



FIRST HILL
IMPROVEMENT ASSOCIATION

First Hill Improvement Association Questionnaire for City-Wide Council Candidates

First Hill has roughly 14,000 residents and over 30,000 employees, bounded by Union Street to the north, Broadway to the east, Main Street to the south, and I5 to the west.

Homelessness on First Hill

First Hill has hundreds of shelter beds, housing for formerly homeless individuals (with more under-construction at the 1400 Madison project), and various services that support homeless individuals.

- What are your plans to ensure that there are adequate shelter beds and housing options available to those who are unhoused?
- What is your plan to ensure that other neighborhoods throughout the city provide the services that First Hill already does?
- How will you plan to provide adequate counseling to help unhoused people transition into housing?

First of all, please let me apologize for being late with this response and also apologize for the somewhat rushed responses I've given because I'm so short on time right now, but I like to answer questionnaires myself, not have a helper do that for me. I've very interested in downtown and how we can return the downtown neighborhoods to be safe, clean, and livable for people of all ages and abilities that live and work there.

Our approach to homelessness is an epic failure. I've written about why that is at theseattlejournal.com as well as in campaign newsletters. I'm out every weekend litterpicking at current and former unsanctioned encampments and I've learned quite a bit from that and I house people transitioning from homelessness, so I have a variety of lenses that help me see solutions that work as well as ones that don't. These articles encapsulate quite a few of my thoughts on the topic.

[End It Like Gresham - theseattlejournal.com](http://theseattlejournal.com) [Mutual Aid: The Real Reason Our Parks Are Full of Tents - theseattlejournal.com](http://theseattlejournal.com)

As well, my website has succinct position statements on many issues. <https://electkatemartin.com>

I'd like to see us enjoy the kind of district-level democracy we envisioned when we voted for District Elections in 2013, but have not yet realized. Belgium has a governance system that was covered in [an article in The Economist in 2019](#) that would work so well for bottom up governance here in Seattle. My interpretation of how it could work here is that we could have district-level plans developed with guidance from the government, but mostly citizen generated that we would then elect District Councilmembers to steward. In this way we would not have people who aren't representing constituents and their plans elected to those seats. Right now, it seems that we elect district councilmembers, and they have some pretty radical failed theoretical approaches that have nothing to do with solving our problems and they are hurting our city.



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With this kind of district-level planning, we could respond to targets the city provided, but decide ourselves how to accommodate housing for homeless and mentally ill people in a unique way that works for each our districts. We could also make sure that we keep those responses in ratio with the 100,000 or so people that live in each district. It's simply not sustainable or fair to concentrate infrastructure in one or two districts. I'm a planning and design consultant and I like plans. Seattle's approach to concentrating services and facilities doesn't work.

The occurrence of schizophrenia is 1 in 100. The occurrence of bipolar is 3 in 100. At least half of those people are not able to work consistently and some not at all. Many have lost their friend and familial ties over time either because their families got old or because they became addicted on top of their mental illness diagnoses and their kin could not deal with them. In every rural area, small town, suburb or city, the occurrence is the same, so the response must be the same. I call it the 2% solution. We have to distribute the solutions for housing these folks at about that rate of our population. Same with the mental healthcare and addiction recovery facilities in general. We certainly have work to do. When we abandoned residential psych facilities and put people on the street, we had 7000 residential psych units in Washington. The population has since doubled and we only have 1200 units.

On the recovery side, one of my housemates has schizophrenia, bipolar disorder and narcolepsy. He overcame a gallon a day alcohol addiction from his youth a number of year ago, but is currently hooked on meth. He's ready to recover, but we've been waiting 3 weeks for intake. When someone is ready, we need to accommodate them now, not in 3 weeks, 3 months or never.

The Gresham, OR model mentioned earlier is very workable for helping people transition from tents. It's very humane and effective and they've achieved functional zero homelessness without sweeping anyone off to another jurisdiction which is so common in Seattle.

Affordable Housing

Thousands of people commute to and from First Hill on any given day and workforce housing is needed to reduce traffic and commutes.

- What is your plan to increase workforce housing in First Hill and other downtown neighborhoods?

Workforce housing downtown is a concept that doesn't always jive with the workforce unless they're young and/or single. Lots of people with families (a big part of the workforce) don't want to live downtown because even well before the current state of downtown, it wasn't too friendly to kids. This is a real conundrum. When downtowns aren't friendly to kids, bad behavior by adults increases because kids have a way of tempering those bad adult behaviors. We have lots of work to do in that area.



