

City of Sandpoint Council Member

	Joel Aispuro	Rick Howarth	Joel Tate	Joshua Torrez
1. What is your name, what office are you running for and why are you running for this position?	No Response Received	No Response Received	My name is Joe Tate, and I am running for Sandpoint City Council. I was born and raised in Sandpoint, and this community is my home. As a professional listener and problem solver, I want to bring those skills to city government. I'm running because I believe Sandpoint deserves thoughtful, solution-focused leadership that values collaboration, respects diverse perspectives, and keeps our community strong and connected for future generations.	No Response Received
2. How could our city be improved? Please provide your top 2-3 ideas.	No Response Received	No Response Received	Sandpoint is already a special place, but there's always room to improve. My top ideas include: 1) Supporting local families and businesses by reducing barriers for entrepreneurs, keeping downtown vibrant and walkable, and investing in safe neighborhoods, parks, and accessible resources for all ages. 2) Planning for smart growth and infrastructure by investing in roads, sidewalks, and water systems that can handle growth while protecting Sandpoint's charm and natural beauty. 3) Strengthening community connection by creating more opportunities for residents to be heard through open forums, clear communication, and collaborative problem-solving. The more we listen and involve people, the stronger and more united Sandpoint will be.	No Response Received
3. In your opinion, is growth in North Idaho being handled appropriately?	No Response Received	No Response Received	Growth in North Idaho is a reality, and it's not always being handled in a way that works for everyone. While growth brings opportunities, it also brings challenges like rising housing costs, infrastructure strain, and changes to our small-town character. I believe we need to be more intentional in how we manage growth—by planning carefully, protecting what makes Sandpoint unique, and ensuring that development benefits the whole community, not just a few. In recent years, there have also been controversies that reflect poorly on some elected officials, and integrity and public trust have been called into question. These are values I take seriously, and qualities I plan to bring to the City Council level through transparency, accountability, and thoughtful leadership.	No Response Received
4. As cities face increasing costs to pay for city services including law enforcement, fire districts, schools and increased traffic due to increased home developments, what are your suggestions so that growth pays for itself?	No Response Received	No Response Received	Growth should benefit the community, not burden it. I believe new development needs to contribute fairly to the costs it creates. That means ensuring impact fees are appropriately structured so that developers share responsibility for things like roads, utilities, law enforcement, and fire protection. We also need to coordinate carefully with schools and other service providers so planning happens ahead of time, not after the fact. I'm a big believer in working smarter, not harder, and that applies to city planning. If we don't learn from past mistakes, we're bound to repeat them—and Sandpoint deserves leadership that will study what's worked, what hasn't, and make smarter choices going forward. By being proactive and intentional, we can keep Sandpoint's character while making sure growth pays its way and doesn't fall back on the shoulders of longtime residents.	No Response Received

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5. What improvements should be made to the city council's role in the planning and authorization of new developments?	No Response Received	No Response Received	I won't pretend to be an expert in the ins and outs of city politics or every detail of how planning and authorization currently works. What I can say is that if given the opportunity, I will bring humility, integrity, and a commitment to weighing the pros and cons of every decision carefully. I believe the City Council's role should always focus on thoughtful planning, collaboration, and bringing in the right people to ensure decisions are made in the best interest of Sandpoint. I don't do half measures—when I take on something, I see it through and hold myself to a very high standard. Some might call me a perfectionist, but I see that as a strength when it comes to making sure things are done well and with care.	No Response Received
6. In your opinion, should any services currently provided by the city be cut, eliminated, or privatized?	No Response Received	No Response Received	At this time, I don't believe cutting, eliminating, or privatizing city services would serve Sandpoint well. Our city services exist to meet the needs of our community, and when they're underfunded or outsourced, it can create gaps in quality, accountability, and trust. Instead of reducing services, I believe we should focus on making them more efficient, transparent, and responsive to the people who rely on them. Working smarter—not harder—means finding ways to improve how services are delivered without taking them away from those who need them. This is only my opinion, but my main stance is listening to my constituents and bringing their concerns forward if there are services they feel are wasteful or in need of change, whether that means cutting, eliminating, or privatizing. I hope to serve the community, and that is who I work for. I will always remain unbiased and maintain integrity.	No Response Received
7. Do you believe access to city managed water and sewer should be increased to rural communities, why or why not?	No Response Received	No Response Received	I think access to city-managed water and sewer for rural communities is a great idea—but the big question is, how are we going to pay for it? If the planning is right and the numbers add up, then it makes sense. There are real public health benefits too, like reducing strain on failing septic systems, protecting our groundwater, and making sure families have safe, reliable access to clean water. Done the right way, it could be a win for both rural residents and the city as a whole.	No Response Received
8. How do you plan on keeping a healthy reserve fund without increasing taxes?	No Response Received	No Response Received	They say the only two things guaranteed in life are death and taxes, and I take that seriously when it comes to managing taxpayer money. I don't believe the first answer should ever be raising taxes. Instead, we need to be very wise with our money—avoiding waste, keeping a high level of transparency and accountability, and planning carefully. Growth should pay its fair share through proper impact fees and developer contributions, while we also identify income streams that allow for healthy growth and development. By working smarter, not harder, and treating taxpayer money with respect, we can maintain a strong reserve fund without putting more burden on Sandpoint residents.	No Response Received

