

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.

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Position: Seattle City Council City Wide Position 9

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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.

1. What are your plans to ensure that there are adequate shelter beds and housing options available to those who are unhoused?

Seattle is facing a dire housing crisis that city policies can address. With the city's 2024 Comprehensive Plan implementation on the horizon, now is the time to think big and bold about housing in Seattle. Here are my key priorities:

1. **Stop the Sweeps:** Sweeps are inhumane, ineffective, and a waste of resources. The current city policy of destroying encampments established by those living outside is cruel, inhumane, and needs to end immediately. Forcibly moving residents living outside is traumatizing, disrupts the little bit of stability residents living outside have established, and makes all residents less safe. We can divert the dollars being used for sweeps towards more tiny house villages, sanitation support, nutrition, housing navigation, and other supports for residents living outside.
2. **Social & Affordable Housing:** we must rapidly build affordable housing throughout the city by increasing investments in social housing, ending zoning laws which have segregated Seattle, and prioritizing housing for Seattle's Black Trans & Queer communities.
3. **End exclusionary zoning,** expand urban villages, build "missing middle housing" by using a residential infill strategy similar to Portland, and expanding multi-family zoning.

4. **House Our Neighbors:** the city should invest in hotels and tiny village accommodations for Seattleites experiencing homelessness.
 - a. **Short Term & Mid-Term Transitional Housing Options & Supports:**
We must rapidly expand our hoteling programs, parking lot programs, tiny house villages, and supportive services. We will not be able to build permanent supportive housing overnight. In order to mitigate as much harm as possible, we must ensure that people have safer shelter and low-barrier, accessible services until there are more affordable, permanent and permanent, supportive options.
5. **Radical accessibility:** the City of Seattle should create a fund inside the Seattle Parks and Recreation Department to support people who use the parks for housing, enabling parks to help sustainably and humanely address the needs of unsheltered people while expanding green spaces in the city and absorbing unneeded roadways.
6. **Solidify an effective regional approach** to addressing the housing affordability and homelessness crisis.

How do we pay for it? Progressive Revenue Generation.

When it comes to taxation and revenue generation, our state is one of the most regressive. This means that the City also relies upon regressive taxes to generate revenue. Ultimately, the burden of taxation is inequitably distributed. Those paying the most in taxes are also those most impacted by the lack of affordable housing. We need to tax the wealth and corporations who have benefited most from the economic boom in our region.

Some of the taxes we want to explore include:

- Local Estate Tax
- Taxes on exceptionally high compensation
- An augmented B&O tax
- Raise the REET
- Progressive property related taxes such as speculative real estate investments, vacant or unoccupied properties, second home
- Housing Growth Fund (Reinstate the City's Housing Growth Fund)

2. What is your plan to ensure that other neighborhoods throughout the city provide the services that First Hill already does?

- A. Civilianize 911 so that people can call and access the right services at the right time from anywhere in the city.

As of June 1, 911 was no longer housed with SPD. It is now a part of the Community Safety and Communication Center--a new, independent city

department. This department should house other civilian crisis response and program safety programs. We can quickly make sure the new dispatch has new training and operating instructions so that they are sending calls to non-police responders when possible.

B. Expand both HealthOne and community-based responses throughout the city.

We need to expand HealthOne so that it can receive a larger volume of calls. The city is investing \$10 million in an 18 month expansion of community-based responses. We need to assess those who received funding, what kinds of calls or referrals can they receive, what is the connection between other HSD programs and supports and our new civilianized 911, and what other programs or infrastructure needs to be built (based on types of calls 911 typically receives) to provide the best supports when residents are in need or crisis. As officers continue to leave the department, new hiring should be frozen, all salary savings should be recaptured and moved into funding and scaling up non-police responses to harm and meeting basic needs.

C. Radical accessibility and racial equity in the entire city.

We need to be creating radical accessibility throughout the city for our unhoused residents. We propose ending sweeps and utilizing those dollars for garbage pick-up, mobile hygiene stations (including showers and clothes washing), accessibility of public restrooms and water stations, and mobile clinics and supports that include dental and physical health. Where possible, we would like to see mobile units that provide haircuts, undergarments, and other hygiene needs.

More of the services we utilize need to be led by the most impacted communities such as communities of color, especially Black and Native communities, so that they are culturally responsive and representative of the communities with the least accessibility to services. These services and supports, including the above radical accessibility plan, need to be low-barrier.