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Also, lots of workers choose to live further out so they can own a home. I do think a variety of entry level homeownership opportunities could help attract people to be interested in downtown neighborhoods. I like to say that the most affordable housing is the housing you own. We just have not made a lot of opportunities for entry level homeownership with the “developer oriented density” strategies the city has employed to get things built at the expense of the families, workers and more. Shared housing definitely is a strategy that could help get the workforce closer to work especially for people with extended families who can help with childcare and more.

Also, one of the ideas that I have for affordable housing is something I call “Savings Places” where people pay reduced rents in exchange for building savings accounts, if they pay their rent on time. If they don’t pay their rent on time, the “savings” goes to the landlord, but if they pay on time, the “savings” goes to the tenant in a special account. So many people have no savings at all. The “Savings Places” would help them learn to pay rent on time which increases stability and it would also give them a nestegg or resources to invest in themselves and their families. Even \$150 a month would build close to \$2k a year which would make a significant difference in many people’s lives.

Post-COVID 19 Recovery

Over the past year, multiple small businesses, many of them owned and operated by People of Color, have experienced break-ins, assaults, thefts, and arson.

- What is your Road to Recovery for First Hill?
- How do you plan to support small businesses that have seen increases in crime?

I’m interested in enforcement of the laws. I think the failed theory approach that many of our councilmembers, the mayor and the city attorney have taken needs to be replaced by a system that attends to misdemeanors. Little things become big things. What you permit, you promote. The theory that we should all ignore these crimes and label them crimes of poverty is misguided. When laws are not enforced, lawlessness and disorder follows.

We have a lot of drug addicts in Seattle and each day they do what they will to get the money to buy their fix a couple of times. My housemate who lived in a tent at Denny Park said that many of the folks in tents downtown steal all day and then sell all night to keep their habit going. This in turn has attracted other addicts to consider pitching tents here because of the lawlessness.

The beauty of the Gresham, OR model of addressing homelessness is that it gets people (who are ready) into the services and housing they need. It also gets the serious criminals in jail. This reduces populations of shoplifting homeless addicts. Still, we need a criminal justice system that helps people get back on track rather than ignoring their bad behavior at everyone else’s expense including the residents and shopkeepers on First Hill. Activist prosecutors are doing Seattle a huge disservice by allowing our city to



degrade while they promote strategies that have not worked anywhere and will not work anywhere because they're non-sensical. We have to remind ourselves that the role of a prosecutor is to pursue justice and enforce the law. When they won't do that, the police making arrests means nothing and leads to nothing but a revolving door at the jailhouse.

Most of the people I've met along the campaign trail that recovered from a life of crime attribute it to getting caught and doing time.

First Hill Open Space and the Public Realm Action Plan

Our neighborhood is vastly underserved with access to open space. That is why our organization, alongside SDOT, the Parks Department, and SDCI created the First Hill Public Realm Action Plan (PRAP) in 2015 to address the lack of open spaces due to inadequate availability of land and high land values.

- Will you commit, before the August 3rd Primary to go on a FHIA guided tour to learn how the PRAP has benefitted the neighborhood thus far?
- Will you pledge to support First Hill through the continuation of policies that encourage private developers to implement the PRAP? Do you have any policy ideas that can overcome the challenges associated with new park development in First Hill?

I'm very interested in learning more about PRAP and I'd like a tour if we can fit that in before Aug 3, if not after (if I'm lucky enough to make it through the primary).

Seattle has a very low per-capita open space ratio and few places make that more obvious than First Hill. We can't keep growing our buildings without growing our open space resources.

I studied the usefulness of urban open spaces in Paris when I was studying Landscape Architecture in the 70s. I've never been able to see a city without seeing how its open spaces work or don't work for the people that live there since then. Seattle did a great job planning-wise to get some awesome regional parks on the map via the Olmsted Plan before development had its way. Unfortunately, most of our downtown waterfront was not a part of that and we only get glimpses. Larger parks up on Capitol Hill and beyond are not readily accessible. Freeway Park was created, but its perimeter is largely inactivated, and few feet use it as a path to get from one place to another, both terrible qualities for an urban park.

I will look forward to learning about your plan. I'm always supportive of mutually beneficial tradeoffs between residents and developers that result in quality, useable open space opportunities.

Thank you for this opportunity to address your questions.



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