

The Urbanist Seattle City Council Endorsement Questionnaire

SHAUN SCOTT – DISTRICT 4

- **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 Seattle’s commitment to Vision Zero and believe we have not seen enough leadership from both the City Council and the Mayor’s Office on reducing preventable pedestrian deaths. The question before us is which candidate has the requisite experience and backbone to build the political will for a city with safer streets. We can do this by amplifying the voices and stories of those who have felt unsafe on our streets—rather than cater to those who want to continue to see inaction on this question, we need to spotlight those who need change the most. By doing so, we can build compact, interconnected city squares where Seattleites are less car dependent. We can partner with the Office of Economic Development to identify areas where small business can help encourage a less car-centric culture. We can design safer streets with more speedbumps and roundabouts. We can manage speeds, particularly in primarily residential areas. And we can elect City Council officials that show leadership on this issue—not just ones who will take the right stances on paper, only to fold under pressure.

- **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?**

I was proud to stand in solidarity at Seattle City Hall with Safe 35th activists (not to be confused with Save 35th, their decidedly un-urbanist, regressive counterparts who have started a PAC to support Alex Pedersen) when they packed City Hall to protest Mayor Durkan’s decision to dismantle the 35th Avenue bike lanes. I have been endorsed in this race by 2017 Mayoral runner-up Cary Moon, in part because of my commitment to seeing action on completing the bike master plan. And I’m happy to have the support, in this race, of biking activist Laurel Kunkel.

As part of my campaign's comprehensive Seattle Green New Deal—first announced in March 2019—I have called for using debt financing, real estate speculation and land value taxes, and congestion pricing to pay for, among other things, a comprehensive biking network. Many candidates in this race are advancing a regressive vision for Seattle that includes appealing to “historic character” to take no action on building bike lanes. The irony is that Seattle was once celebrated, in the early 20th century, for its comprehensive bike trails. Let's use the best aspects of our past to bolster us into the future.

- **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?**

The Seattle TBD should absolutely be extended, and expanded. The 2015 TBD paid for additional bus service with a \$60 vehicle licensing fee and a .1% increase in the sales tax. I would like to see a greater licensing fee levied on luxury, gas guzzler vehicles and other high-end consumer luxuries that are tied directly to environmental decay. We can also capitalize on the expiration of the TBD to fund a future ST4 campaigns. Building the political will for an expansion of the TBD will not be difficult; standing up to those who will resist the reform will. My campaign has showed me that the majority of Seattleites and District 4 residents care deeply about the environment, and have been waiting for candidates champion climate justice. The upcoming 2020 TBD will be a great opportunity for the next councilmember from District 4 to be that leader.

- **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?**

The next transportation capital project levy can be an inspiring example of what happens when public resources are used to take far-reaching action on climate justice. The next transportation levy should feature investments in public housing—perhaps the establishment of a “land bank” that will give the city latitude to purchase land in the city for housing and transportation-related projects. The current Move Seattle levy has fallen short not in design, but in implementation; specifically, in not having a mayor or City Council fight hard enough to put plans that voters approved at the ballot box into action. Seattleites have had a long, proud tradition of electing to tax ourselves—often with regressive taxes—for the public good. We do so with the trust that our elected

officials will steward and properly-manage the projects we approve. The next Move Seattle levy will need leaders on the City Council who are prepared to hold any future mayor accountable for not taking real action on climate change.

- **Do you support the construction of the Center City Connector streetcar and why/why not?**

I support the construction of the Center City Connector because redundancies in transit are a good thing. In my home neighborhood of Eastlake, I have access to both bus and (nearby) streetcar service. On any given day, having those options will make me more likely to walk and explore the city on foot, knowing that I have a multitude of options to return home. Residents throughout the city—not just in comparatively well-heeled neighborhoods in the north end—should have similar options. I have included the funding of the Center City Connector in my campaigns' Seattle Green New Deal package.

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

I'm proud to be endorsed in this race by Seattle Subway (an endorsement I share with former Seattle Subway president Joshua Newman) because of my commitment to rail transit of all kinds. The main consideration that should inform the discussion around finding additional funding has to do with two concerns: 1) seizing on the urgency of the climate crisis to push state legislators to modify RCW 32.95a so that additional funding sources, and 2) relatedly, finishing these projects sooner.

- **For what purposes should impact fees on development be used?**

In theory, I support impact fees, with the caveat that I would not want to see them used as an anti-housing cudgel by climate arsonists who don't see that more housing stock is central to a Seattle's climate justice strategy. These funds can potentially be used to fund schools and some social services, but must be weighed against the 'impact' they have in providing additional housing, which address those social needs more directly.

