



Nathan Rouse Urbanist Questionnaire 2025

Seattle City Attorney

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

My top priorities as City Attorney are: (1) expanding alternatives to prosecution and incarceration for low-level offenses—including a more effective community court, a higher rate of prefiling diversion, and stronger partnerships with programs that provide treatment and social work services; (2) getting better outcomes in cases involving repeat DUIs and domestic violence; and (3) ending cash bail for nonviolent misdemeanors, so someone's freedom isn't determined by their bank account. These goals are united by a larger objective: accomplishing public trust in a justice system that works for everyone. Right now, the City Attorney's Office has an astonishingly high dismissal rate of cases set for trial (including many charges for DUI and domestic violence), and is failing to interrupt the cycle of nonviolent offenses. Seattle deserves better. As a public defender, I've seen how the system fails and where meaningful change needs to happen—implementing these three priorities will make Seattle a safer, more equitable city.

Do you support adding progressive revenue sources? Which ones would you support or defend to fund city priorities?

Yes. Seattle's future depends on having the resources to support affordable housing, transit, and public safety programs that actually work. I support adding progressive revenue sources like a local capital gains tax. The City Attorney's Office plays a critical role here—not just in defending these policies when challenged, but in drafting and implementing them in a legally sound way. We've seen conservative legal groups and corporate interests sue cities to block progressive tax policy. I will



ensure Seattle has the legal support to fight back and win. That includes defending the JumpStart tax and working with Council to explore revenue options that prioritize equity and shield working families from regressive tax burdens. Progressive revenue isn't just good policy—it's a necessity if we want to meet our city's climate goals, housing needs, and public safety needs. We can't keep relying on the same broken funding model and expect different outcomes. This is especially true at a time when Seattle is at risk of losing federal funding due to Trump's attacks on our city.

How do you plan to defend Seattle under a Trump presidency?

Seattle urgently needs a City Attorney who will fortify its legal protections against attacks from Trump, not only those that have already arrived but the fights we know are coming. This means defending our sanctuary policies, refusing to cooperate with ICE, and pushing back in court against unconstitutional attacks on abortion access, LGBTQ+ rights, and environmental protections. We know Trump and his allies are already targeting cities like ours. We need someone in this office who won't blink. The current City Attorney became a Republican during Trump's first term and hasn't fought hard enough for Seattle. I will. My legal background includes constitutional litigation, federal clerkships, and a career representing people who are the most vulnerable to state power. If elected, I'll be ready on day one to challenge harmful policies in court, coordinate with progressive cities across the country, and ensure Seattle remains a place of safety and resistance. We can't just react—we need proactive legal strategy to protect our laws, our people, and our future. That's what I'll bring to this role.

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



Real public safety requires prevention, not just punishment. For serious cases like repeat DUIs and domestic violence, we must prosecute effectively and pursue meaningful resolutions that protect victims and reduce future harm—such as no-contact orders, ignition interlock devices, treatment, or jail when necessary.

But for crimes of poverty like shoplifting or trespass, the data is clear: jail doesn't solve the problem—resources do. That's why I'll prioritize prebooking and prefilming diversion programs that connect people with housing, mental health care, and substance use treatment. Caging someone for a night and releasing them without support only deepens the cycle. We need a smarter approach.

Ann Davison has dismissed thousands of cases and blamed others for all the ways her approach is failing. I'll take responsibility for building systems that actually work. As a public defender, I've seen what happens when someone gets help instead of jail—and the difference it makes for long-term safety.

I'll partner with public health leaders and community organizations to prevent harm before it happens. Safety means more than case counts—it means people feel secure in their neighborhoods and know their city is addressing the root causes of crime. That's the kind of leadership I'll bring to this office.

How do you plan to improve public safety for transit operators and riders, and boost ridership and transit accessibility? What is your approach to making our streets safer for all users, especially with pedestrian traffic deaths rising?

We need a holistic approach to safety that includes transit riders, operators, pedestrians, and cyclists. As City Attorney, I'll work closely with SDOT, Metro, and community partners to support legal frameworks prioritizing accessibility and safety for all users. For transit operators and riders, that means clear, equitable policies for



addressing disruptive behavior—without relying on unnecessary arrests or jail. It also means defending and strengthening infrastructure investments that make transit faster, more reliable, and safer. I'll support efforts to redesign dangerous intersections, enforce traffic laws with a focus on safety rather than punishment, and collaborate with Vision Zero advocates to ensure legal tools are aligned with our goals. The City Attorney can be a key partner in crafting and defending legislation that protects pedestrians and cyclists—like protected bike lanes, traffic calming measures, and daylighting intersections. As someone who bikes and uses transit myself, I understand how critical this work is. Safety should never depend on how you get around. We must also promote and expand upon novel ideas to improve safety like what is being done on Rainier to plant trees in the center lane. Designing roads that are less conducive to speeding and reckless driving can help prevent dangerous behavior.

Do you support camping bans or sweeps? If elected, how would you adapt or change current law/policies to protect and support our neighbors?

I do not support criminalizing homelessness or de facto equivalents, such as sweeps. Sweeps push people from place to place without providing long-term solutions and often result in the loss of personal belongings and support systems. They create instability, not safety. As City Attorney, I'll prioritize legal strategies that support housing-first interventions, not displacement. That includes working with service providers, public defenders, and impacted communities to develop alternatives to enforcement-led approaches. While the U.S. Supreme Court recently opened the door to cities that want to criminalize homelessness, I will not be part of that. I'll push for policies that expand access to shelter, support long-term housing, and protect people's rights. That includes reevaluating existing ordinances and how they're enforced. We need to stop treating homelessness as a criminal issue and start addressing it as the housing, health, and equity crisis it is. Everyone deserves



dignity—and a safe place to call home. We should also follow Spokane's lead and pass "ban the address" legislation to ensure people cannot be discriminated against by potential employers because they are homeless. Here is my plan for making such legislation happen here in Seattle

<https://www.theurbanist.org/2025/05/17/op-ed-seattle-should-ban-employers-from-discriminating-against-unhoused-job-applicants/>