



## **Andrew Lewis Urbanist Questionnaire 2023**

### **Seattle City Council, District 7**

#### **What is your preferred Comprehensive Plan housing growth alternative and why?**

Seattle needs far more housing to meet demand. That makes this cycle for major Comp Plan revisions make-or-break for climate and affordability. Of the options proffered by OPCD, Alternative 5 is by far the best option. It will allow for greater housing supply, the creation of dynamic neighborhood business districts to support 15-minute planning, and take the most advantage of transit investments of the offered alternatives.

That said, I am intrigued by the grassroots proposal concept of an "Alternative 6" which is bolder and stronger. But, given the current options under departmental consideration, Alternative 5 is my preference.

#### **What investments do we need to make to achieve our housing affordability goals, and what should those goals be? Do you support the Housing Levy?**

Yes, I support the housing levy. I also support creative solutions to increase subsidy and streamline red tape to produce more housing. I am very supportive, for example, of a local option progressive REET increase that was considered this session, but ultimately not passed, by the Legislature. This tool could be a dedicated source for social housing and provide critical stabilizing funding for our permanent supportive housing service providers. I hope it will be on the table as part of the May special session Blake fix. If not, I hope we can win its passage in a future session.

I also very strongly support removing regulatory hurdles to the construction of new housing. This last session I worked with Rep. Bateman to include a SEPA exemption for repealing parking mandates in HB 1110. I also worked with Sen. Mullet on legislation that ultimately became SB 5412 dramatically reforming SEPA as it relates to housing construction. These reforms are important for local government to be able to streamline, and reduce the cost of, new housing. Ultimately, the people who take on the cost of predatory delay are consumers and taxpayers. It just makes sense to streamline.

And, yes, I strongly support the Seattle Housing Levy at the highest possible amount that is electorally viable.

#### **Under what circumstances would you support pedestrianizing streets that are currently open to cars?**

I am the only Seattle public official to have openly and officially backed pedestrianizing Pike Place. I extend that same philosophy to many of our public thoroughfares that would be great candidates for pedestrianization.



In the coming Move Seattle Levy in 2024, I would like us to create a list (possibly working from COVID-era "Stay Healthy Streets") to fund the improvements necessary for permanent pedestrian streets and plazas across the City. At the same time, I would like to manifest these changes in our Transportation Master Plan to make sure it is integrated into our broader transportation assumptions, as well as our Comprehensive Plan and housing planning strategies going forward.

**What is your approach to generating progressive revenue for the city?**

As a co-sponsor of JumpStart, I believe strongly that progressive revenue should remain a pillar of budget planning. JumpStart has been a great success, and Seattle would be in a really difficult spot without the revenue it has created. It has also been an extremely unpredictable and volatile tax, so we need to be careful about overreliance on it.

Progressive revenue will remain part of the equation, but we also need retrenchment and a challenging of assumptions about some of our current budget commitments. For example, does SDCI still need to do all of its same functions now that the SEPA reforms in SB 5412 have passed? What are the budget implications of some of these reforms? Savings related to reforms need to be part of the equation as well.

**What is your position on impact fees?**

In the past I have supported impact fees conceptually. Indeed, MHA is essentially an impact fee of a type. However, we need to be cognizant of two extremely prescient pressures: (1) new economic conditions of rising costs of raw materials and interest rates making it increasingly difficult to build new housing, and (2) the cumulative impact of City fees and taxes on building. For example, we are about to enact a tree ordinance that may well include some form of fee. That on top of MHA, etc.

Given these pressures, I do not think this moment in time is the right time to enact an impact fee. That does not mean under different circumstances some form of impact fee would be appropriate.

**What items do you view as essential to the next Seattle transportation levy due in 2024?**

We need to go big and deep on Vision Zero. We have the data; we know the problem spots. What we don't have is the necessary investment to realize the goal. Similarly, traffic calming. There is huge demand in my district to increase traffic calming improvements like speed humps and crosswalks, but little resource to do it.

Also, as indicated above, improvements to pedestrianize streets.

**Would you vote to approve completing the streetcar network via the Center City extension and work with the mayor to prioritize funding and building it?**

My answer is the same as it was in 2019. The decision has been made and I won't stand in the way of the project being completed. I look forward to fully considering any viable proposal to get it done in the most effective way possible.



### **Under what circumstances are homeless encampment removals appropriate?**

Encampment removals, when appropriate, should be done consistent with the practices JustCare has pioneered over the last few years.