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9. What is your opinion on affordable housing? Is it something that the city should be pursuing?	No Response Received	No Response Received	Affordable housing is an important issue, and I believe the city should play a role in pursuing it thoughtfully. Housing is a basic need—right at the foundation of Maslow’s Hierarchy. Without a roof over your head, it’s nearly impossible to participate fully in our community, hold a steady job, or even pay taxes. When people have stable housing, they can contribute more to Sandpoint as a whole. I think the city’s role is to work with the right partners—developers, nonprofits, and community groups—to create opportunities for affordable housing while still protecting the character of our town.	No Response Received
10. All too often local residents feel that their public comment is not taken into consideration when decisions are made that directly affect their daily lives and their property values. What would you do differently to change the public’s perception?	No Response Received	No Response Received	Sandpoint has had situations in recent years where public comment didn’t seem to be taken into consideration, and that led to a loss of trust. Public perception, like trust, can be lost in an instant but takes time and consistency to earn back. The only way forward is by truly listening, showing through action that input matters, and proving over time that trust is something earned—not assumed.	No Response Received
11. What is your opinion on “Smart Cities” and how they apply to North Idaho?	No Response Received	No Response Received	I’ll be honest, I had to look up what Smart Cities meant. From what I’ve gathered, it’s about using technology and data to improve city services. I think technology can be a great tool to help us work smarter, but I’m also cautious about too much government overreach. In North Idaho, we value our independence and small-town character, and I don’t think that should ever be compromised. My approach would be to trust but verify—using technology when it truly benefits the community, but always keeping transparency, accountability, and privacy at the forefront.	No Response Received
12. Should the concept of “equitable outcome” be implemented as a part of the city council’s decision-making process? Why or why not?	No Response Received	No Response Received	“Equitable outcome” can mean different things to different people, and I think we need to be careful with how it’s applied. For me, the role of City Council is to make fair, transparent decisions that serve the whole community. I believe in giving everyone a fair opportunity to be heard and considered, but I’m cautious about trying to guarantee outcomes. Life, by nature, doesn’t always produce equal results, but we can and should make sure the process is fair, respectful, and consistent. My focus would be on integrity in the decision-making process, listening to all voices, and striving for solutions that help Sandpoint as a whole.	No Response Received
13. Is there anything in your personal, business, or career life that would be a conflict of interest in your ability to serve the people of this city?	No Response Received	No Response Received	No, I don’t have any personal, business, or career interests that would conflict with my ability to serve the people of Sandpoint. The only thing I would mention is that I’m one of the rare born-and-raised Sandpoint locals, and I feel a strong sense of responsibility and protectiveness over this town. That connection doesn’t create a conflict—it gives me motivation to serve with integrity, fairness, and care for the community I’ve always called home.	No Response Received

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14. What is your background and why do you feel it qualifies you for this position?	No Response Received	No Response Received	I was born and raised in Sandpoint, so I understand firsthand the values and character that make this community special. Professionally, I've built a career as a licensed professional counselor (LPC), which means I spend my days listening, problem-solving, and helping people find common ground. My clients have included people from all walks of life—those on Medicaid, veterans, first responders, men and women facing challenges of every kind. I am also an active member of Alcoholics Anonymous and have fought my own battles with substance abuse, remaining clean and sober for over 16 years. Those experiences have given me perspective, humility, and the ability to hear and respect different viewpoints. I'm not a career politician, but I believe that's a strength. I bring a commitment to integrity and a deep investment in Sandpoint's future. My background as both a professional listener and a lifelong local qualifies me to serve this community with care, balance, and accountability.	No Response Received