



## **Sara Nelson Urbanist Questionnaire 2025**

Seattle City Council, Position 9

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

My top three priorities are: (1) public safety, (2) reducing homelessness and addiction through treatment and housing, and (3) tackling housing unaffordability by increasing supply. The fentanyl epidemic is inextricably linked to our public safety and chronic homelessness crises. I created a pilot to directly fund comprehensive, on-demand treatment – and it's changing lives. I led efforts to fund an additional mobile treatment van and expand addiction services into permanent supportive housing. I'll keep fighting for treatment access that meets people where they are. I've pushed to fully staff emergency services and improve 911 response times, so everyone can feel safe in their neighborhood. On housing, I'm pro-growth. I sponsored legislation allowing 1000 units in SoDo, half affordable for 75 years. I support the Comprehensive Plan's Neighborhood Centers and backed historic affordable housing investments. I've been focused on permitting reform so we can build more housing faster, across all neighborhoods and income levels.

### **How will you boost housing options, particularly for families of all incomes to live near where they work? How will you expand shelter space, emergency housing, and permanent supportive housing? How do you weigh community objections with the housing goals for your jurisdiction, while encouraging engagement from neighbors?**

We need to aggressively expand housing across types and incomes. That means following through on HB 1110 permanent controls and building more 3-bedroom



units for families. I led on workforce housing in the Stadium District and supported Seattle's record \$342 million affordable housing investment for 2025–2026.

I serve on the KCRHA Governing Board so I oversee the regional budget for emergency shelter and transitional housing. I also backed Seattle's funding for YouthCare's Constellation Center, non-congregate shelter beds, and direct rental assistance.

We must scale up permanent supportive housing with on-site services and hold operators accountable to Good Neighbor policies. I've supported tiny home villages, recovery housing, and on-demand treatment as crucial pieces of this continuum.

I'll be pushing for the renewed Multifamily Tax Exemption program to be calibrated to maximize developer participation in order to generate more workforce and market rate housing faster.

As an at-large Councilmember, I hear from a wide range of residents. My role is to weigh community concerns with the citywide need for housing. I believe in open public input, but my responsibility is to weigh that feedback in the context of long-term housing and equity goals for the city.

**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?**

If and when federal funding cuts under Trump hit Seattle's budget, we need to be ready. This is a uniquely dangerous, unpredictable administration, and Seattle has to be able to respond fast to protect the basic services people rely on.



That means everything is on the table when it comes to progressive revenue. But it also means holding ourselves to a higher standard. The better we deliver, the more people we can help so our first responsibility is to make sure our investments are delivering the outcomes we expect. That's called accountability. Council passed a record number of Statements of Legislative Intent during last year's budget deliberations to get answers to that question and the responses we receive back from departments will enable us to better determine what cuts are appropriate going forward.

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

Public safety is what makes a city livable. If you don't feel safe walking to the bus, opening your business, or calling 911 and knowing someone will show up, nothing else works. I'm focused on building a system that can respond, starting with increased staffing at SFD and SPD for faster response times and fully equipped emergency services. Rebuilding public safety starts with rebuilding trust – a department that responds quickly and appropriately. We also need greater access to on-demand substance use disorder treatment. I secured funding for another mobile medication van through Evergreen Treatment Services and invested in recovery-based services in permanent supportive housing. When care is the right tool – and it often is – we need to have it ready. At the same time, we can't ignore the impact of fentanyl and open-air drug dealing. SPD must use its growing workforce to arrest the dealers harming our neighborhoods. We're also working toward 30% women in SPD by 2030. Rebuilding public safety means rebuilding the department itself. This is a critical moment of change and an opportunity to make SPD more representative of the community it serves.



**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?**

Transit only works if people feel safe using and operating it. I'm proud to be endorsed by ATU 587. I supported their demand for physical barriers between operators and passengers and I'm glad Metro is finally moving on it after Shawn Yim's death. It should have happened sooner, and I'm committed to making sure future fixes don't wait. Operators have also raised serious concerns about exposure to drug use on board. No one should have to feel unsafe at work, or as a rider.

