

Tucson Metro Chamber
City Council Candidate Questionnaire

Candidate: Andres A Portela

Party Affiliation: Democrat

Ward: 6

Occupation: Deputy Director of Organizing

Education: Bachelors

What relevant experience, knowledge or perspective would you bring to the City Council that prepares you for this position?

My professional qualifications include:

Working on the federal level with Congressman Ron Barber.

Writing federal policy while working in fair housing.

Speaker for Arizona Department of Housing.

Working as a city employee and writing the commission on equitable housing and development and the office of equity.

My personal qualifications include assisting in creating a community development corporation, board member at WorldCare Tucson and Boys to Men Tucson, rebranding the Dunbar Pavilion, and community mentor for the Rites of Passage program.

The existing mayor and council are missing someone who has worked in the housing industry. My experience working on the federal, state, and local levels in housing prepares me to provide experiential guidance.

What is your vision for Tucson?

My vision for the city of Tucson is rooted in HOME (Housing, Opportunity, Mobility Justice, and Environmental Justice). With this vision, I will prioritize keeping Tucson families in their homes, focusing on economic opportunity and proximity to resources, the ability to get around the city multimodally, and a city that develops environmentally responsible.

What are your policy priorities and how do you see yourself partnering with the Chamber on these issues?

My policy priorities reside in the acronym HOME. I believe the most relevant to the Chamber resides in Opportunity. Creating a home in the heart of Tucson means that we have to provide the resources to make it all work. We can advocate for the needs identified through participatory budgeting and other community listening processes guided by community development and racial justice. Ensuring that all of those who live in Ward 6 have access to education systems, public assistance, quality housing without the risk of displacement, access to employment, and mobility, is a priority.

Working with the Chamber of Commerce begins with understanding our shared goal of workforce development while also acknowledging the wages that will keep Tucsonans here. So tapping into the visionary spirit that resides within the Chamber will allow me to grow informed by the experts. I see myself being a facilitator or vision that doesn't get slowed down by bureaucracy, so working with the Chamber, City of Tucson Office of Innovation, and the Start-Up space to sustain equitable business development.

In your opinion, what are the top three most important issues small businesses in Tucson face today?

In my opinion, workforce development or skilled workforce, a seasonal economy, and access to resources.

What is the relationship between the business community and government and how can they work together to promote a business-friendly climate?

The relationship that I saw within the Ward 1 Office was one that was disjointed and the opposite of what I would in my office. I believe that my office will serve as a space that nurtures small business as well as uses the resources that city of Tucson has to promote a business-friendly climate. My mother was a 20-year small business owner who needed access to a network that would support her growth. I believe that in community the Chamber and our office can do that.

What is the City's role in economic development and business growth?

The city should serve as a point guard or a facilitator that doesn't hold all of the resources but works with their team to accomplish the larger mission for sustained development and growth.

What role should local government play in ensuring an adequate workforce is available to meet employers' needs?

The city of Tucson plays a very delicate but important role in understanding workforce issues but working with leaders to ensure we address employer and employee needs. The first things that come to mind to be is be the "watering hole" that is trusted and can convene unions, business owners, the Chamber and other institutions such as trades and tech schools.

What specific efforts do you propose the City can implement to reduce the current level of poverty and homelessness?

This is an excellent question and something I have already incorporated within my platform and will need the most assistance from the Metro Chamber with. My way of addressing poverty is through addressing the opportunity.

I believe that for the city of Tucson, it takes a public health perspective to poverty and homelessness reduction to get actionable things done. During the Plan Tucson community conversation, our community asked the city of Tucson to focus on Public Health, and we didn't. Doing COVID, we had no choice, so we saw investment in broadband, education attainment, workforce issues, housing first infrastructure, and access to food insecurity. My goal will be to

take the current work we have begun and do it with the community's assistance to look for long-term housing solutions for our homeless community with I Am You 360, Habitat for Humanity, Developers, and city staff.

What unmet needs do you see in the area of infrastructure (roads, internet and transportation)?

The unmet needs, I believe that we can work with the Biden Infrastructure bill to fix. Example, I believe that we need to address our neighborhood infrastructure such as internet and roads through the infrastructure bill. I think leveraging those funds coupled with public private partnerships is the best course of action.

Do you support a dedicated City tax for infrastructure?

Yes

Do you support a dedicated City tax for education?

Yes

Do you support the City's participation in RTA Next?

Yes

Do you support the expansion of the Central Business District and the use of the GPLET?

No

Would you support the City of Tucson becoming a designated Sanctuary City?

Yes

Would you vocalize support for the F-35 to be stationed in Tucson?

Yes

Do you support policies that shift infrastructure improvements to developers and the private sector?

Yes