- **Do you support imposing additional fees on ridesharing services like Uber and Lyft?**

Yes. Because I am not taking corporate campaign contributions and—unlike Jenny Durkan—do not count a rideshare executive among my closest circle of advisors, my campaign is in a position to levy additional fees on an industry which contributes to both carbon emissions and a car-centric culture in the city. With a "Green Mode"

option now available on Lyft, the City Council could be in a position to, say, levy an additional tax on non-electric vehicle rides, if not ban such rides in the city limits outright.

But at the same time that we recognize that rideshare is not an optimal solution to “last mile” transit issues, they do serve a role in getting to and from transit stations. So at the same time that we attempt to disincentivize their use, we must provide alternatives; what if the city invested in an electric vehicle “Dollar Van” shuttle, similar to the one that immigrant communities (like my own Jamaican grandparents) have run for decades? Such a shuttle can get people to and from light rail stations at little or no cost, as part of an overarching climate justice strategy.

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

Yes. I was the first candidate in the District 4 Seattle City Council race to support congestion-pricing, and am glad that I have set the terms of the debate in this race with respect to climate justice. The city of London has raised upwards of \$1.5 billion in the last decade using congestion pricing. Our primary considerations should be a) structuring the tax in such a way so that it does not disproportionately impact working people who have been displaced, and b) using the revenue to fund projects that address climate change at a regional level, so that people who have been displaced to distant suburbs can have access to public transit.

- **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?**

The various “sneakdowns” identified during Snowmagedon 2019 revealed what many urbanists have long known: that major cities like Seattle generally do a poor job of harmonizing street space with a real need for pedestrian space and biking infrastructure. I support converting and reducing general purpose lanes as a matter of principal, and think we could have more pedestrianized streets throughout the city—starting with The Ave in the University District.

- **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?**

Redundancies are a good thing. Where forms of transit overlap, they reinforce and strengthen one another. The city should be investing more in signage and visible maps that direct users of emerging mobility options to our transit hubs.

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

As a journalist for City Arts Magazine (2015-2018), I wrote an article after the Employee Head Tax was repealed, titled "[The Class Warfare of Seattle's Business Community.](#)" The surge of traffic to the article briefly crashed the website. People across the country had their eyes on the situation in Seattle, and we disappointed progressive movements across the country by opting out of taxing the rich to pay for basic services.

I was for the Head Tax in 2018, and would commit to reintroducing it as a City Councilmember.

But it isn't enough for candidates to say that they support the Employee Head Tax in theory. We need candidates who are prepared to lead on this issue, and are ready to suffer the political consequences of standing up for Seattleites in need of relief. As a city councilmember, I would commit to reintroducing the Employee Head Tax, by taking the lessons of the 2018 repeal into account and moving forward with a re-tooled political case to present to the people of Seattle.

I would work in collaboration with Councilmembers Mosqueda, Sawant, Herbold and hopefully Morales to create a climate where the moderate voices on the council can step forward to do what is right by working people in this city. Securing a decisive sixth, mayoral veto-proof vote on the City Council will be key to getting a new EHT passed—as will be making an appealing political case that focuses not only on where the revenue is coming from, but what it will be spent on.

Seattleites need elected officials who have a history of standing up to corporate power before ever seeking office, and a City Council that is committed to constructive collaboration to secure material gains for the 99%. As a former editor of *Real Change News* and a Seattle Democratic Socialists of America organizer, I sense the desperation that rent-burdened and homeless Seattleites feel, and share their frustration with the

lack of urgency seen on progressive issues from city government. As a former outreach coordinator for Seattle's Office of Arts & Cultural Affairs who over saw the city's transformation of [King Street Station into an arts hub](#), I understand how to hold constituent meetings and collaborative listening sessions to deliver positive policy results.

- **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?**

Most major corporations agree that we need cities that have an educated workforce, good public schools, and affordable housing. The philanthropic initiatives we have seen from companies like Amazon and Microsoft and recent years—particularly those around housing—are an admission that governments have not been doing enough to make cities hospitable for the workers on whom these corporations depend. Major corporations have to realize that their obligation to cities must extend to helping to pay, in taxes, for the investments in human and social capital they need to continue thriving. I do not currently believe that corporations are meeting this obligation, and think that we need bold leadership on implementing progressive, results-oriented revenue to pay for the amenities of an inclusive, deeply affordable city.

