

The Urbanist
Seattle City Council Endorsement Questionnaire
Debora for District 5

- 1. Do you support Seattle’s commitment to Vision Zero, and what legislative strategies would you seek to implement the goal of reducing serious injuries and fatalities on our streets to zero within the next decade? Do you think legislative strategies are sufficient to achieve this goal?**

I support Vision Zero and have voted for its actions, including reducing speed limits across Seattle. I will continue to vote for policies that come before the council to reduce traffic deaths. In addition, I have voted for funding other traffic calming projects, like “home zones” and also worked directly with SDOT to add traffic calming devices to streets in District 5 that were dangerous because of excessive speeding. Legislative strategies are a start and major component, but we also need to have a cultural shift around how people drive.

- 2. Do you support the completion of the current bicycle master plan? If so, what strategies, both political and financial, do you propose to ensure its completion?**

Yes, I support the bicycle master plan. It’s important to make sure that when we build major capital projects and invest in infrastructure, that we address the needs of bicyclists in the planning and development stages. If the plan requires modifications, all voices need to be heard and the City should include neighbors, bicyclists, businesses, and other stakeholders.

- 3. The current Seattle Transportation Benefit District funding bus services and transit access expires at the end of 2020. Should it be extended and do you envision any changes to the programs it funds?**

Yes, I would like to see specific funding for electric buses. In many parts of my district, we need to have more routes and an increase in frequency in order to reduce the number of cars on the road. I anticipate that we will need to address two other issues: 1) ensure that we have enough space to park buses when they are not in use and also

2) hiring and training enough union bus drivers to meet the transits demands for quality service.

4. The Move Seattle levy expires at the end of 2024. What features should the next transportation capital project levy have? What lessons do you take away from the way the current levy has gone?

Having SDOT write a new workplan after reassessing the progress of the Move Seattle was a good first step to knowing about the shortfalls with projects and levy funding. That being said, the City must find a way to keep promises made to the voters who approved the levy funding. My district has the most used bus line in the entire City- the RapidRide E line- because of its efficiency, reliability, and it is easy to use. Seattleites who live in other areas of the City deserve to have similar bus lines. Expanding the RapidRide lines must be a top priority and I would support redirecting funding from lower priority levy projects to complete the RapidRide lines. North Seattle has been ignored for decades and severely lacks sidewalks. Move Seattle provided funding for several maintenance and new sidewalk projects in D5. I helped fund 12 sidewalk projects in the last year, including adding sidewalks on Greenwood and a new crossing on Lake City Way, but there is much more that needs to be done in a future levy.

5. Do you support the construction of the Center City Connector streetcar and why/why not?

I can neither support nor oppose this project at this time because I do not have enough information. The Mayor's office and SDOT are working on this and bringing more information to the City Council. I look forward to learning more.

6. What considerations should inform the discussion around finding additional funding for a light rail tunnel to West Seattle? To Ballard?

It is premature for me to answer this question. Since I am a member of the Sound Transit board, I will wait until I see the outcome of the studies we commissioned on this topic, including the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS.) Ideally, we are able to stay within the funding constraints of ST3, as passed by voters. Proponents of tunnel options for Ballard and West Seattle have indicated there may be a way to find cost-competitive solutions, which I am open to reviewing.

7. For what purposes should impact fees on development be used?

State law only allows for impact fees to be used for four things: fire protection, parks, streets, and school facilities. We do not currently have impact fees in Seattle. We know that new development often puts a strain on city resources. As such, one of the reasons I voted for MHA was the requirement of developers to dedicate new units for affordable housing or contribute to developing affordable housing elsewhere in the city.

8. Do you support imposing additional fees on ridesharing services like Uber and Lyft?

Private companies are offering many new transportation services, from app-based ridesharing to car/bike/scooter share and more. These private providers operate in the public right-of-way, but operate within different standards of accountability and transparency than public agencies, in terms of data sharing, accessibility, and equitable service coverage.

I need to learn more about how much these fees would cost, where the money would be directed, and how we impose a fee without negatively affecting marginalized communities, workers, and disabled people.

