



Ahmad Corner Urbanist Questionnaire 2025

King County Council, District 5

What are your top three priorities to achieve in your term?

(1) Increase in affordable housing in District 5. (2) Increasing pathways to union jobs like apprenticeships and 21st century jobs in emerging fields. (3) Better community safety that includes an all-of-the above approach—not just law enforcement funding

How will you boost housing options, particularly for families of all incomes to live where they work? How will you engage the public for new shelters, transitional housing, emergency housing, permanent supportive housing? How do you weigh community objections with the housing goals for your jurisdiction, while encouraging engagement from neighbors?

We need to rethink our relationship with restrictive single-family zoning regulations and embrace more multifamily home options throughout the county, so neighborhoods can include folks of all income levels close to where they live, recreate, and work. If elected, I will have an open door policy for my constituents, and will hold town hall type events to hear from my constituents on housing options that help people get back on their feet and back into stable housing. Oftentimes, however, the folks who show up at these meetings are not the ones who will be using or benefiting from the types of housing options being discussed, so I will proactively work to solicit comments from folks who will actually be utilizing the housing options being considered when making my decisions—they are my constituents as much as homeowners and renters are, too.



Do you support adding progressive revenue sources? Which ones would you support to fund your priorities? Or what cuts would you make to balance budgets facing increasing strain under Trump?

Yes, I strongly support taxes on high wage earners in our county, and on luxury properties.

Governor Bob Ferguson has been resistant to lifting the 1% property tax lift cap, which has depleted King County resources over the past 25 years. How would you lobby to get this lid lifted or find alternative funding sources to overcome this limitation?

I will work closely with my colleagues on the King County Council, as well as local and state legislative elected officials to advocate for a property tax lift cap that makes more sense for King County and allows us to raise the funds necessary to meet the needs of our growing community.

What do you think is the most important strategy your jurisdiction can pursue to limit cost increases and make the region affordable to live in? How would you go about implementing that strategy?

For far too many families in our region, the dream of financial stability is out of reach. I know this firsthand. My family chose to live in Des Moines because it was more affordable than other cities, but even then, we couldn't afford a conventional home. We bought a fixer-upper, and I used skills from high school and college CAD and construction classes to renovate it.



Housing, food, and basic costs are skyrocketing—but for many working families, the most significant and rising expense is childcare, if they can even find it. That's why I believe no family should pay more than 10% of their income on childcare. Families are being forced to choose between their careers and caring for their kids. This burden disproportionately falls on women and BIPOC families, worsening the racial wealth gap and gender pay gap.

Childcare is expensive because it's hard to build new facilities and there's a shortage of providers. King County can help through public-private partnerships, land grants (including Sound Transit property), and financial support. We also need to raise wages, fund education for early learning professionals, and improve working conditions to make the field more sustainable.

What is your approach to improving public safety over the next five years? How will you actualize it?

As the father of two young Black children, I am both deeply concerned about the increase in crime in District 5. But I know very well that the answer is not simply to give law enforcement a blank check and expect them to solve all our issues on their own. We need an all-of-the-above approach, which means faster emergency response to all areas of the county, more law enforcement officers, more social workers, more mental health professionals, more mental health beds and hospital beds, and that we live up to the promise of the Crisis Care Centers Levy for those in need. I also believe we need to interrupt crime and violence before it becomes a



community issue—I support organizations like Choose 180, Creative Justice, and Community Passageways and will fight to expand investments in these programs.

How do you plan to improve public safety for transit operators and riders, and boost ridership and transit accessibility?

We need better wraparound mental health services in our county and we need more mental health and hospital beds for those experiencing mental health crises. This, ultimately, makes everyone, including transit operators and riders much safer. Bus shelters need to be lit at night and need to have trash receptacles close by, and transit operators need to have more access to respite areas where they can stop and get off their buses if needed. Finally, particularly in South King County, we need more sidewalks in transit-dependent areas so that transit riders do not have to walk alongside busy roads to access transit.

