



SEATTLE CITY COUNCIL | DISTRICT 5

COUNCIL PRESIDENT DEBORA JUAREZ

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Seattle City Council President Debora Juarez Prepares to ‘Leave a Legacy’ of Accomplishments

“Our Uncle, Billie Frank Jr., taught us that you should ‘lead to leave.’ I’ve added my own sentiment: ‘leave a legacy.’ I believe it’s time to leave Seattle City Council, and I am proud of our legacy. It has been an honor to serve the city I love, with good people who care as deeply about it as I do.”

- Debora Juarez

Today Seattle City Council President Debora Juarez announced her decision not to seek re-election to the Seattle City Council. Juarez was elected as the first representative of District 5 in 2015, with 64% of the vote. She was re-elected in 2019 with a 60% majority. Juarez intends to complete her second four-year term as the first Indigenous Councilmember (and first Indigenous Council President) in the 154-year history of the City of Seattle when her second term concludes on December 31, 2023.

“My decision to not seek re-election this year creates an opportunity for the next generation of leadership to bring fresh, new ideas and energy to the City Council. It has been my honor to serve D5 as a voice for economic development and jobs – in the district, citywide, and for our region as a whole.”

Council President Juarez’s legacy includes successfully forging new ways to build the city’s infrastructure through community partnerships. She is known for her determined “get-it-done” approach, and her willingness to see opportunities where others see barriers. Propelled by this spirit, Council President Juarez leaves a legacy marked by the development of critical infrastructure, increased services to vulnerable communities, and consistent advocacy for equity and economic vitality.

Leaving a Seattle Legacy

As Chair of the Parks, Waterfront, Libraries, and Seattle Center committee, Juarez led the way for the city to rebuild Key Arena. Her work included bringing together the right partners in government and private industry to create a blueprint for a rebuilt arena on [Seattle Center](#) grounds; one that would attract Seattle’s first professional NHL hockey team, and suitable for an NBA expansion team.

Thanks to Juarez’s leadership, [Climate Pledge Arena](#) was funded privately - without public subsidy - and was completed after less than three years of construction at a cost of over \$600 million. The NHL’s [Seattle Kraken](#) played its first major league game there on October 23, 2021.

Climate Pledge Arena was among the first modern professional sports facilities in the nation to be built without public funding, and it's projected to benefit the public for decades to come.

A strong supporter of women's sports, Juarez consistently advocated for facilities like Climate Pledge Arena to support the 4-time national champion [Seattle Storm](#), as well as the [OL Reign](#) (which currently uses Memorial Stadium). She advocated for the construction of the [Seattle Storm Training Facility](#) in nearby Interbay. She also advocated for the [Kraken Community Iceplex](#) to include space for girls' hockey games and practices. In 2021, she was recognized as an "[OL Reign Legend](#)."

After the demolition of the viaduct and re-opening of the waterfront, Juarez led the creation of the [Waterfront Local Improvement District \(LID\)](#) to support the redevelopment of the area for public use. Projects include a pedestrian bridge extending to [Pike Place Market](#), and a significant expansion of the [Seattle Aquarium](#).

In 2019, Juarez was appointed to represent the City of Seattle on the regional [Sound Transit Board of Directors](#), which is currently at work on [West Seattle Ballard Link Light Rail](#), the largest public capital project in the city. This megaproject presents the biggest opportunity for transit-oriented development in the city's history.

After Seattle's Mayor declared a "State of Emergency on Homelessness" in 2015, Juarez supported and advocated for a doubling of the City's proposed [Housing Levy](#), which was overwhelmingly approved by 68% of voters. This spring, she will convene a Select Committee to review the Mayor's proposal for a renewal of the Levy.

In 2017, Juarez was invited by the Mayor to serve on a task force with service providers, local businesses and community leaders to develop a plan for generating dedicated revenue to fund efforts to reduce homelessness. She later served on the [King County Regional Policy Committee](#), and helped create the [Regional Homelessness Authority](#), designed to bring best available science and a region-wide approach to reducing homelessness. She was pleased to work constructively with the [Downtown Seattle Association](#) and [Chamber of Commerce](#), along with service providers and suburban cities on laying the groundwork for a county-wide approach to homelessness.

