safe and Accessible Public Spaces Ordinance, which brought all seven Councilmembers together after years of disagreement over camping and obstruction policies and ultimately became the first policy, to my knowledge, co-sponsored by the entire Council. I also led the successful effort to implement Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design improvements on the Monroe Street Bridge to improve safety through better visibility for pedestrians traveling between downtown and the north side of the river. Even before it was cool, I pushed to remove unnecessary building-height restrictions to encourage additional housing and development in the downtown core. I have supported incentives and regulatory relief that can attract needed private investment, and I have opposed changes to downtown streets that I believe would make travel more congested, particularly when downtown property owners, residents, and users have raised concerns about accessibility. While the tools will be different, I will bring to the Spokane County Auditor's Office the same focus on transparency, efficiency, responsiveness, and making government an effective partner and not an obstacle.



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?

Public resources are extremely limited and precious. First and foremost, government needs to accomplish the basics well before expanding into other areas. Second, we need to know what a policy or process change or capital investment will cost before proceeding. Third, one-time dollars should be used on one-time costs and not used to pay for ongoing expenses. These basic principles have guided me through nearly seven years on the Spokane City Council, including my time on the budget committee, the budget reforms I have proposed and passed, and my time chairing the Finance Committee. As Spokane County faces a projected budget shortfall of nearly \$30 million heading into 2027, the Auditor's Office is not immune from the difficult decisions necessary to balance the budget. This will require careful and strategic planning by the next Auditor to absorb these impacts to ensure that essential services continue and that the public receives the same high standard of service it expects. Within Financial Services, my first priority is the full implementation and stabilization of Workday, the County's new human resources and payroll system. Over the past couple years, the implementation of this new platform has been anything but smooth and will require substantial coordination between the Auditor's office, Human Resources, and third party consultants. We have to do the basics well first. Following that, high on my list will be investing in tools that expand public access and financial transparency so residents can more easily understand County expenditures. Transparency is an investment too.

Election costs are different from many County services because costs are allocated among the jurisdictions participating in an election. As those costs rise, municipalities, school districts, fire districts, and other jurisdictions can ultimately feel the impact in their own budgets. My focus will be on prioritizing human capital with the goal of processing and counting ballots as quickly and accurately as practicable. Ideally, that means tabulating everything on hand on election night and then processing ballots received in the mail as they arrive in the days that follow. I will also consider more accessible voter service centers, particularly during high-demand elections, expanding post-election audits, and creating greater opportunities for public observation, including livestreaming logic-and-accuracy testing, Canvassing Board meetings, post-election audits, and gathering a bipartisan group to offer recommendations for broader improvements. I am very interested in building partnerships with organizations, businesses, schools, and other institutions that can help me proactively engage the community in getting out the vote. Downtown offers a unique opportunity for greater election outreach because thousands of people work, live, visit, and gather there every day. In 2020, it seemed like every business had some kind of signage encouraging customers or passersby to vote. Every election should feel that way. My responsibility as Auditor will be to use discipline and strategy to ensure high standards and public transparency regardless of budget impacts.





DOWNTOWN SPOKANE PARTNERSHIP

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

For the first time in 28 years, Spokane County will have a new Auditor. That makes a smooth transition one of my first priorities. This office does too much important work to allow a change in leadership to disrupt service. I am committed to upholding the law and serving every constituent, customer, and voter equally. I am proud that this campaign has built a broad bipartisan coalition of people and organizations who know me, know this office, or have worked alongside me.

That includes business and labor organizations, retiring Democratic Auditor Vicky Dalton, Congressman and former County Treasurer Michael Baumgartner, Council President Betsy Wilkerson, former Councilmembers Jonathan Bingle and Karen Stratton, and numerous county commissioners, countywide elected officials, legislators, community leaders, finance professionals. You can view the full list at www.cathcartforspokane.com/endorsements. Their support is not because we agree on everything. We don't. It is because this is an executive leadership position, and the Auditor's Office should not be about partisan politics or political games. It should be about competence, integrity, public trust, showing up, and leading with sunlight. Please feel free to visit my website, www.cathcartforspokane.com for more information or to volunteer or donate. I would be very grateful to earn your trust and your vote.



818 W Riverside, Ste 120, Spokane, WA 99201



509.456.0580



info@downtownspokane.org



downtownspokane.org