That's why I supported funding for additional safety personnel on buses and light rail. Their presence isn't just about responding to incidents; it helps prevent them. That's a good use of resources.

On our streets, pedestrian deaths are rising. We need to act. I support deploying speed cameras in high-risk areas and redesigning streets with shorter crosswalks and clearer accountability for reckless driving. We know what works. We just need to do it.

**Goldilocks questions on the neighborhood growth centers in the Mayor's One Seattle housing plan: about right, should be more, or should be less? And why? In what ways could your city's comprehensive plan go further, and what would you push for to improve it during your tenure?**

Seattle needs more housing. Period. Neighborhood growth centers are one of our most effective tools for adding density in the right places – near transit, jobs, and services – while also supporting small businesses and strengthening community identity.



I've fought for major new housing in SoDo, backed the comprehensive plan's growth framework, and supported HB 1110 as a foundation for adding more missing middle housing citywide. But plans aren't enough. Implementation matters.

The comprehensive plan should go further to allow for corner stores in residential neighborhoods and remove unnecessary barriers that delay housing construction. I'll keep working with district-based Councilmembers to surface local issues, but my citywide role is to keep us focused on the bigger picture: more housing, more affordability, and a livable Seattle for the next generation.

**What are your transportation priorities in light of budget limitations?**

Public safety will continue to be my top transportation priority. That means expanding physical barriers for operators, adding more security staff on transit, and making sure fare enforcement is handled in a way that keeps everyone safe and treated with respect. We also need to keep buses moving. That means reliability, expanded service, and signal prioritization, so transit becomes the default option for more people. We know that working people are most eager to use public transportation if they can trust it to be clean, safe, and on time. We also need to invest in our city's core infrastructure – roads, bridges, and traffic systems—to prevent disruptions and ensure every mode of travel works reliably. A world-class multimodal transportation system requires investing in all modes.

**What outcomes do you want to see from the Seattle Transit Measure up for renewal by early 2027?**

I want more frequent, reliable bus service for the greatest number of riders in Seattle but it's too early for me to know what changes to existing Metro service will or should be contemplated. To increase transit ridership in general, we must make it



safer to walk, bike, or roll to one's destination. I want to see continued investment in bike infrastructure, pedestrian safety improvements like shorter crosswalks and better lighting, and bridge and road maintenance so people can stay connected regardless of how they travel. Improvements like better bus stop design, clearer wayfinding, and more reliable service along key corridors will make transit easier to use for everyone.

**What is your stance on the Mandatory Housing Affordability program and particularly if it should apply to middle housing in formerly single family zones?**

The Mandatory Housing Affordability program was the result of years of work by housing advocates, developers, and community groups. I supported it then, and I still do. But, I also think we need to adapt based on how it's working in the field. I've heard directly from builders that the 9% affordability requirement for low-rise projects can be a dealbreaker. That's a problem that we need to address. These projects – duplexes, triplexes, and small apartments – are some of our most affordable market-rate options. If the math doesn't work, they don't get built so I do not support applying MHA to middle housing in formerly single family zones. I'd support re-evaluating affordability requirements after rezonings and adjusting by building type or geography.

**How do you think the city should approach the idea of reallocating space away from parking and single-occupancy vehicle travel?**

We need to be using street space in ways that move the most people and support the city we're trying to build. That means more room for buses, bikes, and walking – especially in places where the demand is already there. I've supported expanding bike infrastructure, transit lanes, and pedestrian improvements, and I'll keep doing that. Some uses still require vehicle access. I've supported practical access solutions



where needed, while staying focused on shifting toward cleaner, more efficient ways of getting around. If we want people to rely less on cars, we have to make the alternatives better. That means supporting more reliable transit, safer bike routes, and more walkable streets and sidewalks. The more we build that kind of system, the more modeshift we'll see.