- **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 would have supported MHA and think that it has started a much-needed conversation about the historical results of segregation in our zoning code. It differs from my ideal policy in that it is a market incentive program for an industry (housing) that we should rely exclusively on the market to execute. I would have liked to have seen a progressive revenue option for the creation of more social and public housing throughout the city, coupled with the zoning reform MHA initiated.

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

I am endorsed in this race by the Transit Riders' Union, Sierra Club, and Seattle Subway in part because of my understanding of the important intersection between transit and

housing. I support transit-oriented development. The way we ensure TOD is affordable and doesn't displace communities is by having elected officials of color who have a demonstrated pedigree of working with a race and social justice lens to simultaneously challenge north end residents while also enfranchising those in the south end. Practically, that means making historically white neighborhoods (like those in District 4) absorb as much if not more new public housing as neighborhoods in the south end. As a former outreach coordinator with the Office of Arts & Cultural Affairs who implemented the Race and Social Justice Initiative toolkit in the transformation of King Street Station into an arts and culture hub, I'm prepared to show leadership on precisely this issue.

- **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?**

The most important strategy Seattle can pursue to make the city affordable involves not leaving our housing decision up to the free market alone. My assumption is that the market, left to itself, will not distribute goods and services (like housing, healthcare, or education) in a way that aligns with the general social welfare or health and well-being of society. We need progressive revenue for public housing. We need a land bank that allows the city to compete for land with the private market. We need zoning changes that allow for more diverse forms of housing throughout the city. We need the housing market to incorporate the wellspring of energy and ideas that progressive urbanists across the country have devoted to the completely solvable crises of affordability that many major cities find themselves mired in.

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

We must partner with community organizations like Washington CAN and Socialist Alternative that have been pushing for a comprehensive tenants' bill of rights for years. As someone who has been evicted myself, I understand that access to funds from the Seattle Housing Authority can be the difference between keeping an apartment and being charged with an unlawful detainer. I would like to see the Seattle Housing Authority assume a more proactive role in getting rent vouchers to vulnerable renters who need help the most.

- **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?**

Yes. Following similar efforts in Portland/Multnomah County and Los Angeles' Proposition HHH, I support city/county partnerships of any kind to address homelessness. As a city councilmember, I would work with the leaders of a parallel initiative campaign to identify the scale of the problem, areas of need, and particular sites of collaboration between county and city government. I would support it on the City Council by offering debt financing as a way for the city to go "half in" on funding solutions with King County.

- **What causes people to experience homelessness in the City of Seattle?**

I am endorsed in this race by Washington Low Income Housing Alliance and have worked as editor of Real Change News because of my sensitivity to—and understanding of—the plight of homeless Seattleites. The reasons that people experience homelessness are legion; the single biggest cause, however, has to do with economic stressors—the loss of a job, an increase in rent, the arrival of unexpected medical expenses. Many folks slide into homelessness because of substance abuse issues; others because they cannot go back home to families that are prejudiced against LGBTQIA+ youth. We have to build an inclusive and an affordable city to address homelessness at its many roots.

- **What, specifically, should the city do to address racial disparities in housing opportunity?**

The city need a complete overhaul of its current zoning regime coupled with massive investment in public housing. These moves would accomplish two things: 1) the dismantling of a legislative infrastructure which created historic racial disparities in housing, and 2) the creation of a more equitable future where housing decision are not left up to the whims of the private market, and the public can have a direct say in how housing decisions are made. The city, thanks to the Office of Civil Rights, has a Race and Social Justice Initiative toolkit, which Councilmember Mosqueda has suggested we use for housing-related decisions in the city. I concur, and look forward to working with her on the implementation of this strategy to make Seattle a city free from an exclusionary past.

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

With seven of the city’s nine council seats up for grabs in 2019, many candidates will relay their ideas for Seattle’s future. They will do so by working from assumptions about our shared past. The question we should always ask these candidates is “which Seattle do we want to live in?” The one where “Black Victorians” found a refuge from the racism of the Jim Crow South in the aftermath of the Civil War, or the one where police officers killed Charleena Lyles and faced no consequences? The one where Pioneer Square nurtured LGTBQIA life in the 1960s and 70s, or the one where queer folks are overrepresented among the city’s houseless population? The buzzing, environmentally-conscious metropolis that [established an extensive network of bike lanes](#) in the early 20th century, or the wannabe suburb that tied its neighborhoods to racially-restrictive zoning codes and criminalized the kinds of [dense, multifamily housing](#) we need to end [capitalism’s perpetual crisis](#) of housing unaffordability? My definition of “historic character” in Seattle is one that recognizes that we have, in our past, two distinct tendencies: one towards inclusion and another towards exclusion. In the 2019 election cycle, we need candidates who animate that tendency towards inclusion. Among the first acts that the Seattle City Council passed, as a legislative body founded in the mid-19th century, was the Indian Exclusion Act of 1865 that banned Native Americans from entering the very city they helped incubate. If we are to move forward as a city, we must correct that exclusionary past in the present.