When the Seattle City Council considered taxing sweetened beverages in 2017, Juarez persuaded her colleagues to dedicate a portion of the revenue to food banks, to ensure *all* Seattleites have access to nutritious food. Juarez also repeatedly secured funding for senior meal programs.

In 2018, Juarez joined Mayor Durkan to promote expansion of the Families and [Education Levy](#) to include the [Seattle Promise Program](#), which entitles graduates of Seattle Public Schools to paid tuition at any of the Seattle Colleges.: North Seattle College, Seattle Central College or South Seattle College.

Juarez has advocated for LGBTQ rights throughout her tenure. In 2017 she launched a survey of all major medical providers in Seattle to assess their anti-discrimination policies, making sure transgender constituents have access to gender-affirming health care services.

As Chair of the Parks Committee, Juarez joined former Seattle City Councilmember Tom Rasmussen to support the [AIDS Memorial Pathway](#) at Cal Anderson Park. She also joined state

Senator Claire Wilson to advocate for the creation of Washington State's first [LGBTQ Commission](#).

Juarez also advocated for the creation of [Detective Cookie Chess Park](#), honoring SPD Detective Denise "Cookie" Bouldin for her work in south Seattle.

As a former public defender and King County Superior Court Judge, Juarez brought years of experience in the justice system to her position, and she advocated strongly for police reform and accountability. Juarez worked with former Council President Lorena Gonzalez in response to a Department of Justice consent decree to pass the [Police Accountability Ordinance](#), creating the [Community Police Commission](#), the [Office of Police Accountability](#), and the [Office of Inspector General](#).

In addition to being an advocate for accountability and reform, Juarez was one of two councilmembers who declined to take a pledge to reduce the police budget by 50%; an arbitrary, deep cut that some suggested might eventually lead to abolition of police. Seeking a more deliberate response to the civil unrest ignited by the murder of George Floyd by Minneapolis police, Juarez stated: "We need a plan, not a pledge" for real police reform.

In 2022, Juarez was asked to serve on Mayor Bruce Harrell's Chief of Police Search Committee, which ultimately selected Adrian Diaz. She also serves on the Labor Relations Policy Committee, and the City's Economic Revenue Forecast Council; both of which require careful consideration and balancing of city priorities and resources.

In 2021, Council colleagues elected Juarez to become Council President. In this capacity she has carefully steered the Legislative Department back to work in a hybrid environment that provides more flexibility and increased productivity.

As President, she sets a high bar for civility and mutual respect, as well as concise discussion at meetings. She has also boosted Mayor Bruce Harrell's "[One Seattle](#)" initiatives, fostering a new era of cooperative, collaborative work between the legislative and executive branches.

Leaving an Indigenous Legacy

Juarez is an enrolled member of the [Blackfeet Nation](#), and grew up on the Puyallup Reservation. After serving as a public defender, she served as the Executive Director of the [Governor's Office of Indian Affairs](#) for Governor Mike Lowry, and then Governor Gary Locke, focusing on economic development for Tribal communities statewide. In her capacity as an attorney, she worked on economic development projects with Tribes throughout the country before being elected to the Seattle City Council.

As a Seattle City Councilmember, Juarez was mindful of how the City of Seattle could better serve Native communities. As Chair of the Governance, Native Communities, and Tribal Governments committee, she worked with local Native organizations such as Seattle Indian Health Board ([SIHB](#)), [Chief Seattle Club](#), and [United Indians of All Tribes](#) to identify needs, and prioritize funding for services. She's also a staunch supporter of direct government-to-government relations with sovereign Tribes as facilitated in Seattle by the [Office of Intergovernmental Relations](#).

To ensure the City continues to work productively with all Indigenous communities, Juarez created the City's first [Indigenous Advisory Council](#). Composed of nine members, the IAC is

dedicated to advising the city's elected leadership and departments on the best ways to serve Native communities.

Juarez successfully advocated each year to dedicate funding to support culturally-appropriate housing and health services for Native women and men facing homelessness and violence. To improve access to health care and culturally-appropriate medical services, Juarez instigated a partnership between SIHB and North Helpline to [open a medical clinic in Lake City](#). The new clinic provides primary care services for adults and children, as well as vaccinations, testing, and diagnosis and treatment of chronic diseases for all people, while also offering culturally-attentive Indigenous medical care to ensure Native populations are properly served.