First, outreach workers should build a by-name list of encampment residents and triage by housing need (market rate, voucher supported, light or heavy on-site services, or enhanced shelter). Second, after a plan has been made for every encampment resident, everyone should be moved to housing on the same day (JustCare calls this "moving day"). Third, after everyone is gone, the site should be flagged for remediation (throw away things knowingly left behind, clean up graffiti, repair damaged infrastructure, etc).

As we all know, this is not always how removals go down. Until last fall, the City never even monitored displacement related to removals (Durkan administration insisted there was NO displacement, and hence no need to track something that doesn't exist). Our goal is for nobody to have to live in encampments. In the short term it means we have to embrace interim strategies like tiny house villages and hotel/motel leasing. I have repeatedly tussled with the King County Regional Homelessness Authority demanding greater investment in these interim solutions. As we have seen, public opinion is greatly shifting in favor of sweeping encampments regardless of placement to go. That sentiment will only increase unless we can efficiently and effectively get people into enhanced shelter, and do it now.

### **Hiring incentives haven't worked so far to attract additional police officers to the Seattle Police Department. How can the City promote public safety in such an environment?**

Frankly, the biggest thing I have heard from police leadership is the lack of emphasis in our recruitment strategy of the opportunity for lateral applicants to live in the suburbs or exurbs of Seattle. Our very high pay gets a lot of laterals to take a look at the region, but when they Google "Seattle housing" they see the huge costs internal to the City not realizing 30-45 minutes outside the City there are more options.

Another potential strategy could be investing in take home vehicles. Hear me out on this. Police departments have huge motor pools with hundreds of cars. This requires parking to store the cars. It also requires parking to store the personal vehicles police use to drive to the city and switch vehicles. It is also inefficient because there is significant transfer of gear, etc, that wastes time.

Under a take home policy, officers in essence store the patrol vehicle at their place of residence. It allows them to suit up at home and keep all their gear in one place. It also allows the City to plan for less facilities parking.

Tacoma switched to take home vehicles and saved money over the course of a decade. It also increased morale. Note that the take home vehicle can ONLY be used to go back and forth to the precinct. It cannot be used for personal errands, etc.

In any event, it is something to consider.



**What is the appropriate role for the Seattle Police Department to play in creating public safety in Seattle? What would a police contract that encourages safety look like? What does the next police contract need to have in order to earn your vote of approval?**

At a bare minimum, the next contract must include all the accountability measures from the 2017 accountability ordinance. Full stop.

More broadly, we need a substantial revision of the fundamental assumptions of our public safety system. I have been extremely outspoken on this. NICJR estimated that nearly half of all police responses could be done by a different unarmed civilian responder. The department itself admits that at least 12% of calls for service can, which is significant.

Seattle needs a scaled and robust response alternative like Denver STAR or Eugene Oregon CAHOOTS. We are closer than ever with a pilot to hit the streets later this year, as well as the work we are doing via the Third Avenue Project with the BIPOC-led and owned company "We Deliver Care". Our progress has been slow, but if there is ONE thing I can get done in the next four years it will be a fundamental revision of our public safety system that emphasizes wellness and a right-sized civilian first response.

**How can Seattle encourage more people to ride transit?**

There needs to be a bigger emphasis on the concierge experience. We cannot possibly think it is humane to allow people to experience completely unsupported public health crisis on public transit and expect other members of the public to just deal with it. Without a doubt, it is the biggest reason people are not returning to transit. People in crisis and people experience addiction have greatly deterred people from the transit experience.

It doesn't have to be this way. "We Deliver Care" (WDC) is an excellent service for de-escalating, system navigating, and providing low-acuity care to people in crisis. What if we had a special service via the Transportation Benefit District that allowed a WDC team to respond to the summons of a transit operator to board a bus and assist a community member in crisis? It would be way more effective than having transit police or fare enforcement intervene... which is essentially just kicking someone off the bus, or potentially citing (a cite that will never be paid) or arresting them (an arrest that won't go anywhere in terms of prosecution).

By far, I think this is the biggest issue. While reliability of service post-COVID is certainly a relevant consideration, the feedback I uniformly get from constituents is "I don't feel safe on transit." And, typically, it's because of crisis and public health-based episodes from fellow transit riders. A crisis we continue to respond to with square-peg round-hole strategies based only on enforcement instead of care.