

2009 Candidate Questionnaire

SECTION I

BASIC CANDIDATE INFORMATION

1. Name as it will appear on the ballot

First Name	Middle Initial or Nickname	Last Name
Jessie	M	Israel

2. Office sought (include office, jurisdiction, position/district number):

Seattle City Council, position 6

3. Are you the incumbent? Yes No

4. How long have you resided in this district/city?

I am a third/fourth generation Seattleite. I have lived in Seattle proper for more than 20 years.

5. How long have you resided in King County?

34 years

6. Is the office sought partisan or nonpartisan? Partisan Nonpartisan

7. If partisan, please indicate party:

CAMPAIGN CONTACTS

Campaign Name: Jessie for Seattle

Address: PO Box 9100

City/State/Zip: Seattle, WA 98109

Campaign Phone: 206.443.1990

Campaign Fax: _____

Campaign E-mail: info@jessieisrael.com

Campaign Website: www.jessieisrael.com

POLITICAL BACKGROUND

1. Beginning with the most recent position, please list public offices you have held. Include positions on appointive boards or commissions.

Public Office	Elective or Appointive?	Dates Held	Leadership Role (if any)

2. If you ran for public office but were not elected, please list those races below:

Office Title	Year of Run

SECTION II

In this section, we are seeking responses that reflect the four ratings criteria: involvement, effectiveness, character, and knowledge. These are defined as follows:

- **Involvement:** What has the candidate done previously in family, neighborhood, community, volunteer work, employment or public life to suggest readiness to accomplish challenging objectives? How do these activities demonstrate readiness for the challenges unique to the office sought?
 - **Effectiveness:** Has the candidate demonstrated promise of being productive in the office sought? Has the candidate shown the ability to work with other people?
 - **Character:** Do the candidate's personal traits show the ability to take on the responsibilities of campaigning for and holding the public office she or he is seeking? Is the candidate a leader, participant or observer? Is the candidate trustworthy, reliable and candid?
 - **Knowledge:** Has the candidate demonstrated the willingness and ability to learn and adapt? Does the candidate understand the duties and challenges of the office sought? Does the candidate have a firm grasp of the issues important to his or her constituency and their potential effects?
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1. In one page or less, why are you running for this office? (Note: the interview committee will be given a copy of this statement before your interview; at the beginning of your interview you will have the opportunity to expand on this statement in any way you wish.)

Now, more than ever, we need leadership on the Seattle City Council that is innovative, inclusive and – most importantly -- decisive about getting the job done. In the next 20 years, the Puget Sound Regional Council estimates 1.7 million people will move to our region. Today, we must address issues of density, environment, transit and education with an eye on the future that our children will inherit. For the past decade I have brought my passion for building partnerships across economic and political divides to help build stronger communities.

In representing Seattle, my priority will be to build strategic partnerships across the private and public sectors to:

- **Champion strong, walkable communities**
- **Make smart investments in schools, transportation, energy efficiency and the environment**
- **Strengthen our safety net for those most in need**

These tough economic times demand that we bring out the very best of Seattle. We can do that with an engaged citizenry and thoughtful, bold leadership.

Far too often Seattle's fair-minded approach to planning has been co-opted by the forces of "No." Change starts with elected officials who remember their two primary responsibilities: to listen, and to act. On too many occasions our leaders have failed that second responsibility.

2. Describe your most important personal characteristics or traits as they relate to the office you seek.

My reputation and accomplishments show that economic and environmental goals go hand in hand – not one or the other. I'm an entrepreneur who works in government. My job is to seek and develop fresh, creative ideas that drive business and improve my organization's financial health. This isn't always easy within government but is critically necessary at the City.

Overcoming bureaucratic inertia requires me to have a foot in both the business and government camps. I need to identify business plans - sometimes scrappy ones - based on their merits, and then explain them to both constituents and government in terms they can understand and will be comfortable with. My overall purpose is finding ways to infuse entrepreneurial innovation in government, and help government employees become comfortable with it.

I'm a dyed-in-the-wool entrepreneur, who happens to find her calling in civil service. It's not just that I love government; I love the idea of dynamic, efficient, responsive government.

I specialize in imagining and implementing non-traditional partnerships geared to increase government efficiency and private investment. I am a true believer that a combination of creativity, efficiency and technology should trump bureaucracy - a notion reflected in every project I take on.

