

# The Urbanist Seattle City Council Endorsement Questionnaire

## Joshua Newman, D4

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?
  - a. I unequivocally support Vision Zero. Human life is my most precious value, and we must prioritize the safety of all Seattleites. The City Council can no longer assume that the current and future Mayors will prioritize pedestrian, cycling, and transit principles. The Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plans, and a city-wide expansion of bus lanes should be reestablished through legally binding legislation. Political action and support will be required to ensure the transition away from cars supremacy, but our elected representatives must show leadership on this issue.
  
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?
  - a. If you mean the previous Master Plan that was established during previous mayoral administrations, yes I do. I objected to the revised and cut Master Plan the Durkin Administration is proposing. As stated in the first question, I believe that the bicycle master plan must be established as a legal requirement for us.

However, many of my neighbors are seniors, parents, or not particularly active. They are calling for a dramatic expansion in public transportation. We need protected Bike Lanes (PBL), but on Seattle narrow roads, we need to study which car-alternatives are the most effective at getting people out of their cars. I suspect PBL yield a higher return on investment (ROI) of cars reduced per dollar invested, but a network of bus-only lanes may invite more people out of their cars.

To accomplish this, I would redirect SDOT spending towards the Bicycle Master Plan and similar bus lanes. We must also avoid spending \$400 million enabling car-dedicate infrastructure such as the Magnolia Bridge.

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?
  - a. It is critical we extend Seattle's Transportation Benefits District. Until Washington State and the federal government refocus their respective transportation departments, Seattle and King County must prioritize car-alternative solutions. This is true both to reduce carbon emissions and to create real alternatives to automobile congested streets. A comprehensive review of the TBD's spending is a matter of good-governance, and spending should be refocused to provide the greatest reduction of car-trips.
4. The Move Seattle levy expires as 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?
  - a. The next Move Seattle Levy should focus on a dramatic city-wide expansion of bus only lanes and implementing an Area Congestion Pricing program in Downtown Seattle and South Lake Union. The next levy must provide more accurate and precise planning, while the accounting must be more rigorous, to ensure the city government can deliver on its promises
5. Do you support the construction of the Center City Connector streetcar and why/why not?
  - a. Absolutely. Fixed rail infrastructure provides significantly higher capacity than general buses, and because of its permanence and predictable route, it attracts greater private investments nearby. The real comes from connecting the South Lake Union and Capitol Hill Streetcars. The network effects of this will dramatically reshape transportation in Seattle.
6. What considerations should inform the discussion around finding additional funding for a light rail tunnel to West Seattle? To Ballard?
  - a. The primary consideration should be additional ridership, followed by race and social justice equity, and finally, the long-term political and financial viability of the system. Based on these priorities, a tunnel to West Seattle does not make sense. The estimated \$700 million for that tunnel could extend the line south or mitigate the construction impacts in the International District. A tunnel under the ship canal in Ballard is expensive, however, is probably the right design give the local constraints and future system expansion.

7. For what purposes should impact fees on development be used?
  - a. Impact fees should be used to pay for infrastructure investments that enable our larger and growing population.
8. Do you support imposing additional fees on ridesharing services like Uber and Lyft?
  - a. Perhaps. It's unclear if rideshare services reduce car ownership, or increase congestion. They certainly provide low-barrier employment for many immigrants. However, they are also profit-seeking corporations that haven't earned my sympathy. Our transportation systems are in a state of transition and we need to devise policies carefully.
9. Do you support a congestion pricing program downtown? If so, what considerations should be made when setting up such a program?
  - a. Absolutely, specifically a Cordon or Area Pricing Program. The Seattle Department of Transportation has done an exemplary job laying out the research and options in its Phase 1 Summary Report. The objective is clearly reducing congestion while mitigating impacts on vulnerable communities. I will follow the lead of this report which leverages Seattle's Race and Social Justice Toolkit, while keeping in mind the objective of moving people and freight throughout 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?
  - a. Seattle, and the entire United States, currently allocates too much space to automobile usage relative over alternative transportation. Under most circumstances, I am comfortable converting general purpose and parking lanes to transit only lanes or protected bike lanes. Some very wide residential streets, such as NE 75th Street east of 40th Avenue NE, in District 4, should be considered for green stormwater infrastructure and narrowing.
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?
  - a. Continue with dockless vehicle shares and allow the private market to experiment and invest during this time of transition. The government is not in a position to accurately predict which new transportation technology will be successful in Seattle. The city government should create a level playing field for these different technologies and companies, while maintaining a hierarchy of safety with pedestrians at the top, and personally owned automobiles at the bottom.