Black and Native communities experience the highest rates of criminalization and have historically (and presently) been brutalized by the government; therein having a rightful distrust of government supports and services. When people access city-based or city-funded services, they should not fear being further criminalized or brutalized while accessing those supports or being forced to commit to things like religious services, addiction services, or other types of

services while receiving basic needs support. Meeting the basic needs of our unhoused residents cannot be dependent upon compliance with receiving other types of services. Such requirements make it hard to build trust and rapport, especially in Black and Native communities, and often “turn people off” to receiving such support later, if needed.

Having mobile units also allows the City to respond to different needs throughout the city and target our support towards those most marginalized and vulnerable community members, such as the Black and Native communities. It also allows us to be flexible about how and where we show up, as many residents without homes may not always remain in the same place. Having the ability to be flexible and evolve with the needs of community members without homes is key to meeting these initial basic needs.

D. Addressing root causes is key to ending the crisis.

The racial wealth gap, exclusionary zoning and red lining, the lack of affordable housing and low-barrier shelters and supportive transitional housing, the continued rising cost of living in our region, and the lack of access to high-wage employment are all largely to blame for why so many of our unhoused resident are disproportionately Black and Native. We need low-barrier permanent and transitional supportive housing that is, again, led by Black and Native communities because we are able to respond to the cultural and spiritual needs of our community members. The expertise to run these facilities well and sustainability may not exist throughout all Black and Native communities and so the City must commit to providing the technical support needed to build and sustain these spaces.

E. Race & Social Justice Initiative

The Race and Social Justice Initiative requires the RSJI toolkit be employed in assessing our work and implementation as a City. We must take seriously utilizing all tools at our reach to ensure our work is actually aligning with our vision for the City as it pertains to RSJI. In this regard, we should employ full-time staff in each applicable department whose only role is to ensure that we are to our very best aligning with the principle and values outlined by RSJI.

3. How will you plan to provide adequate counseling to help unhoused people transition into housing?

We should provide radical accessibility (discussed in Question #1 & #2) for residents who are without homes and prioritize services (including sanitation and health services) and de-escalation supports for those communities. Criminalizing poverty, mental health, and drug use is not preventative and in fact forces people into a cycle of recidivism that can be detrimental for the entirety of one's life and ultimately creates and exacerbates the public health and safety crisis.

We must also invest more public safety dollars in a diversity of supports such as city-wide mental health support teams, substance abuse support centers, and de-escalation teams that are not connected to police or sweeps. There are a myriad of reasons why people are without homes and typically is not because of drug use nor mental health. Over 100,000 Seattleites are facing the possibility of being homeless if we do not address the looming eviction crisis. Continuing the work of defund ineffective public safety systems and investing in the humane, dignified solutions we know actually work is key.

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.

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

A. Zoning & Density

Our current zoning pattern has created a bifurcated city. ⅔ of residential land is not accessible to all but those with the highest incomes. The 2024 Comprehensive Plan is an opportunity to effectively end, in the least, the apartment ban, and, at most, single-family zoning in our city and equitably build housing density throughout the entire city.

Our development needs to be thoughtful-- we must stop urban sprawl, improve public transportation access and equity, make more areas of the City walkable, improve access to key amenities and services for all Seattleites, and we must have in place anti-displacement and anti-gentrification policies as well as opportunities for BIPOC families to generate equity as many BIPOC families have been historically and presently excluded from wealth building opportunities.

Density should be shared across the City. Priority areas for urban villages and urban enclaves are areas where we know there is or will be robust public transportation. This will help us to achieve our climate goals, build targeted transportation infrastructure, and make more of the City walkable. The more people can live in the areas where they work, go to school, grocery shop, access childcare and healthcare services the less people will

drive and the more accessible our City will become by public transportation, bike, or on foot.

- B. Keep people in their homes by: a) preserving currently affordable and b) renters protections.

Many of my policies for building affordable, social, green housing are elaborated on in the above questions, but it is important that we expand renters protections as well to allow workers to live where they work, reduce commute times, and reduce carbon emissions from single-occupancy vehicles.

