



## **Ryan McIrvine Urbanist Questionnaire 2025**

King County Council, District 5

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

1) Sustainable Growth – We must increase housing supply in urban areas, prioritizing transit-oriented development to reduce sprawl and protect open space. By building walkable communities with connected bike paths, transit access, and safe streets, we can reduce car dependency, lower emissions, and improve accessibility. I will focus on expanding our regional trail network, restoring salmon habitats, safeguarding water quality, and enhancing our urban tree canopy to combat rising temperatures. These climate justice efforts are crucial for creating resilient, equitable communities.

2) Community and Public Safety – Everyone deserves to feel safe in their neighborhood, parks, and on transit. I'll work to improve transit safety, promote active transportation, and ensure that public spaces are welcoming for all. Addressing homelessness, drug use, and public health challenges through compassionate, solutions-based approaches is key to promoting equity and protecting public spaces. Collaboration will help us build a safer, healthier region.

3) Workforce Development – I am committed to expanding career pathways, particularly for individuals transitioning from homelessness or incarceration, through green job training and clean energy apprenticeship programs. This is essential for fostering economic sustainability and tackling climate change while supporting both people and the planet.



**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?**

As a Renton City Councilmember and regional housing leader, I've supported zoning reform, missing middle housing, and investments in affordable housing near transit. On the County Council, I'll prioritize using surplus public land for housing, expand the Housing Trust Fund, and support social housing models that serve families of all incomes.

When it comes to siting new shelters or supportive housing, I will lead with direct, early, and transparent public engagement. The goal of any process should be to avoid potential conflicts. That means meeting with neighbors, listening to concerns, and clearly explaining how these services work and why they matter. I'll partner with providers to ensure operations are accountable and responsive.

But I will also be firm. Community objections cannot override our obligation to house people safely. I will be clear that homelessness is a regional crisis, and every neighborhood must be part of the solution. Engagement is about building trust, not granting a veto. I'll lead with honesty, equity, and urgency.

**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 support adding progressive revenue sources to fund housing, transit, behavioral health, and climate resilience, especially as federal threats grow under the Trump agenda. Washington's tax system is one of the most regressive in the country, and reform is long overdue. We need a tax structure that reflects our region's growing economy while ensuring fairness and sustainability.

I will advocate for modernizing our tax code, including a high-earners income tax to ensure the wealthiest contribute their fair share and progressive business taxes focused on the largest corporations to support workforce development pipelines. I also support revisiting the Real Estate Excise Tax to better direct funds to affordable housing. We must explore financing tools and public-private partnerships that align with equity and sustainability goals.

Before seeking new revenue, I will work to optimize existing resources and ensure transparency and accountability for every dollar spent. Our budget should reflect our values, support frontline services, and uphold strong labor and racial equity standards.

King County must lead by example, by investing in people, infrastructure, and climate solutions through a tax system that works for everyone, not just the wealthy few.

**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?**



The 1% property tax cap has deeply undermined King County's ability to fund essential services, and I support lifting it. I will collaborate with stakeholders across the region, including businesses, state legislators, and community organizations, to ensure we are using smart, equitable strategies to fund the services we need. Reforming our tax system is just one piece of a broader strategy that includes partnerships and regional solutions to address our housing, transit, and climate challenges. I support tying it to inflation and population growth, so our budgets can reflect real costs.

At the same time, we must also ensure we are constructing enough new housing units overall in order to meet the rising demand and ensure we do not negatively impact housing affordability and price families out of homeownership opportunities in King County.

In the meantime, we need to protect core services and ensure any limited dollars are spent equitably. But make no mistake, the property tax cap is unsustainable. We need leadership that is honest about what it costs to run a thriving, inclusive county, and I will be a strong voice for change.

**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?**

The most important strategy is to treat housing as essential infrastructure and invest accordingly. That means building more deeply affordable and workforce housing near jobs and transit, protecting renters, and preventing displacement.



On the County Council, I'll push to expand the Housing Trust Fund, support social housing models, and prioritize public land for permanently affordable development. I'll also advocate for renter protections, eviction prevention programs, and income supports like child care subsidies and transit access that reduce cost burdens on working families.

To implement this, I'll work with cities, housing authorities, and labor to ensure new funding is tied to equity, sustainability, and long-term affordability. The cost of living is not just about market forces, it's about political choices. I'll lead with a commitment to building a region where people can afford to stay and thrive.

