



Maritza Rivera Urbanist Questionnaire 2023

Seattle City Council, District 4

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

When I talk to neighborhoods and future constituents throughout Seattle, there is a lot of consensus around allowing reasonable housing like quad-plexes, townhomes, row houses, and mixed-use development in our community. Unfortunately, we've let bad politics pit us against each other. On one side is more density seemingly no matter the impact on our neighborhoods and on the other are those that want to preserve what makes this City such an amazing place to live. This is a false dichotomy that has led to our city both failing to address our affordability crisis while at the same time approving developments that hurt and displace communities.

More broadly put, I do not support abolishing single-family zoning and believe that whatever changes we consider we need to be gradual and thoughtful in our approach to new development. I do believe that we should ensure that our zoning allows homeowners to be a part of the solution and housing affordability in every neighborhood. If we allowed development up to quad-plexes everywhere in the City while expanding transit-oriented development, we would address a very significant portion of our housing affordability crisis and preserve the unique character of our neighborhoods.

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 believe that Seattle can be a place where people from all backgrounds and communities can afford to not just live but thrive here. For far too many that is just not possible anymore. Whether it is essential workers that can no longer live in the communities they serve, seniors on fixed incomes being priced out and away from their loved ones, or young people trying to access the same kind of wealth building possibilities afforded to my generation through home ownership, Seattle is a city out of reach and flatly unaffordable to far too many.



In 2020, the McKinsey Global Institute completed a report concluding King County would need between \$450 million and \$1.1 billion more in public spending every year for the next decade to meaningfully address housing affordability and homelessness. That's why I support the Mayor's proposal for a new housing levy which does a great job of collaborating with business, labor, the region and state to tackle affordability— it is an excellent model for how our City should approach new revenue.

Ultimately, we must acknowledge that it is simply infeasible for the City of Seattle to meaningfully address housing affordability alone. We need partnership at the local, regional, state and federal level. Additionally, as we discuss new investments it is important to understand that our state's tax code is one of the most regressive in the country, with those that can least afford paying upwards of 20% of their income while those that can most contribute to our cities prosperity pay less than 2%. New taxation should avoid increasing the burden on middle, low, and no income families.

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

As a mother, one of the silver-linings from the COVID-19 pandemic was the introduction of safe streets initiatives in many neighborhoods throughout the city. As a council member I would work to find opportunities to expand safe streets and safe routes to school and other amenities in our neighborhoods. This program is an effective way of increasing pedestrian access, safety for families, and accessibility throughout our city. Our children, people with disabilities, families, and folks of all means deserve to be able to complete their necessarily daily trips safely and without needing to rely on cars.

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

My approach is defined by two words: collaboration and accountability.

I have worked at the city in various capacities including helping lead a department as well for a council member, I have also seen first hand that we need to do more to bring accountability to spending at the city. I will work to restore public trust by ensuring every dollar of public money is allocated to the priorities clearly articulated by voters and residents. Bringing urgency to addressing the pressing issues facing



our city also means being a tireless advocate for rebuilding trust that our government is a good steward of public dollars.

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What is your position on impact fees?

Councilmember Alex Pedersen put it best "it's high time for Seattle to catch up to cities across the State and nation that collect reasonable impact fees from for-profit real estate developments to ensure our infrastructure is strong and safe." Impact fees are used by more than 70 Washington State cities and many more across the nation to cover basic investments in infrastructure, transportation, and other essentials. A good impact fee proposal will be built in collaboration with the business community, labor, and stakeholders from across the political spectrum and focused on shoring up investments in varied, multi-modal transportation options throughout our City.

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

The Seattle transportation levy must work to support the unique needs of every neighborhood in Seattle. In my district, there are multiple neighborhoods that still don't even have basic pedestrian infrastructure including sidewalks or crossings. Additionally, I feel strongly that we cannot continue to kick the can down the road when it comes to maintenance and repairs including for our aging bridges, sidewalks, and existing infrastructure. I am a strong advocate for increasing multi-modal transportation options including buses, light-rail, pedestrian infrastructure, and bike lanes. Finally, the plan must prove to voters that it is a responsible and accountable use of public dollars. We have asked voters to approve more and more spending while they continue to see us fail to deliver. The



transportation levy must have strong mechanisms of accountability and a work plan that is detailed and specific in delivering the priorities I've outlined.

