

## **John Lombard, Candidate for City Council, District 5: Position Statement on Northgate**

Northgate is the geographic and economic center of District 5. Huge public and private investments are currently underway or contemplated there. Councilmember Juarez has done nothing to involve residents in shaping Northgate's future—despite gaping needs for pedestrian improvements, huge concerns over traffic and parking, increasing public safety concerns, and major displacement threats for low-income renters. Working together with residents to ensure action on these issues would be a top priority for me as District 5's representative on the City Council.

Here is a quick summary of what is happening already:

- Sound Transit's Northgate light rail station is scheduled to open in 2021;
- Simon Properties is going to redevelop most of Northgate Mall over the next decade, cutting retail space in half while adding more than 1,000 residential units and 700,000 square feet of office space, a 200-room hotel, and a large public open space;
- NHL Seattle plans to build a three-rink, 180,000-square-foot practice facility at Northgate for Seattle's new hockey team by 2021, with the rinks available for use by the public and amateur teams when not needed by the NHL;
- King County has selected a developer team for a "Transit-Oriented Development" on its transit center site, with new retail and residential uses, including more than 400 units of affordable housing;
- The Seattle Department of Transportation is preparing to build the long-awaited pedestrian and bicycle bridge over I-5, linking North Seattle College and neighborhoods west of I-5 with the Mall, light rail, transit center and neighborhoods to the east;
- Private developments with hundreds of units are going up east of the mall; and
- North Seattle College, Northaven Senior Living, Neighborcare Health, and UW Medicine are all at various stages of considering major housing developments.

There is currently no coordinated effort being made to identify and address unmet needs that affect everyone in the Northgate Urban Center—including all of these developments, as well as the surrounding neighborhoods of Maple Leaf, Licton Springs, Haller Lake, Pinehurst, and Victory Heights. There are many issues at stake, including:

- Much-needed pedestrian and bicycle improvements, trails, and pathways through the "superblocks" that dominate much of the area near the mall;
- Potential traffic gridlock and parking jams that could be caused by commuters trying to access light rail at Northgate;
- Changes in Metro bus routes when the new Sound Transit station opens;
- Ensuring that local schools have adequate capacity to serve the anticipated growth in residents;
- Increases in violent and property crime in the Northgate area;
- The need for one or more new grocery stores and other locally oriented businesses (in contrast to the regionally oriented businesses at the mall); and, not least,
- Minimizing displacement of current residents from existing affordable housing (a threat that the City estimates to be greater here than anywhere else in Seattle).

I was a leader in the Northgate Stakeholders process more than a decade ago, when the City involved the community in a similar way to what I am calling for here. The issues then were important, but not nearly as momentous as what is happening now. Thornton Place and the adjacent Thornton Creek

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Water Quality Channel resulted from our process, as did zoning changes that have facilitated new development along Northgate Way. The Northgate Stakeholders Group understood back then—and community leaders understand today—that new development is necessary for the Northgate area to transition to the pedestrian- and resident-oriented future we want for it. I'm a Northgate Urban Center resident—and renter—myself. I'm very pleased to see so much public and private investment in Northgate underway or planned. But I want to see it succeed for everyone, to the greatest extent possible.

A large workshop on the future of Northgate, held in January 2018 and organized by the City of Seattle and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, also called for a group similar to what I am recommending: a "Northgate Collaborative," to be convened by Councilmember Juarez and the Mayor. Councilmember Juarez supported and attended the workshop, but has never convened such a group. The Collaborative was supposed to include community groups, but community representatives were largely left out of the workshop: only three out of the 46 participants were community residents, and they were only invited indirectly, through another invitee. Nearly all those who attended the workshop were from government agencies or non-profits.

Councilmember Juarez rarely involves the community in her work. She certainly did not with the Northgate bridge over I-5, whose design had gone through an extensive public process by the time she was elected. She ignored that as well as budget concerns raised by the Seattle Department of Transportation, and instead tried to broker plans for an even more glamorous bridge, working with Simon Properties, Lorig (the developer of Thornton Place), and North Seattle College. It was all for naught. In the end, budget concerns required scaling back even the bridge's original design.

With so much change already taking place in Northgate and so much more just ahead, we need a truly inclusive "Collaborative" to help guide it. Especially given the threat of displacement, we need to involve not just community councils but also renters and under-represented communities in the Northgate area (82% of students at Northgate Elementary School are non-white, and 35% are English language learners).

The Mayor's Office was directly involved in supporting the success of the Northgate Stakeholders Group more than a decade ago. We need the Mayor and our District 5 representative to do more than just convene a "Northgate Collaborative." We need them to make sure that the Collaborative gets the support it needs to succeed, and that the City commits to act on its recommendations. As a Northgate resident and renter, past leader with the Stakeholders Group, and the lead organizer for the D5 Community Network, I am the candidate for District 5 best-positioned to do that.