



Olga Sagan Urbanist Questionnaire 2023

Seattle City Council, District 7

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

Of the plans that have been put forth, none of them are perfect, but Alternative 4 is probably the best for District 7. It accomplishes key goals, such as up-zoning along major transit corridors and entrances to large parks, but doesn't change the zoning in areas where those amenities are not present. District 7 is home to downtown where I live, but also Queen Anne. These communities have very different needs when it comes to adding new housing, and Alternative 4 does an OK job at balancing the needs of the community while still adding capacity for 100,000 new homes.

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?

Funding provided by the Housing Levy is a critical resource for achieving our housing affordability goals, and it is responsible for the construction or conversion of thousands of affordable homes. However, the need for affordable housing far outpaces the homes created by the Housing Levy. I also feel that there is a general exhaustion of people from being taxed and not seeing results. For example, King County voters approved a measure to renew the property tax levy supporting parks, trails, and open space. I just read an article in the Seattle Times that said we are not opening parks due to lifeguard shortages. This shows that more oversight and research needs to be done before any taxation is in place. With every revenue stream, there should be systems in place to ensure those funds are being spent efficiently and the way that they're supposed to.

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

As a small business owner at Pike Place Market, I understand first-hand the need for pedestrians to feel safe as they walk around the city. I had to close my bakery in Century Square because customers didn't feel safe on the sidewalk and were pushed out into the busy street on Third Avenue. Downtown streets, especially by



the waterfront, should be pedestrianized. We must do it in a way that ensures people who rely on transit are not impacted, so the streets should be chosen very deliberately with community input from all stakeholders. I promise to listen to the people of Seattle when making these big decisions – not special interests groups and not the political establishment.

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

Businesses like mine generate nearly 60% of Seattle's revenue, so revitalizing downtown, lowering the cost of doing business, and cleaning up our streets, sidewalks, and public parks will have a positive effect on the city's treasury. Most Seattle businesses, such as mine, pay competitive wages that support a good quality of life and allow people to live downtown close to where they work. That allows revenue to stay downtown and allows the city to fund important projects. If we allow an atmosphere for families to live downtown, that would go an even longer way towards driving revenue.

What is your position on impact fees?

Seattle does not currently have impact fees, despite having the statutory authority to collect them. Impact fees in my opinion are not a bad revenue tool, as long as there is a clear public benefit that is created. The fee structure should also encourage and incentivize businesses to invest in their communities, not simply pay the fee and call it a day. What we should remember is that Seattle businesses love investing in their communities – as you can see with the Climate Pledge Arena that is entirely privately financed, as well as the Seattle Museum of Pop Culture.

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

As with the Housing Levy, I feel that we need to be careful in understanding what was achieved and not achieved with the previous Levy. We should learn from our mistakes and assess the results before creating extra taxation.

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?



The plans that have been presented for the streetcar network don't achieve the goals that were promised. The three sections are unconnected, which doesn't make sense and isn't a good use of city funds. It is also duplicative, since one of the sections runs parallel to the subway.

Under what circumstances are homeless encampment removals appropriate?

The 9th Circuit opinion in *Martin v. Boise* requires cities to offer shelter before police can take any enforcement action to remove a homeless person from their temporary encampment. Many people who are unhoused experience drug addiction or mental health issues, and they need specialized shelter before they can begin to work on those problems. We cannot allow unhoused people to camp on the streets and expose passerbys – many of them children – to drug use and other things that are known to happen in encampments. It's not humane to allow those conditions and it's unacceptable. If we care about safety and supporting small businesses and revitalizing downtown, we must offer a helping hand to our unhoused residents with shelter and treatment.

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?

The number one thing we can do is make sure our law enforcement officers have the tools and training to handle the situations they are put in every day, and that starts with being smarter on how we direct them to use their time. We should not send police officers to respond to non-violent calls involving unhoused residents – those are better handled by trained mental health professionals and people trained specifically in this area. Police should spend their time doing what they are trained to do, which is attending to burglaries, violent crimes, and such problems that plague downtown. If we utilize officer's training in the appropriate way, it will create room in the budget for other needed services and solve the problems with morale and recruitment. Unfortunately, the city doesn't understand the problems they are trying to solve. You can't solve anything without understanding the problem.

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?

As far as the appropriate role for police is concerned, I'm in favor of traditional police for things that only they can do and new crisis responders for non-violent calls. We shouldn't send police officers for things that don't require law enforcement action, such as offering shelter to an unhoused person. They don't want to be doing that and the unhoused person probably doesn't want to interact with police either. The Seattle Police Department is the most accountable police department in the country. Besides competitive wages, we should continue with policies that create a system of accountability while supporting our police officers who put their lives on the line every day to keep us safe.

How can Seattle encourage more people to ride transit?

First of all, transit needs to be safe and people should not be allowed to use drugs openly on transit. We can also start by revitalizing downtown and making businesses open again. That way, there will be more jobs and more reasons for people to take transit downtown. We need to restore the frequencies and coverage to previous levels that existed before the government imposed cuts. People won't take transit if they have to wait long periods that add over an hour to their commute time.