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?

I support a proposal to complete the streetcar to connect two separate lines, help revitalize our urban core and get more people out of their cars.

Under what circumstances are homeless encampment removals appropriate?

It is unconscionable and ultimately a policy failure that we allow people to live in most encampments and especially under our freeways and in other dangerous locations. In far too many cases, the conditions of encampments are dangerous and flatly unlivable.

The City must have the option of closing encampments when there is a clear threat and danger to those living in the encampment and the neighborhood. To do anything less would be negligent of our basic charter and the responsibility of the city to ensure its residents are safe and healthy.

I will commit to working tirelessly with city leaders and community working on affordable housing options, mental health and recovery services to ensure that our unhoused are able to find suitable housing with the services they need to thrive.

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?

I'll never forget the hours waiting and worrying outside Ingraham High School as my two girls were in lockdown following the fatal shooting that claimed a student's life. No one in our city should ever have to feel like my daughters – or frankly how every single parent waiting outside Ingraham – did at that moment. While I never thought I would seek public office, I decided to run for city council to improve public safety and make our city safe and secure for everyone.



I grew up in a tough neighborhood in the Bronx on the 5th floor of a five story no elevator building. My dad was a welder and proud union member, my mom worked in a factory. They moved from Puerto Rico to New York in search of a better life for me and my siblings. I know first-hand that working families and communities of color like my own disproportionately feel the burden of higher property crimes, hate crimes, gun violence, and the failure of our city leaders to step-up and ensure we are safe.

The Seattle Police Department is down to the lowest staffing levels in at least 30 years. We must go beyond hiring and retention incentives to think innovatively about how to increase staffing. This year, the first class of Seattle Fire Department's pilot program to recruit new firefighters by building on Seattle's 13th Year Promise will graduate. I support piloting the same program in partnership with the Seattle Colleges and Seattle Police Department so we encourage our youth to pursue careers with the SPD and have home grown officers in addition to all who want to enter the SPD and meet our staffing needs.

I will work to ensure 5-minute response times for priority one calls, a return to full staffing at pre-2021 levels, a comprehensive approach to getting drugs and guns out of our streets, collaborate with neighborhoods to address safety, take property crime seriously and invest in proven alternatives to law enforcement that reduce crime while also reducing harm for communities of color. I believe the City Council's decision to defund the police was flat out wrong and I'm infuriated that three years after thousands of Seattle residents marched for justice we have still failed to adequately invest in proven alternatives to law enforcement. This combination of reckless rhetoric and lack of leadership in actually addressing our problems is wrong for the residents of Seattle and is the most important issue that I plan to address as the next council member in District 4.

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?

We cannot continue to ask our law enforcement agencies to shoulder the burden of every social problem and our city government must live up to the calls for justice and reckoning with our racist criminal legal system. We must rapidly invest and scale



up alternatives to policing to lessen the need for police officers to handle every call for help and allow them to focus on priority one calls. It is a failure of leadership that we are still just talking about expanding proven programs like Health One instead of having done the hard work to ensure mental health professionals replace the need for a traditional response on a significant portion of calls. This future is possible, with the right leadership. I won't rest until alternatives to policing are scaled up to meet the size of the public safety crisis we are facing.

I believe the next police contract is one of the most important opportunities to ensure we are building the right culture and police department in Seattle. I'm focused on ensuring that the contract does not put unreasonable limitations on the Office of Police Accountability, does not restrict the City's capacity to meaningfully invest in alternatives to policing for some calls for service, and employs an appropriate standard for office discipline, hiring, and termination for misconduct.

How can Seattle encourage more people to ride transit?

I grew up in New York City riding transit every single day and I commute on light rail here in Seattle. If we want people to ride transit then it needs to be safe, reliable, cheap and quick. We must invest in multi-model transportation including bus and rapid-ride routes, bike and pedestrian infrastructure, light rail and streetcars, closed streets and safe routes to school and other options that do not require residents to own a car to get around. We will never meet our climate goals without transitioning Seattle from a place where transit is something you use when it's convenient to do so, to one in which transit is the best, most reliable, cheapest, and fastest way to get where you need to go. Living in New York City, I rarely had to think about when the next subway would come, or if there would be a bus to get me where I needed to go- that's what it means to have a world-class transit system and that's what I believe is possible for Seattle with the right leadership.