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

Public safety means more than policing. It means investing in housing, behavioral health, crisis response, youth programs, and infrastructure that helps communities feel secure and supported. My approach is prevention first. I'll work to expand diversion programs, strengthen mental and behavioral health response systems, and ensure 911 alternatives like crisis teams and community-based responders are available throughout King County. I also support continued accountability for law enforcement, including body-worn cameras and civilian oversight. For offenders who have not responded to earlier interventions, an approach of compassionate accountability ensures that consequences are paired with support, creating pathways for change and reducing repeat offenses.



Safe neighborhoods provide affordable housing, good lighting, well-maintained streets and parks, and places for youth and families to gather. I'll fight for a public safety strategy that reflects those broader needs and includes the voices of the communities most impacted by violence and underinvestment by creating meaningful partnerships with neighborhood groups, youth leaders, and community-based organizations. That includes regular listening sessions, participatory budgeting, and elevating trusted messengers who know their communities best.

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

Transit operators and riders deserve a system that is safe, accessible, and welcoming. I will advocate for increased staffing of transit ambassadors, mental health responders, and unarmed safety personnel to support both safety and rider experience without relying solely on enforcement.

To boost ridership, we need to prioritize frequent, reliable service, especially in underserved areas. I support full implementation of the Metro Connects network, adding late-night and weekend service hours, and ensuring safe, accessible stops with good lighting and shelter. I'll also work to reduce barriers for youth and low-income riders, and make fare enforcement more equitable.

Public safety and ridership go hand-in-hand. People are more likely to ride when they feel safe and when service is reliable. I'll work closely with frontline transit



workers, disability advocates, and community organizations to make sure our approach reflects real-world needs.

**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 to treat traffic violence as a public health crisis. I support a countywide commitment to Vision Zero, backed by real investment in street design, data-driven enforcement, and equitable mobility. As a County Councilmember, I'll advocate for safe street infrastructure like protected bike lanes, raised crosswalks, daylighting at intersections, better lighting, and traffic calming in high-injury corridors. I'll prioritize areas with high pedestrian volumes and underserved communities, where investments have historically lagged.

I will also work to improve coordination between King County and cities to ensure regional consistency in road safety standards, and I'll advocate for better integration of transit access and walkability in all infrastructure planning. This is about more than engineering. It's about political will. We need to prioritize people over cars, and I'm committed to doing that every day in office.

**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?**



Electrification is essential to meeting our climate goals, but it can't come at the expense of service. If we cut transit hours, we lose riders, increase emissions, and push people back into cars. I reject that false choice.

I will advocate for state and federal funding to help cover the capital costs of electrification, and for phasing in fleet transitions in a way that maintains or expands service levels, not reduces them. As we move forward with electrification, we must prioritize communities of color and historically marginalized communities first, leading with equity to ensure these populations benefit most from the transition to clean energy.

I also support exploring progressive local revenue sources tied to climate and transportation goals to help fund both clean fleets and expanded service. We need to prioritize dense, frequent service alongside electrification. That means planning around ridership, not just emissions per vehicle. Climate justice is transit justice. We can't solve one without advancing the other.

**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?**

As a Renton City Councilmember and member of the King County Growth Management Planning Council, I've helped shape policies that protect open space,



agricultural land, and rural communities. But strong policies mean little without consistent enforcement.

If elected, I'll work to ensure the County has the staffing and tools to uphold its land use regulations. That includes better tracking and public reporting of violations, improved coordination across departments, and timely follow-through on enforcement actions. At the same time, I'll support outreach and education to help rural landowners and small communities navigate permitting and compliance. Preserving rural and natural lands is critical to our climate goals, food systems, and regional identity, and we need both accountability and access to get 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?**

The Eastside has an opportunity to lead in creating a new model of urbanism that reflects diversity, centers equity, and bridges the gap between suburban and urban communities. With the opening of light rail stations in Bellevue and Redmond, the expansion of Eastrail, and the RapidRide K Line, we can prioritize affordable housing around these transit hubs to ensure these benefits reach all communities, especially those historically underserved.

We need to build complete neighborhoods where people of all incomes can live, where transit connects people to jobs and services, and where land use supports climate and economic goals. We must resist efforts that limit growth and deny housing solutions, particularly where new transit can bring more equitable



opportunities. By prioritizing affordable housing near transit, we create connected, inclusive communities that allow residents to access essential services without fear of displacement.

As a Renton City Councilmember, I've supported zoning reform and stronger regional coordination. On the County Council, I'll advocate for walkable, accessible strategies that allow working families to stay rooted. The future of the Eastside should be welcoming, connected, and resilient. I am committed to helping us get there.