In 2018, Seattle's Urban Indian Health Institute ([UIHI](#)) published a [national report](#) on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (MMIWG) throughout the United States. The report identified Seattle as having the highest number of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women compared to other major cities, due in part to the number of cold cases that were never or never adequately investigated. Juarez authored a resolution, and [successfully launched](#) the first Native American data specialist position within the Seattle Police Department to review MMIWG cases.

This winter, Juarez will represent Seattle as she visits Washington's Congressional Delegation in Washington, D.C., and the National Congress of American Indians ([NCAI](#)) Executive Council meeting.

Leaving a D5 Legacy

The [2013 Districting initiative](#) ensured that north Seattle - originally an annexation area - would have a geographically dedicated voice on City Council. Up until the first district-based elections in 2015, many constituents believed the area never received the attention it deserved from City leadership.

As the first representative elected from District 5, Juarez - a 30-year resident - made it her priority to bridge the divide between City Hall and constituents by providing a consistent, fearless voice on the Council for the district. She made sure every mayor, department director, elected official, and staff around her knew that she proudly represented D5, and that the district is an up-and-coming place of future growth and opportunity.

To celebrate the district, Juarez welcomed all D5 residents to "Live in D5," an annual summer music event at [Hubbard Homestead Park](#) in Northgate. She also hosted "Dive in D5," a late winter music event held at The Shanty in Lake City. Juarez worked with local businesses to sponsor the events, welcomed local musicians and performers to the stage, and invited elected and community leaders from across the city to attend. Live in D5 and Dive in D5 helped solidify City recognition of District 5 neighborhoods and local community leadership.

Infrastructure challenges in District 5 included increased demand for transportation alternatives and housing. In 2015, constituents requested a Sound Transit [LINK Light Rail stop at NE 130th St.](#) to directly serve the Haller Lake, Bitter Lake, and Lake City neighborhoods. A 130th light rail stop would not only provide relief from the stop-and-go rush hour traffic on I-5 but would incentivize housing density in neighborhoods around the station. Juarez successfully persuaded the Sound Transit Board to include a station at 130th Street in the [2016 Sound Transit Ballot measure](#) passed by voters. Construction on a second platform is now underway, with opening anticipated for 2026.

“It has been a pleasure to advocate for the infrastructure necessary to make Northgate a thriving, active, and welcoming neighborhood for growing local businesses, creating jobs, and housing people of all incomes.

Juarez has called I-5 through Northgate a “Berlin Wall,” blocking east-west bicycle and pedestrian transportation in District 5. To address this, on October 2, 2021 the City of Seattle opened the [John Lewis Memorial Bridge](#); a wide, welcoming, and safe pedestrian and bike connection spanning 12 lanes of I-5 to connect North Seattle College and the Licton Springs neighborhood directly to the new [Northgate light rail station](#), Kraken Community Iceplex, and Northgate Station shops.

Looking around District 5, Juarez found not one park, road, library or community center named after an African American leader, so in 2021 she spearheaded the effort to name the new bridge after one of our nation’s most impactful civil rights leaders: the late [Congressman John Lewis](#).

“The John Lewis Bridge marks a shift in our thinking about naming infrastructure to recognize and value the contributions made by community leaders of African, Indigenous, Asian, and Latin heritage. Naming infrastructure is an opportunity to tell the complete story of how we got here as a community with the work and leadership of Black, Brown, and Indigenous people.”

When Seattle secured the Kraken NHL hockey team, the team needed a training facility. Initial proposals included locating a training facility outside of the city limits. Juarez saw opportunity in the city; specifically in District 5. She argued successfully for the [Kraken Community Iceplex](#) (KCI) to be developed at Northgate to make use of the new [Northgate light rail station](#) (opened in 2021), and to help secure jobs in District 5. This \$80 million private investment in D5 was completed in 2021 with three new rinks available for community use.