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

- a. The head tax was an example of poor legislation and tax policy. A future payroll tax that is broad-based and equitably implemented should fund additional infrastructure needs Seattle residents and businesses. The Seattle business community is not solely responsible for, and should not be expected to solely fund programs for the Homelessness Crisis. Homeowners must recognize and take responsibility for their impacts due to Exclusionary Zoning.

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?

- a. We must first acknowledge that our state and federal tax codes are regressive, and they have allowed the wealthy and corporations to avoid paying their fair share of taxes for at least 40 years. This is not a problem we can solve at the municipal level, but we can mitigate some of these effects. Our business community should prioritize paying employees a living wage. They have started down that path via the \$15 minimum wage, and I expect the business community to continue supporting a strong minimum wage policy.

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?

- a. Yes, I would have voted for MHA. I would prefer a higher In Lieu of Fee to encourage more developers to build affordable housing on site, or generated greater revenue to more build housing in less-expensive parts of the city. I also wish that the original HALA Grand Compromise on SFH Zoning had been included, and was not delayed.

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?

- a. Absolutely. Sound Transit should stop wasting millions of dollars in publicly subsidized car storage near rail stations. It is unfortunate, but some displacement will of communities will occur. Dramatic transportation improvements will rearrange our cities, but we must make the changes for the good of our entire city and region. Local governments can provide moving assistance and funds to people who are displaced, but low density residential areas must give way to transit-oriented development with strong bus connections.

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?

- a. We must allow up to four units on residential lots throughout the 75% of residential Seattle that is currently zoned for single-family homes. We also need to eliminate the limits on non-related roommates living in a single structure. Finally, we need to re-legalized boarding and single room hotels that used to provide affordable housing two single working individuals. These assume that the private market will be able to provide housing for the majority of our population, and historically that has been true. However, there will be individuals who do not or cannot compete in the private market, and it is up to the government to build public housing to ensure all of our neighbors have somewhere to live that is safe, sanitary, and reliable.

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

- a. I'm heartened by the strengthening of state eviction laws thanks to the work of 43rd District Representative Nicole Macri. The city government must work to improve its own processes and ability to ensure renters receive protection in a timely manner.

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?

- a. Absolutely. Homelessness is a regional issue and we must address it at the regional level. I would fund those efforts and pass binding legislation that directs the city to focus its efforts and funds to the King County and Seattle City partnership.

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

- a. People are homeless for a variety of reasons including drug addiction, mental illness, fighting with a roommate, breaking up with their partner, their sexual or gender orientation, and just bad luck. But locally, the primary driver of homelessness is the dramatic rise in rent over the last 10 years in King County.

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

- a. Seattle needs to eliminate the zoning that has propped up the explicitly racist red-lining zoning that was created in the 1920's, and evolved into our current zoning. Defending a system of white supremacy, is defending white supremacy itself, and betrays Seattle's values.

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

- a. We cannot talk about the historic character of Seattle and also discuss the indigenous communities. The United States committed ethnic cleansing, and in some cases, genocide of the indigenous communities. This caused the near-total destruction and replacement of those communities. There is virtually no continuity between them. Therefore "historic character" refers only to the agrarian and industrialized American society that has been established since then.

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

- a. Seattle needs to remove the exclusionary zoning and eliminate laws that make it difficult to establish co-ops and multi-generational housing. Legislation is needed that explicitly allows and encourages them. Expanding the zoning will allow private market and individual homeowners to create the housing solutions that work best for them.

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

- a. All residents of Seattle are entitled to have their political voice heard. As a tall athletic white presenting male, my sense of safety is different from my short, older female neighbor. Even though we perceive threats differently, hers is not wrong. However, no one should demon our most vulnerable neighbors. It is cruel and leads to ineffective, wasteful, and destructive policies.

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?

- a. I have worked to intentionally promote and create opportunities for female and people of color within my white and male dominated corporation. I have sought out to include women in meetings that would otherwise be entirely male, and have asked teammates to do the same

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?
- a. We must consider policies through an equity lens from the beginning of the process. Seattle Race and Social Justice Toolkit is a powerful tool for this, and the Phase 1 Report on Seattle Congestion Pricing is an excellent example of this process done well.
26. What are ideas for progressive revenue sources for transportation and housing that do not burden low-income communities?
- a. Public housing will be critical to providing homes for the small percentage of our communities that cannot find housing via the private market. I've proposed and called for a \$1 fee for bus-rides on King County Metro and eventually, other public transportation systems.