

I've long believed real progress happens here at the local level, where we live in the same city and can see the same reality from different perspectives. I saw this as a policy analyst and rep for Martin Heinrich back when he was a city councilor. I see it, feel it, love it now as a candidate. This is where real conversations, #realtalk, and actual dialogue happens. That feeling, the daily experience of dialogue with people on the street, is what kept me going through the last forty days in the summer heat.

In the five weeks of the qualifying period, I've asked over 1000 people some form of the questions:

"How long have you lived here? What have you seen change?"

"What is your biggest issue? What do you think the city needs to work on?"

The answers have varied,

From the specific:

- *Street racing on Lomas keeps me awake at night.*
- *My car just got broken into - again.*
- *Don't let the city put a detention pond in our park.*

To the bigger, heavier truths:

- *My kids had to leave NM to get a good job.*
- *There are so many homeless people now.*
- *We're going to run out of water. The Rio Grande is now the Rio Pequeño.*
- *I might not make rent next month.*

I've heard the same themes, the same issues repeated: homelessness, property crime, lack of opportunity, sustainability.

The interconnections are obvious. The solutions are complex, and beyond what a single city councilor can solve. But the questions I ask back - to myself, to residents, to community leaders - matter more than any off-the cuff proposals and ideas I can give at someone's door. I think about *root causes*.

- Property crime and theft is a symptom - of poverty, inequality, untreated addiction. Where is the support for breaking the addiction cycle? The jobs paying living wages and giving purpose, stability, community to those able to work?
- Homelessness is preceded by the state of being housed. The injustice of the housing market is causing further housing insecurity, which leads to desperation turning to escape in addiction, poverty, and the eventual state of homelessness. Letting homelessness persist normalizes it. [Functional Zero homelessness](#) is possible in Albuquerque.
- A lack of opportunity when we have 5000 high-paying tech jobs coming to town? Netflix, Intel, the Orion Center - we need local people taking those positions, with direct pathways to apprenticeships, on-the-job training, and long-term employment. Anyone of my generation and the next should have a compelling choice to stay in Albuquerque.

- For all the new infrastructure we need to build: union apprenticeship is higher education. The trades bring dignified work and wages. My family and my life taught me that.

Are these root causes complete? No. They are starting thoughts. They are the beginning of questions to those already working hard on these issues. And they form the prompts for this round of my Listening Tour, where I listen, learn, and go deeper on proposals for change.

One thing I've learned: our firefighters, public servants, and social workers are tired. They work harder and harder, reacting to increasing symptoms. I met with the firefighters at their union, our local IAFF 244. On the streets, they see more assaults from pent-up stress, fires from negligence, and emergencies from a city still recovering from a pandemic's many tolls on health. The compassion of our first responders is immense. They struggle to find time, resources, and partners in government to create long-term solutions.

I aim to support them with new initiatives, budgets, and impact bonds. We have new federal relief and infrastructure funds coming our way. Investing in long-term solutions is win-win-win: for our public servants, our people and our community - and to reduce our budget, now spent on expanding recurring costs to react to symptoms.

My final thought-in-progress:

Building social infrastructure - the foundation of a strong, inclusive economy - means addressing root causes. Investing in the long-term, in our people, makes inclusive and shared development a natural part of our future.

I'll share more thoughts on what an "Inclusive Economy" means for Albuquerque in the next edition of Field Notes.

In solidarity with my city,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Travis Kellerman', with a stylized, cursive script.

Travis Kellerman