I am a tireless government entrepreneur and only person in this race who has actually transformed government to work harder for citizens. I bring a critical skill, experience and outlook to the Council at a time when we must retool how government serves us. I am unique in that my experience with King County forging public-private partnerships has given me perspective on how government can and should operate. Over 5 years at King County, I have worked to convert Parks into an efficient, performance-driven organization – ensuring that 25,000 acres of open space remains open to the public even during hard fiscal times. I've earned the sole endorsement of Washington Conservation Voters and spent much of my life working to build sustainable communities, protect open space, clean air and clean water. I pledge that I'll bring that same ethic and fight for smart environmental investments to the City.

A family friend in the real estate business once said, "Among leaders, there are deal breakers and there are deal makers." Some look at a problematic situation, and only see the imperfect. Other leaders can look at problematic situations, break them down, and fix them. I have a proven track record of being the latter and getting to "yes".

3. Please describe, in sufficient detail, one to three accomplishments or contributions of which you are most proud. These examples should illustrate skills and capabilities you think apply to the office you are seeking. These accomplishments may have occurred at any time in your personal, professional, or public life.

King County Parks – Business Plan Implementation:

At King County Parks, I am responsible for helping to build an entrepreneurial, performance-driven governmental organization that continues to enhance communities and our regional quality of life, even during tight fiscal times.

Specifically, I have been tasked with business development and negotiating corporate partnerships that increase amenities & revenue generation while decreasing Parks' reliance on the County general fund. In managing corporate partnerships, my job is to provide an interface where government red tape becomes invisible to partners. Due to these efforts, King County Parks now brings in 25% of its operating budget via business revenues. Since joining King County, I've worked to meet the public's expectation for innovative government – exceeding revenue goals and building support with media, park user groups, and corporate community. I have been on point for breakthrough projects including:

\$610,000 5 year naming right for Group Health Velodrome

\$100,000 1 year naming right for MSN Wi-Fi Hotspots

\$250,000 1 year trails project with Starbucks

\$550,000 Starbucks Ultimate Park Makeover of White Center Heights Park

\$1.3 Million bi-annual lease agreement with Cirque de Soleil & related parking revenue (2006, 2008)

Conversation of public facilities to take advantage of concession opportunities (that also meet a public benefit and need)

Non-mandated services are going to be increasingly more challenged in the coming years. Government must come to terms with the reality that if we do not succeed in meeting revenue or efficiency targets, then critical services (Parks, Human Services, transit) will no longer exist to serve the public.

We must embrace non-traditional ways of doing business and listen carefully to citizens and community groups to ensure that public-private partnerships reflect the aesthetic and values of our great City. This sort of value from government is not only helping us to fill the budget gap but also, to build public trust that the City is worth continued support.

White Center Community Enhancement Initiative: Community Learning Space at Lakewood Park

As the County General Fund dwindles and communities and leaders are deciding the future of urban unincorporated areas like White Center, I chose to leverage what resources we have in order to reduce vandalism, build community and invest in critical resources. Across King County, by encourage community-based organizations with the capacities to construct a successful project we have been able to leverage \$9 Million into \$50 worth of new community assets. Among these projects, one near and dear to my heart in White Center is the new Community Learning Space at Lakewood Park. In a unique public/private partnership with the Technology Access Foundation, TAF is leveraging \$2 million in County funding to build \$13 million state of the art Community Center for 21st Century Skills at Lakewood Park to serve the most culturally diverse audience in KC. TAF will be on-point for fundraising for capital construction, designing, building and then most importantly – operating - this Community Center for the good of the public over the next 30 years. This is a tremendous leveraging of public funds in a way unlike the normal “business as usual” for government.

City Year Seattle King County:

I am proud to serve as a board member of City Year Seattle/King County (approx. budget = \$1.4M), a local Americorps program which brings young adults from around the country to volunteer in Seattle for one year and work with local children tutoring, mentoring and providing safe places during out-of-school hours. In my time on the board, we have successfully brought the organization to consistently operate in the black and generate overwhelming support from the private sector. Due to our success, we are now currently looking to expand programs in a strategic and targeted way to reach Seattleites who are most at risk of getting left behind.

4. Please list or describe current and past activities in the community in which you have acquired skills that relate to the office you seek. Include your role in the activity and the year(s) in which you were involved. Involvement consists of many areas such as family, neighborhood, community, employment, or public life.