Traffic deaths are rising across Washington state, with pedestrians composing an increasing share statewide. What is your approach to making our streets safer for all users?

We need more consistent lighting along pedestrian routes and we must have more sidewalks in pedestrian areas. Although building new sidewalks is incredibly expensive, this is an issue where the County could split the cost with developers when new buildings are constructed or are being re-developed, and will help greatly defray the overall block-by-block cost. Where the County cannot build sidewalk infrastructure, rigid infrastructure like concrete bollards that block off pedestrian access ways from car traffic will help increase pedestrian use and safety.



Transit electrification plans are straining King County Metro's budget and could lead to fewer service hours and thus less ridership and more climate pollution overall as more residents drive or ride hail to work. How would you approach these tradeoffs?

The most climate friendly system is one in which more people can afford to live close to where they work and play. Ensuring people can get to their jobs, doctors appointments, grocery stores, and schools quickly and reliably without the use of a car has to be our top priority. To the extent that electrification is straining our budget we should prioritize ridership, service hours, and overall transportation system. Transportation makes up 30% of our carbon emissions but only a fraction of a fraction of that total comes from mass transit or multi-modal options. While electrification and stronger fuel standards are important, and we should do what we can particularly where there is low hanging fruit, I feel strongly that we simply cannot make the perfect the enemy of the good. Frankly, our transit system is already decades behind where it ought to be for the type of region we are today and more importantly the region we are growing into in the future. We must achieve a world-class transit system like our peer regions across the nation and the globe. That's going to take a laser-like focus on increasing transit options quickly and without delay, and compromising is a part of that.

King County has good policies and codes designed to protect agricultural, forest and rural lands, including our natural areas, waterways, and small rural communities. However, these policies and codes are too often not upheld and enforced. How will you ensure that rural lands are protected, and that violators are subject to enforcement?



The problem isn't that we lack policies—it's that we lack follow-through. Our protections for agricultural lands, waterways, and rural communities are only as strong as our willingness to enforce them. Right now, that commitment is falling short. This lack of enforcement reflects a broader issue in our criminal-legal system: we over-police low-level offenses that disproportionately impact marginalized communities, while large-scale environmental violations go unchecked. It's a systemic imbalance. That's why I would propose, in partnership with the King County Prosecutor's Office, Sheriff's Department, and local cities, the creation of an environmental protection unit focused on enforcement. Regional, inter-agency units like this have worked—for example, the domestic violence firearms enforcement unit has removed hundreds of firearms each year. Environmental rules are complex. Enforcement requires specialized training for law enforcement, prosecutors, and government officials. Relying on general enforcement mechanisms is setting the system up to fail. If we're serious about protecting rural lands and waterways, we must invest in the expertise and coordination needed to do it right.

The Eastside faces unique challenges when it comes to affordability, transit connectivity, and suburban versus city identity. What are your thoughts on how we can envision the future of urbanism on the Eastside?

Fundamentally, I think the most important thing for us to do is to change our approach in how we talk about urbanism and density more generally. For too long, the perception in the suburbs has been that density is all or nothing. Either single-family zoning on one end or massive skyscrapers like downtown Bellevue or Seattle. This has allowed powerful corporate interests and the ultra-wealthy to spread fear about what it means to increase density and housing options. However, in my conversations with people when we viscerally show people the kind of density we are primarily looking for, human-sized quad-plexes and six-plexes with good



access to transit and tree coverage, we build a coalition that has broad consensus. We need an urbanism that champions vibrant, thriving, and connected communities that resonate with the values of every part of our county, not just the most progressive neighborhoods and cities. Ultimately, however, I believe the problem is that our elected leaders have adopted this harmful dichotomy and have become far too comfortable playing into the same political choices opposing density completely. The truth is, voters are ready and willing to support a more holistic vision for our communities, they just need the opportunity to vote for candidates who are actually championing that vision and that takes bold leadership.