Before taking office, constituents approached Juarez to ask for her support for the complete demolition and replacement of the outdated and under-serving [Lake City Community Center](#), operated by Seattle Parks & Recreation ([SPR](#)). Completed by volunteers as a Lion’s Club project in 1957 – and later donated to the City of Seattle - the community center lacks a gym, has limited accessibility, and is not large enough to adequately serve the growth in the surrounding neighborhood.

Juarez successfully advocated for millions in city and state funding for the Lake City Community Center project. Though put on hold with all other capital projects during the pandemic, Juarez’s persistence has meant that the \$40.5 million project is now in Phase II. The project is intended to include affordable housing units above the community center.

Increased housing – including affordable housing – is also anticipated throughout District 5 with a focus on the Northgate neighborhood. Juarez successfully advocated for mixed-income housing throughout the Northgate neighborhood, including: Simon Property Group redevelopment plans for Northgate Mall, the [Seattle Housing Authority’s](#) plans for redevelopment of what is called [Northgate Commons](#) at 1st and Northgate Way, and on the campus of [North Seattle College](#).

When Juarez was approached by Lake City residents wanting to recognize the [Hayashi family](#) for their role in building Lake City, until the U.S. government shamefully imprisoned the Japanese-American family in an “internment camp” during World War II. Juarez led the effort to honor the Hayashi family by renaming 28th Ave. NE - which runs in front of the former Hayashi

family farm, and the current [Lake City Library](#) and Community Center - with the honorary name '[Hayashi Avenue](#)'.

"It is my hope that future Seattle leaders will continue to seek and recognize the leadership and commitment of local community leaders such as the Hayashi Family, and civil rights leaders, like John Lewis, who insist that our country live up to its stated values."

During her time in office, Juarez consistently secured dedicated funding for outreach services in her district to help unhoused neighbors find housing and services; starting with securing a dedicated City-employed outreach worker for Lake City. In 2020, Council voted to disband the City's Navigation Team. Juarez voted against the proposal, but the majority's vote led to District 5 losing its dedicated outreach worker. Responding to constituent requests, Juarez successfully argued for funding two outreach workers dedicated exclusively to Lake City. Their service continues to this day to supplement city-wide services.

Juarez worked to expand construction apprenticeship training at North Seattle College, and she engaged leadership from the Seattle Colleges system and apprenticeship programs for discussions on ways to make training in the trades more accessible to north Seattle youths.

To relieve student homelessness, CM Juarez worked with former North Seattle College President Warren Brown, and House Speaker Frank Chopp on a plan to build student housing on the campus.

During her tenure, Juarez also advocated for improved and expanded services for those most in need. In District 5, she developed strong partnerships with two dedicated service organizations working to ensure the most vulnerable and marginalized residents in the district would have access to basic resources to support healthy lives.

[North Helpline](#), located in Lake City, provides a food bank as well as a variety of services including eviction prevention, utility assistance, supplies and support for newborns, and resources for finding employment and securing housing. When the Greenwood Food Bank abruptly closed in 2016, Juarez worked with North Helpline to secure city support to open the [Bitter Lake Food Bank](#), located across the street from the Bitter Lake Community Center.

In the Aurora corridor, a service organization called [Aurora Commons](#) provides a compassionate, safe place for sex workers; many of whom are homeless, suffering from addiction, or being trafficked by abusers. Aurora Commons is a place to make a meal, tend to self-care, and connect with trained social workers to strategize ways to get stable housing and employment.

Juarez later directed city funding to a [medical services partnership](#) with Harborview Medical Center and Aurora Commons, supplementing the support of local donors. Juarez also secured city funding for a feasibility study and down payment for permanent space on Aurora Avenue for Aurora Commons.

"As I pass the baton to the next generation of city leaders, it is my hope that they will continue to see the work of organizations like North Helpline and Aurora Commons as part of the basic social infrastructure of our city, and fund them accordingly."

Each of these citywide and D5 successes were made possible thanks to strong, reliable leadership and support of 16 Seattle City Councilmember colleagues, 3 Seattle Mayors, and

many valued Department Directors and City staff. Success also relied on collaborative work with regional leadership such as Tribes and Indigenous-led urban organizations, the 18-member Sound Transit Board, the state legislative delegation, the Governor and federal Congressional Delegation, and many active, attentive community groups. Juarez is grateful for the help and direction provided by all these partners during her time in office.