Regarding tenant's rights, I oppose state laws preventing cities from enacting rent control legislation and other forms of housing stabilization. As a campaign we are supporting the grassroots Tenants Rights Union campaign "No Debts, No Evictions." Some of the key protections we will pursue include:

- Support (at the state level) a moratorium on evictions and foreclosures for 2 years after the state of emergency and no rent increases for the same time period.
- Build social housing. We need to build \$400 million units per a year for 10 years to meet the needs of Seattle residents.
- Support moving public land into communal owners for the development of permanently affordable, democratically-controlled housing. This could be for co-ops or community land trusts and should prioritize grassroots groups led by BIPOC communities.
- If possible, put in place a Community Reinvestment Ordinance which requires banks sell foreclosed property to local residents, community land trusts, and coops, for conversion to social housing.

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.

1. What is your Road to Recovery for First Hill?

This past year the COVID-19 crisis has exacerbated the pre-existing conditions of gross inequity and inequality in our communities. Therefore, when I talk about a "COVID recovery," I am not envisioning a return to normal -- rather, I hope that we can chart a new course forward that will actually begin to address some of the systemic issues the crisis has laid bare. We have an opportunity to use the lessons we have learned from the COVID-19 crisis to build social safety nets, massive investments in housing and transit infrastructure, pass progressive taxation legislation that is permanent, and fund social services that provide supportive care, medical treatment, mental health resources, and

crisis de-escalation. All of these are necessary to build up as buffers for the next crisis or recession that will come one day.

As we strive to safely re-open we must prioritize workers, those most impacted by the housing affordability crisis and looming evictions, creating an engaging and safer space for Seattleites, and not just simply rebuild post covid but to prioritize a true economic and social safety net for workers which includes unionized work, prevailing wages, healthcare, hazard pay, and dignified working conditions. Supporting national efforts, such as the Pro Act, and developing more local protections for workers post the COVID-19 crisis will ensure that workers have key protections if we are to ever face a similar crisis again.

During the COVID-19 crisis public transportation was made free; a feat that many have said to be impossible. However, in the midst of a crisis and what we thought would be a budget shortfall, we were able to find the political will to do the unimaginable: free public transportation. If we are to see more workers taking public transportation, and achieve our climate goals, free public transportation is a must.

2. How do you plan to support small businesses that have seen an increase in crime?

The pandemic and resulting recession have exacerbated the pre-existing conditions of inequality and inequity that already existed in the City. The increase in crime, not just in Seattle but nationally, is due to a lack of access to basic needs such as housing, healthy food, gainful employment, physical and mental healthcare, etc. The best way to support small businesses in regards to “crime” is to get people housed, fed, and well-cared for. Fewer people struggling on the streets is good for us all--including business.

As workers return to the First Hill area, small businesses that remain will naturally see an increase in business. The Seattle City Council has already passed legislation for commercial rent control for small businesses in Seattle affected by COVID-19. This ordinance provides protections for Seattle small businesses in the form of rent control, repayment plan requirements, and prohibition on late fees, interest, and other charges.

An issue with the legislation is that prohibitions outlined in the legislation only remain in effect until the civil emergency proclaimed by Mayor Jenny Durkan on March 3, 2020 is terminated. Commercial rent control in a city as expensive as Seattle is generally a good thing for small businesses and is something I recommend we keep in place even after the emergency proclamation has been terminated.

Additionally, the Seattle Rescue Plan includes dollars specifically for small businesses, community/neighborhood reactivation, and revitalization. Ensuring all businesses have

the technical support they need to safely reopen and apply for these dollars is within the purview and responsibility of the City.

First Hill Open Space and 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.

1. Will you commit, before the August 3rd Primary to go on a FHIA guided tour to learn how the PRAP has benefited the neighborhood thus far?

Today is July 26, 2021. I am currently working full-time as an Executive Direction while running for office. If we are able to find some time to make this happen before Aug. 3, I am willing. However, if we are not, I am committed to make it happen early in the general.

2. 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 on First Hill?

Yes.

A. Community Benefits Agreements

The City needs to leverage the power of community benefits agreements more frequently. Community benefits agreements are a powerful tool for ensuring that new developments meet the needs and vision of the current community.

B. Permitting

The permitting process for buildings grants the City some power in encouraging developers to meet certain expectations. Leveraging this process to encourage developers to meet the vision of residents for their neighborhoods is useful.

C. 2024 Comprehensive Plan

The 2024 Comprehensive Plan may hold some promise by requiring certain zoning considerations to push developers to work with the community to implement the PRAP. (ie. If you are going to build here, you must incorporate the PRAP into your development plan.)