9. Do you support a congestion pricing program downtown? If so, what considerations should be made when setting up such a program?

Congestion pricing is an interesting and innovative tool to reduce emissions along our rich transportation spine. I am still examining the racial and equity impacts on labor, immigrants, families, disenfranchised communities, and people living with disabilities. Congestion pricing should focus on congestion, emissions, equity, and reinvesting revenue into more transportation choices for all of Seattle.

10. How do you feel about the current allocation of street space in Seattle? Under what circumstance would you support converting general purpose lanes to other uses?

Bus-only lanes are a proven solution to traffic and I would support this conversion where it makes sense and would have the most impact on congestion.

11. What approaches would you take to ensure that emerging mobility options (bikeshare, rideshare, e-scooter, etc) are implemented in a manner that increases access to our mobility hubs?

Seattle residents need more first/last mile connections to our mobility hubs. We have two light rail stations opening in D5 in the next few years and we need to solve the issue of connecting people to transit. The City should work directly with these emerging companies to ensure access for bicyclists, and pedestrians, and bus and light rail commuters throughout Seattle.

12. What lessons did you take away from the head tax vote/debate? Would you support bringing back the head tax?

Legislation needs collaboration between legislators, the community, and stakeholders affected by the changes. It needs time and cooperation to develop. Any progressive tax must be implemented correctly and the Council needs to work to insulate the City (and taxpayers) from the cost and stress of a prolonged lawsuit that could strike it down. We need to address income inequality, the impact of “big business” has on our city and limited resources, and finding a way toward a solution. We as a city have proven in the past we can tackle tough issues, build consensus, and do the right thing.

13. What responsibilities do you think that corporations doing business in Seattle have to the city, and are they meeting them? If not how would you get them to do so?

I believe the city must work with the business community to address our challenges and would find ways to partner with them. I created the D5 Business Coalition, so that I could hear from business directly, engage them on how they can help the city, and work to ensure they are a part of the solutions that are workable for both employers and workers in Seattle. I believe we need to find new, more progressive sources of revenue that ensure those who can most afford to pay their fair share do so in Washington.

14. If you had been on council at the time it was considered, would you have voted for Mandatory Housing Affordability, Seattle’s version of inclusionary zoning? In what ways did the final approved plan differ from your ideal policy?

I was very proud to cast a vote for MHA. Private companies and developers benefit from our growing economy. They have a role in ensuring new development provides additional affordable housing units so we are not displacing low income people in Seattle. Such entities should participate in the Mandatory Housing Affordability (MHA) program; I prefer performance rather than payment. MHA was a first step to creating more density and affordable housing; I look forward to expanding it to other areas in the future.

15. Do you support transit-oriented development? If so, how do you ensure TOD is affordable and doesn't displace communities around new transit infrastructure?

Yes, I support transit-oriented development. A major component of new TOD must be mixed income and multi-family housing to prevent displacement. Historically, housing and transit policies were designed to create pockets of poverty and led to racist zoning. We can undo these historical wrongs and prevent displacement by making sure there is affordable housing and the opportunity for neighbors to stay in areas that are being developed alongside transit.

16. What do you think is the most important strategy or set of strategies Seattle can pursue to make the city affordable to live in? What assumptions about affordability do those strategies rely on?

High-quality, affordable childcare ought to be considered required infrastructure just like schools, roads, hospitals, and other institutions our city needs. Childcare is exceedingly expensive and difficult to find near home and work. I have coined the term "transit-oriented childcare" as I am collaborating with a few for-profit developers to add a childcare facility to the area before the arrival of light rail. Having accessible childcare is crucial for families to thrive in Seattle.

We can also expand our public/private partnerships to build more affordable housing, similar to LIHI's Tony Lee House and the Compass Broadview.

17. What would you do as a city council member to address evictions and the displacement they cause, particularly in communities of color?

