



Amber Waldref | County Commissioner, District 2

Professional licenses or experience: Spokane County Commissioner 2023-current; Spokane City Councilmember, 2010-2017; Director, The Zone Project, Northeast Community Center 2018-2022; Development Director, The Lands Council 2004-2009.

Campaign Website: www.amberwaldref.com

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

One of my favorite events is Terrain. I love Boo Radley's and Atticus, as well as O'Doherty's.

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?

The County can support City of Spokane and State policies to activate investment and support businesses, like tax incentives and making business permits and fees more affordable. I'm particularly interested in activating more housing downtown and redeveloping commercial properties. We need to advocate at the State level for subsidies or incentives to make this affordable for developers. The more people who live or work downtown, the more vibrant it is on a day to day basis.

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?

The County can partner with the City in activating public spaces. We do this in the University District through tax-increment financing. Perhaps we can explore this for downtown? While the City plays the main role in maintaining and enhancing infrastructure, I have been a strong advocate for investing in Parks. I supported the Riverfront Park levy and now the recent schools and parks levy. I think we can do more to activate Riverfront Park with dining and activities along the River. I'm open to ideas of how the County can partner!





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?

As I stated earlier, my highest priority for downtown is finding ways to support more housing development. I am interested in reducing barriers to development and we need to explore ways to do this at the State and local level. As I stated, we need to find a way to reuse office buildings and incentivize development of parking lots and other empty spaces downtown. I believe there have been some good policies discussed in recent years. We can look to other states and cities to see how they have made these projects pencil. It's essential for the health of downtown!

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?

I agree with balancing these priorities. I'm committed to seeing the Safe and Healthy Taskforce recommendations to fruition -- we need to work across the region to invest in behavioral health and law and justice resources. We have been talking about this forever. I'm committed to building the political will to invest in short and long-term changes. I truly believe that with some strategic investment and bipartisan, community-driven leadership, we can be a leader in the country in community health and overcome the challenges of the opioid epidemic. And if we can track our outcomes and continuously improve, the County and our medical system can be more cost-effective and reduce costs in the future.

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?

I would prioritize early intervention with people who touch the criminal justice system. Pre-trial programs, more mental health and drug treatment programs, anger management. Also, resolving criminal cases more quickly and creating much more robust re-entry programs that ensure rapid rehousing and stabilization. Also, focusing efforts on those individuals who are the highest users of our criminal justice system.





DOWNTOWN SPOKANE PARTNERSHIP

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?

It's a constant balancing act deciding how to fund competing priorities. I think it's smart to space out ballot measures and balance investment in public safety, transportation, and community services. Our state restricted the ability of elected officials to raise revenue above 1% property tax without a vote of the people. This creates a long list of ballot measures that must be constantly prioritized. I have tried to bring various local government organizations (school districts, cities and county, transit agencies, library districts) together to discuss and strategize around this -- I will increase my efforts in my next term. We also need to look at how we fund essential government services in Washington State. Are there other strategies? I'm interested in working with downtown businesses, citizens and other local government leaders to find out what folks want to do differently in the future.

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

I appreciate the opportunity to share my perspective. Thank you!



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