

From Donna Cohen, St Johns community member
My thoughts on the District 2 City Council race. [10/20/24]

There are 22 candidates in the race. I reviewed materials and watched/listened to candidate forums and chose candidates to interview who seemed likely to have the best chance of helping our District and city. From those, I met individually in St Johns for lengthy interviews with 8 and invited two others who did not respond.

There are two candidates who I feel have the best qualifications, temperament and ideas to fulfill the City Council position. I also feel they are *serious* candidates from the standpoint of being interested in governing. I encourage you to look at their websites and review some interviews/forums with them.

My priorities are housing, writ large – homelessness is just a part of our overall housing problem. We have a woeful undersupply of housing in Portland, especially for low-mid-income individuals. It is a large part of why we have homelessness [research has proven that lack of housing supply matters most; other issues – addiction, mental health – play a lesser role; see <https://homelessnesshousingproblem.com/>].

My other concern is that Council members realize that the north peninsula is precarious vis-à-vis the earthquake to come. 30,000 are at risk for being stranded here – separated from family, with no medical facility, subject to toxic air from CEI Hub, etc. – given the current situation of the bridges over the “cut” failing during the earthquake [if not before!] as well as the tunnel under Columbia Park/Lombard failing. We must have advocates on Council to get our emergency routes secured.

Jennifer Park

Jennifer has more housing experience than perhaps all the other D2 candidates combined. She worked for 6 years for a supportive housing program in San Francisco. As a citizen housing advocate myself I attend programs/webinars put on by the city [The city has just passed a plan to increase housing supply, btw]. Every program I attend, Jennifer is there; and usually, she is the only City Council candidate in attendance.

When Rosemont Village, a senior affordable housing building became threatened with not being able to rehouse tenants after a 2-year hiatus due to Legionnaire’s Disease. Jennifer chose to be very involved, reaching out to groups/agencies that could help, starting a petition drive, etc. She did not want to see those 100 units of affordable housing disappear. That is commitment to housing!

Jennifer is studying for her Master’s Degree in Public Policy. She has serious and long-term interest in the public sphere. She is also committed to seeing us get our emergency routes. Check out her excellent website!

Elana Pirtle-Guiney

Elana has a varied background with political systems having worked as the legislative liaison between Governor Brown’s office and the legislature, done organizing work with unions, and having been on the City of Portland’s Parks Board.

Our 2-hour discussion ranged from her background to the emergency routes to the peninsula’s problems with pools, and to noise/pollution from the racetrack, and more. Elana is a critical thinker, someone who looks deeply and from all sides at a situation. Her knowledge of the ins-and-outs of the speedway, for example, was very impressive! She does not jump on bandwagons, but takes the time to examine situations completely and come up with her own creative ideas and solutions.

She is also the only candidate who has *consistently* spoken out about the emergency route situation – for example, in a survey sent to candidates last March, on an interview with KBOO radio, and in a Think Out Loud candidate forum!

I have been canvassing for Jennifer and Elana for a couple of weeks now, visiting neighbors and encouraging them to support these two candidates at the top of their rankings. I know they will be at the top of mine.

Thanks for reading!

Jennifer Park <https://www.persistwithpark.com/>

Elana Pirtle-Guiney <https://www.elanaforportland.com/>