



## **Ry Armstrong Urbanist Questionnaire 2023**

Seattle City Council, District 3

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

We need a new one. Alternative 6... why not push all the way to Alternative 7. I'd like to quote the Urbanist themselves from an article written on 01/09/23: "The climate crisis demands a bolder approach: urban housing growth is the cure for suburban sprawl. Climate-driven migrations from heat and drought-stricken areas to temperate Seattle leaves a very plausible scenario that growth will actually increase rather than slow down from the highs of the recent tech-boom decade. At the same time, climate threats to both our food supply and our forests demand that we conserve rural land by accommodating growth in core urban areas." We don't have time to wait to build housing. We need to fully fund a comprehensive I-135 - establishing a strong Housing Development Authority to be competitive in the Seattle market and build as much as we can while preserving the historic soul of our city: Capitol Hill, the Central District, and the CID. The current One Seattle plan does not nearly keep up with the, and I'll take a well known word from the pandemic, "unprecedented" climate events that will occur this decade. It's only people in my generation and beyond that will care about looking past the "business as usual" status quo because we want to see a City of Seattle existing past 2070.

### **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 fully support the passing and expansion of the upcoming Housing Levy. I think in one of the most regressive tax-structured states in the country, we need more access to progressive taxes to support housing and mental health services. This being said... I want to pass a residential and commercial vacancy tax to establish universal shelter in our city. Only when we finally take care of our fellow citizens on the streets can we actually build a pathway to secure social housing for Seattle. Growing up here, I remember houselessness being a "crisis" then and it seems like not enough action has been taken to actual help these people in over a decade. Beyond their circumstances breaking my heart, we need more supply to meet the continually rising demand to live in one of the most beautiful places in the world: the



Pacific Northwest. There needs to be a raffle or tiered system to prioritize socialized, de commodified housing. Just in the past couple years, around 90% of all new builds have been luxury housing. That is disgusting and needs to change so we can continue to support growth of our city.

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

Yes, under any circumstance where we can collaborate to shift to our city systems to prioritize pedestrians first: done and done! I do not own a car and take public transit, my bike, and my scooter everywhere I go. Sometimes I even use my own two legs. One thing I want to do is make the streetcars free and connect them by closing down Pike Street from the market up to Cap Hill as a pedestrian area. We need to connect the heart of Downtown to the Arts District of the city and make that the main arterial for tourism and cultural experiences. It's time to connect the two sides of our city and create an experience for people visiting and living here to want to get out and experience the beauty life has to offer.

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

My approach is collaboration and fierce lobbying within the State Government to combat the systems of oppression and supremacy working against us. As a truly progressive city, we need to restructure our systems to be equity-driven and redistribute wealth from those at the top to those who have built this city from the ground up. For me, this specifically looks like a vacancy tax to support housing & mental health services, a carbon wealth tax to support sustainability in Seattle, and a capital gains tax, through the Whole Washington initiative, to establish universal healthcare. What if we lived in a world where we actually used tax systems to take care of our most vulnerable people?

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

I think impact fees are a bureaucratic excuse for circumventing real investment in social housing. It seems to me that the public cannot easily track where those funds end up and I would rather have a tiered system where developers earn the right to build luxury capital projects after giving back to the community they are profiting from. I am open to a conversation about it, of course, but I think it's better to use



policy to make change instead of charging impact fees to attempt to "deincentivize" the behavior we don't want to see.

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

I think there are an abundance of issues to address. We need to continue the expansion of light rail as fast as we can to get more and more people commuting to Seattle proper. It's crazy that we only have one true subway / light rail line in this city. We need more reliable bus service for so many of our citizens that need those services to run on time. Finally, we have a terrible turnover rate within the transit sector; instead, we could actually invest in our own people and give them a decent wage to run our community... just a thought.

**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?**

Yes. Of course!

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

When there are no longer human beings residing in that space. Sweeps are often never appropriate, but doing empathetic and robust case work to help someone find more permanent housing would be the answer. Then giving them access to systems in a way that is user friendly and accessible to them would be the absolute dream for my campaign. I want to be on the ground talking to my fellow citizens living without a home and seeing how I can best help them after listening to their specific needs.

**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?**

We need alternatives to policing. We need to get rid of qualified immunity and build checks and balances into building independent departments dedicated to non-emergent and mental health/addictive needs to show up to situations where police are not necessary. Then after giving the cops less responsibility they can have



the capacity to actually show up when they are needed and defining what that is. We also need transparency with body cams and the ability to move forward in always pursuing anti-racist work of undoing a system of oppression that is the American policing system.

**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?**

To have my support, we need to create contracts for separate departments and not throw endless money at problems. We need people to fully understand the job of a police officer and not have them show up to every call made to 911. I think the people of Seattle should have the autonomy and choice to call 311 for non-emergencies, 611 for mental health/addictive services, and then 911 for the "traditional" emergency response or lack thereof. We need to specify the approach to a myriad of situations and let people who are educated in mediation and/or have the medical knowledge to lead those sometimes very delicate situations that do not need further escalation. My approach would also be to engage with community in constructing these systems of accountability and listen to those who are more often punished and criminalized by those policies: people of color.

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

We need to have the ORCA card become a catch all for people to use city services and have a threshold where if you make less than \$50K in annual income, then public transit is free to use. Imagine an accessible, singular card for transit, SNAP benefits, universal health insurance, and public banking services. People need to trust the system and it needs to be easy to access in order for it to be successful as public transit. Beyond that, we need to increase service, have the light rail run 24/7, and I would love to do Free Fridays where all transit is free on Friday evenings to encourage our city to have more of a nightlife scene for young people who are yearning for connection here in the city we all adore.