The landmark eviction reform passed in the legislature is an important first step. We should look into additional protections for families facing eviction, rent stabilization and

preventions for rental price gouging. We need better legal assistance for low income people facing violations, disputes, and the threat of eviction, funding for enforcement for renter protections and transitional housing for families and victims of domestic violence. We should be committed to creating a path to rental-ship, affordability, and home ownership.

18. Do you support the proposed creation of a city-county authority to address homelessness in Seattle/King County? If so, what steps would you take to support it on city council?

I am pleased that the county and city will create a Regional Governance Authority, set to be in place in August 2019. The RGA will be in the form of a Public Development Authority (PDA.) King County will propose a charter to create the RGA and the city and county will negotiate an interlocal agreement to determine Seattle's participation. We know this is a regional issue and need Seattle and King County to work together to improve services. I currently serve on the City's Select Committee on Homelessness and the King County Regional Policy Committee where this is being developed.

We are an innovative city and there are a myriad of solutions for our biggest challenge. I also believe we can start to address homelessness by focusing on the positive impacts made by small, local non-profits working in our community.

19. What causes people to experience homelessness in the City of Seattle?

There are many factors that cause people to become homeless, but the top reasons in Seattle include the lack of affordable housing, substance abuse disorders, and untreated mental illness. Rising income inequality means that people are housing insecure and more likely to end up homeless. We have seen enormous economic growth in the past decade, yet it has not been felt positively by everyone.

20. What, specifically, should the city do to address racial disparities in housing opportunity?

We must fix the historical wrongdoings of redlining. We need to update our zoning laws in order to address some of the racial disparities in housing opportunity.

21. How would you define “historic character”, and in what ways do you feel your definition is inclusive of Seattle’s indigenous communities?

Colonizers stole the land of the indigenous Coastal Salish and pushed them outside of what is now the City of Seattle. The legacy of colonization has not yet included the historical trauma of Native people. There is not yet a definition of historic character that is inclusive of Seattle’s indigenous community.

22. What approaches would you consider to ensure that multi-generational, affordable housing is located in high-opportunities neighborhoods?

We need to build the “missing middle” including ADUs, DADUs, and townhouses to fill the gap between high density apartment buildings and single-family homes.

23. What role should Safe Seattle and like-minded groups play in our public discourse?

We support all those that wish to exercise their first amendment right to free speech. Free speech is a cornerstone of democracy and true public discourse.

24. To what extent has pursuing racial equity been a priority in your work to date? How do you plan to continue that work on city council?

As a Native American and Latinx woman, pursuing racial equity has always been a personal and professional commitment and sacrifice. As such, I represented tribes throughout my legal career, helped establish both the Washington State Hispanic Bar Association and Native American Bar Association, served as an advisor to two governors on Native issues, and more.

I have continued this work at City Hall and added “Native Communities” to my committee’s name--Civic Development, Public Assets, and Native Communities--to make sure that we have a voice at Seattle City Hall and to include a focus on native issues. I specifically did this to facilitate government to government relationships between the City and the sovereign tribal nations within our state.

25. What approaches do you feel are most-important to ensuring that programs, policies, and practices are prioritized in historically underserved and underrepresented communities, who may not have the loudest voice in a public forum?

Our region's obligation to ensure that we are assisting the most vulnerable and historically disenfranchised: children, elders, and immigrants. I have led on these issues in my district. For example, I am fighting for a new Lake City Community Center, with a focus on children, elders, and immigrants. I have secured \$18 million for this project and hope to get more dollars for it. I was able to deliver funding in the last budget for Sound Generations to run a program for lunches for East African elders, since there is not a senior center or cultural center for them in my district. The new community center will have a full-size commercial kitchen to accommodate meals for seniors and cooking classes for kids. I am hoping to also add a day care center in the community center, as well as building a childcare facility near the light rail station coming to Northgate.

26. What are ideas for progressive revenue sources for transportation and housing that do not burden low-income communities?

My district has historically voted for and supported a statewide income tax. For that reason, I supported the Seattle City Council's attempt to create a citywide income tax, knowing that it faces significant legal hurdles. I think the state legislature should defend the ability of municipalities to fund their priorities through local taxation while also ensuring reliable support for priorities such as education.