Jessie Israel's family history goes back more than 100 years in Seattle and the Pacific Northwest on both [Sephardic](#) and Norwegian sides of her family. She has lived and worked in many of Seattle's neighborhoods and now resides in a cute red house in Ballard.

Jessie has a fifteen year track record of bringing together groups to invest in local community development, environmental and equity issues. She has trained around the world on building public-private partnerships & developing sustainable communities.

In 2002, after the passage of I-747, King County Parks was left with a potential 80% budget cut and considering mothballing 25,000 acres of open space. Since then, Jessie has been on point to help reshape [King County Parks](#) into an entrepreneurial, performance-driven governmental organization. This transformation allows parks to generate non-tax revenue and ensure green space remains open, even during tight fiscal times. Jessie serves on the Parks management team with operating revenue of more than \$20 million & 150 permanent employees. She directly oversees Parks business revenue target encompassing 25% of overall operating revenues. Under her supervision, community partnerships have allowed Parks to build many new facilities by leveraging available capital investment dollars. Through this program, an impressive \$50 million dollars worth of new parks facilities will be coming online over the next several years due to the strategic investment of \$6million in public dollars.

Immediately prior to joining King County, Jessie was recruited to manage a start-up non-profit organization out of the University of Washington – The [Center for Women & Democracy](#). Over two-years, she increased the organization's budget exponentially. During this time, programs broadened reach to thousands in the United States, Morocco & Cuba featuring notable figures including Gloria Steinem, Madeleine Albright, Sen. Maria Cantwell, Gov. Christine Gregoire, Mavis Leno & Fidel Castro.

Jessie has trained in English and French on communications, political strategy and sustainable development. In 2002, she was part of a high-profile team with the National Democratic Institute training candidates for Morocco's national election—resulting in historic jump from 1% to 10% female representation in Moroccan Parliament.

In the 1990's as a consultant, Jessie worked with neighborhood planning groups to establish the [Central Area, Eastlake, Denny Triangle, Wallingford neighborhood plans](#).

In 2006, she was named one of the Puget Sound Business Journal's 40 Under 40, one of the region's "rising business stars who are under the age of 40 and possess a certain passion that drives their business and community involvement to a new level." Jessie's work at King County Parks has also brought in several national awards for good-government and innovation in the public sector.

Israel has a long history of community service with [City Year Seattle/King County](#), [National Women's Political Caucus of Washington](#), [National Democratic Institute - Morocco](#), [Washington Women United](#), [BaseCamp Seattle](#) and the [United Nations 4th World Conference on Women in Beijing China](#).

Jessie spent more than two years as an agro-forestry volunteer with the [United States Peace Corps](#) in rural [Guinea, West Africa](#). She has a BA in Political Science from [Seattle University](#).

"KingCounty's 25,000-acre park system is one of the largest in the country. Injecting a measure of efficiency and self-reliance into the system was no small challenge. But it is happening. The value of this kind of creativity cannot be overstated. Parks are not a mandated county service, yet no community would be complete without one. KingCounty's meaningful development of its parks sustains funding and keeps them a treasured public amenity." - Seattle Times editorial about Jessie's work transforming King County Parks, June 16, 2006

5. Please describe the duties of the office you seek. Which are the most important duties and why?

The most important responsibility of civil service leaders today is to bridge the inspiration gap. In general, government suffers neither a shortage of technology or resources. What we lack is a culture where risk taking is encouraged – and coupled with accountability.

At a time of perpetual budget crisis, there first needs to be an understanding by our City Council that there IS a funding and economic crisis and leadership to mobilize unified political will to engage community leaders and coalitions. Through legislation, budgets and the mandating of business plans across departments, we must encourage a restructuring of organization & culture within government to meet the current service needs of citizens in a grim fiscal reality. We also must ensure Seattle is poised to jump on opportunities that will be critical in meeting our long term goals for growth and economic prosperity.

Land use, utility, budget, neighborhood and transportation decisions made by our Council over the next four years will define Seattle for a generation to come.

It is incumbent upon legislators to create a solid policy direction that encourages entrepreneurial, performance-driven agencies that embraces nontraditional ways of doing business where needed. In fact, I would argue that this is the only way we will solidify public trust that the City and its services are worth continued support.

King County Parks' staff and management have transformed themselves with a cultural shift toward more businesslike government. I fully recognize that while I worked every day to implement these shifts, they would not have been possible without the broad support of elected leaders and citizen groups. I see that same leadership is now needed at the City.