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

Please refer to my answer to the above question about transit-oriented development. We have two light rail stations opening in District 4, a historically white district with great schools. North end neighborhoods should be, in the words of Jessyn Farrell, “on the hook,” for new affordable development in this city.

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

Safe Seattle serves to show us how low we can go. They serve to show us the stakes for having—or not having—true progressive leaders in office. They advance a dark (or

rather, extremely white) vision of society that should make us all shudder, and motivate us to make sure our City Council does not swing to the right, where they reside.

Safe Seattle represents the worst of Seattle's political tendencies in the Trump Era, and my understanding from listening to Seattle anti-racist activists is that Speak Out Seattle is largely a re-brand of Safe Seattle. As such, I was proud to not attend Speak Out Seattle's recent District 4 candidate forum in March.

But simply playing defense is not enough: We need elected officials who will stand up to regressive organizations that mean targeted and vulnerable populations like the homeless and people of color harm.

As a candidate, I orchestrated a [mass report](#) of Safe Seattle on Facebook, after Safe Seattle spread a baseless lie that I was violating the rules of the Democracy Voucher program. Though my supporters and I did not succeed—as we had hoped—in getting Safe Seattle's Facebook page shutdown, we at least helped to shine a light on the fact that Seattle is not free from the kinds of pernicious conservative politics we see gripping the nation elsewhere.

As a councilmember, I would like to hold a forum with the Seattle Ethics and Elections Commission and social media corporations with offices in Seattle to establish a reasonable baseline for political discourse in the city—one that finds ways to penalize and disallow dehumanizing pictures of the homeless, and targeted harassment of candidates and politicians of color.

When I was a [field organizer for Rep. Pramila Jayapal](#), I saw everyday as Pramila defended the rights of working people and immigrants in front of right-wing extremists like Tucker Carlson. As a candidate, I am happy to be a recurring target of vitriol on Safe Seattle's Facebook page, because it means that I am standing on the correct side of major policy decisions that can substantively improve the lives of everyday Seattleites.

- **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?**

Racial equity is the beating heart of my campaign's platform, and the center of my work as an author, filmmaker, and organizer. In 2004, I was present for the founding of the Seattle Civil Rights and Labor History Project, and helped to pioneer UW research into historically regressive land use decisions and exclusionary zoning. Documentaries I made with the SCRLHP as a young man in the mid-2000s are still being used to educate Seattle area youths about the history of segregation in Seattle to this day. In 2016 I was hired as director of outreach by the Office of Arts & Culture's effort to transform King Street Station into an arts and culture hub, and I implemented the city's Race and Social Justice Initiative toolkit to that end. I have been a #BlackLivesMatter activist, a published author who wrote a book about the dire economic straits of Millennials of color, and an editor for Real Change News. I will continue my work as an advocate for racial justice by championing policies which benefit the very communities that have made my candidacy policy.

- **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?**

What's most important is that we elect City Councilmembers who have a demonstrated history of advocating for and organizing with minority communities before ever seeking office. As somebody who fits this description, I think we need to dramatically expand the purview of the city's Race and Social Justice Initiative toolkit to include decisions in housing, economic development, and policing. We must also partner with front-line organizations that have been doing the work of making Seattle a more inclusive city for decades. I'm proud to be the first candidate in this race to denounce the Seattle Police Officers Guild contract, and to be still be the only frontrunner in the race to say that I would not have voted to approve the contract (I am joined in that stance by Cathy Tuttle, Beth Mountsier, and Joshua Newman). The SPOG contract was denounced by over two dozen community groups, and I look forward to partnering with them to ensure we have a city where the police are accountable to the communities they swear to "protect and serve."

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

I support the progressive revenue sources advanced by the city of Seattle's Progressive Revenue Taskforce on housing and homelessness—everything from a mansion sales tax to an excess compensation tax to a re-tooled Employee Head Tax, to payroll taxes, to raised business & occupation taxes.