



Kim-Khanh Van Urbanist Questionnaire 2025

King County Council, District 5

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

Safe and healthy communities, opportunity for all, and transparency and co-governing centering community

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?

Increased housing options include zoning changes, middle housing, mixed-use buildings, ADUs, eliminating parking requirements, subsidizing lower-income housing and MFTEs, and promoting progressive programs such as publicly owned social housing.

I show up for constituents. I attend community events, host office hours, and do town halls, all so that I can listen to the community's concerns. On King County Council, I will make use of the budget for communications with our constituents. Transparency is a core tenant of my campaign, centered around a co-governance model. This is the people's seat, and I want the community to have shared ownership of it, even during tough conversations.



During the pandemic, I held community conversations regarding the De-Intensification Shelter at the Red Lion Hotel. I collaborated with community organizations, faith leaders, the business community, and residents. Having been the only council member who visited the Shelter and brought masks for the 230 plus neighbors there, I understood the situation. I worked with Downtown Emergency Service Center and SEIU 1199NW on an ordinance that would fit the needs of them and the community, voting NO on evicting them.

Additionally, I voted on pre-approved ADU permits, and support middle housing ordinances to provide alternative housing options.

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?

I don't just support adding progressive revenue sources but see it as something that we MUST do in order to build the future that our residents deserve. I signed on to King County's letter requesting Governor Bob Ferguson and the State Legislature to provide tools for local jurisdictions and for progressive revenues. Washington has one of the most unfair tax systems in the U.S., where wealthy people and big businesses do not pay their fair share, burdening working people and the poor. We need them to pay their fair share in the form of property taxes for high-income earners and for expensive property so that we can pay for crucial services that support a healthy society. It will also mean working with state lawmakers and local elected officials at the city level to make sure that we can have as much consistency across regions as possible, to be able to fill as many gaps as possible, so that we don't allow vulnerable community members to fall through the cracks.



We must maximize our funds for services, by looking at upstream services for public safety initiatives. Our budget must be resilient and sustaining, and become independent from federal instability.

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?

To me this is a strategy issue. I was incredibly supportive of Governor Ferguson during his campaign. I do not understand his resistance to lifting the 1% property tax lift cap. The right to do is to increase the cap for local governments and communities to thrive. I would use the relationship that I have built with both him personally and his office, over the course of many years, to work with the Governor for him to understand our dire needs. Not supporting Democratic priorities can only hurt Governor Ferguson's goals in the long term. I signed on to King County's letter requesting Governor Bob Ferguson and the State Legislature to provide tools for local jurisdictions and for progressive revenues. Progressive elected officials need to do a better job of joining together to stand by our values and hold the line. People's lives literally depend on us doing this. No Democratic candidate wins a statewide race without winning King County. For that reason, the opinions, lobbying, and pressure coming from members of King County Council holds significant weight. That is also why it is imperative that we make sure that District 5 elects the most progressive candidate possible.



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?

We have to find a way to make the cost of housing and rent more affordable. In some cases this will mean limiting how often landlords can increase the cost of rent and by how much (and when, and why). The price of utilities such as water, sewer, garbage and recycling, and electricity have also skyrocketed over the past few years and that is something that could be easily subsidized for lower-income or middle-income renters. We also need to do more to fund rental assistance programs and to ensure that the public knows about these programs and how to best utilize them. I would also like to see us lower the cost of public transportation across the board. There are many major cities that only charge \$1 per bus ride per user. Right now in King County, it can cost as much as \$3.25 each way and the only way to get the \$1 lower cost amount is to fill out tedious forms in order to qualify as a rider who needs financial assistance, which is an unfair and adds an extra burden to already cost-burdened residents.

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

We need a multi-pronged approach of providing better training to officers, increasing funding for alternative response programs, increasing funding for mental health programs, AND increasing funding for community programs that strengthen community bonds and that provide critical services, opportunities, and that foster belonging among residents. The problem with this answer is that all of these things cost money. The good news is that there are areas of waste and redundancy within



how our current budget over prioritizes certain aspects of law enforcement budgets (such as spending too much on law enforcement tools without prioritizing training first, for example), just as there are avenues for us to raise money that currently isn't being sourced yet, per the previous questions.

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

We need to train transit-specific security while not becoming too dependent or over reliant upon local policing or county sheriff's deputies for issues that need to be prevented first. Protecting the safety of transit staff and riders always needs to take priority. And transit staff deserve to have the best safety and awareness training that can be provided for them. Our riders deserve to feel secure during their rides (which includes safety, cleanliness, consistency, etc.). At the same time, certain law enforcement tactics, or even just presence, can negatively impact the safety of vulnerable communities or increase the odds of intolerable discrimination occurring. Transit-based security requires a different kind of training than what typical law enforcement officers receive to respond to emergency calls. Other models include having assistants or ambassadors to assist riders and drivers, and intervene when necessary. Additionally, having bullet proof or protective dividers at the drivers area. Lastly, at major transit areas, we must work with the municipal governments to have local law enforcement presence like having parked law enforcement vehicles, more lighting in those areas, and mobile cameras. This issue is very personal to me because my 83 years old mother still rides the bus.



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?

So many problems become improved at once by making our cities more walkable and bikeable, yet too many pedestrians are being injured or killed while attempting to utilize our inadequate and often dangerous infrastructure. We need to improve safety around bike lanes, crosswalks, and all roadways. This includes lowering speed limits, adding speed bumps, utilizing roundabouts when and where it makes sense, putting up buffers between cars and pedestrian areas, making some more urban area roads car-free, and then just overall building our policies around a world that doesn't prioritize cars above everything else.

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?

While I support the end goal of transit electrification, we have to get there in a way that makes sense. We all lose if fewer people ride transit because of this. We need to be able to meet the needs of riders via whatever means are necessary because the societal benefits of getting as many people to ride transit as possible are so great. While I do think we need to budget for and build infrastructure with the goal of having transit electrified, we also need to be realistic in understanding that gas-powered buses are significantly better than no buses at all. If we have to choose one, we need to choose the option that keeps the greatest amount of people riding



transit right now, and understand that building new infrastructure takes time and requires patience.

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?

We need more buy-in from local communities. This will come with a commitment to transparency and with engaging local communities in our decision-making process and in educating them about why these policies are important. Many of our policies and codes that are designed to protect our wild lands and open spaces were put in place to protect critical habitat, whether waterways for salmon and other spawning fish or forest cover for deer or elk or grasslands that help to preserve insect populations and biodiversity. If people are not educated on these issues sometimes these codes can seem like more of an inconvenience than a benefit. We also need to do an audit, of sorts, to ensure that our codes make sense and are truly achieving the intended outcome. If the local people in those areas can see the benefit that comes with these codes are they will be more likely to report violations. Additionally, we need to evaluate if more staffing (park/forest rangers) is necessary for enforcement depending on the data of violations.

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?



I see the future of urbanism on the eastside as one in which we have critical light rail access wrapping around the entire sound, including from south Bellevue into Renton and then on in through to SeaTac and even beyond. Renton has some of the worst traffic in the region. The pollution and cuts to productivity that are associated with suburban sprawl are so needless and inefficient. So are the risks and dangers associated with a system that centers around and prioritizes cars. Just because people have chosen to live in the suburbs does not mean that they should not be able to access transit that will take them into the heart of Seattle easily, quickly, and affordably. The current King County Metro system is not yet where it needs to be in terms of reliability and accessibility for many suburban neighborhoods, but so many lives would see improvements if we were able to prioritize this. There is so much character in the unique downtowns of our eastside cities that being able to access them without having to drive cars through them or park cars around them would significantly improve both health and local economies.