



## **George Artem Urbanist Questionnaire 2023**

Seattle City Council, District 4

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

The city's comprehensive plan is a six-hundred-page document. I am supportive of the four core values of the plan, but I find areas where I flatly disagree.

1. Increased density will not solve the problem of housing affordability. Empirically, every place in the world where housing is more dense, the price per square foot is higher.
2. Increased density is directly at odds with our city tree canopy goals.
3. The housing market appears to be cooling off and recent polling shows that a majority of Washingtonians would leave the State if they could. I don't believe that we need to plan for the type of future demand that appears to be the mainstay in the consensus narrative.
4. We need a municipally backed rent-to-own program in social housing developments that promotes long-term tenancy, encourages personal responsibility and helps tenants generate wealth.

### **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?**

I am a fan of Mayor Harrell and want him to be successful, but I cannot support the \$970 million dollar price tag associated with the proposed Housing Levy. It appears that most of the funding, over \$700 million dollars, will go to rental assistance programs to residents of supportive housing communities, that based on my own experience, are housing those with active addiction and substance use disorders, who are not participating in opportunities to better themselves.

We need more active intervention and availability of treatment and training resources for these individuals to help get them back to work, rather than an enormous fund that bails them out and enables their continued use.



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

The decision to pedestrianize streets should be done on a case-by-case basis, incorporating hyper-local community feedback. I am not a civil engineer, but some factors to consider would be potential changes to traffic patterns, feedback from local businesses and residents, and the immediate availability of safe car-free or public transportation options.

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

Seattle is run by a large number of special interest groups, who all have a vested interest in and compete for levy-based funding. Regular, everyday working people, who do not have the time, energy or training to engage in this legislative machine are tired of special earmarks for special interests.

I would work with my colleagues behind the dais to identify contribution sources for steady funding streams to expand the city's general fund, so that city-wide departments can individually prioritize the needs of advocacy groups that are relevant to them, and better address resident requests without having to context switch based on endlessly changing priorities mixed in with the levy process.

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

The impact fee proposal seeks to fund over \$1 billion dollars in new transportation related projects. It raises some questions. One area of concern where I would seek clarification is related to present transportation infrastructure deficiencies. There needs to be a funding mechanism to support prioritizing and making repairs to existing deficiencies before the city adventures on making promises for the construction of new infrastructure.

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

The Seattle Transportation Plan appears to still be in a draft phase. Three of the key issues raised from the STP engagement process are safety, reliability and timeliness of public transportation infrastructure. Most respondents to STP surveys want "rapid



progress" in transforming transportation infrastructure with a strong preference for safe walk, bike and roll alternatives to driving. I am supportive of those objectives but believe that funding for these projects should come from the city's general fund and prioritized by SDOT.

**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?**

Maybe. I would need more information on the impacts of this project and seek feedback from stakeholders like the Downtown Seattle Association and MID.

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

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Removal of homeless encampments are appropriate when individuals refuse housing opportunities that are offered by outreach workers. From personal experience, I can tell you that the homelessness crisis is first and foremost a drug crisis. Seattle needs to remove unsanctioned homeless encampments and ban public camping and public drug use as our neighboring jurisdictions have in Bellingham, Everett, Marysville and Lakewood.

**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?**

SPD was blunt in responding to my questions related to their hiring challenges. Simply put-- no-one wants to be a police officer anymore. This is both a local and national issue. The bottom line is that we need to change our politics around policing, and SPD desperately needs a new collective bargaining agreement to help attract new officers to Seattle.

The 2017 Police Accountability Ordinance is a nearly 90 page document with close to 300 recommendations. SPD has been responsive to community needs and has implemented nearly 90% of those recommendations over the last six years, highlighted by increased crisis intervention and de-escalation training, and co-responder models with mental health professional DCRs. SPD is currently engaged in community dialogues in each of Seattle's districts through the "Before the Badge" program and the Micro Community Policing Plans in conjunction with



Seattle University. I would encourage both media groups and the community to get involved in and promote those discussions.

**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?**

Police play an integral, difficult, dangerous and underappreciated role in keeping our community safe, and the SPD collective bargaining agreement is more than two years out of date. Per my previous answer, a collective bargaining agreement makes a huge impact on our ability to attract and retain new officers and should be a public safety priority.

I am not familiar with all of the points that remain to be negotiated in the new agreement, but from what I understand those negotiations are ongoing and I would leave that responsibility in the capable hands of the Mayor's Office.

I would vote yes to get a newly negotiated agreement in place.

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

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We can improve the ridership experience by focusing on safety and reliability. We need to get the drugs off our streets and off our trains and busses.