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Mayoral debate questions from community and advocates

These questions represent what was submitted by registered guests to the event, and the partner non-profits that developed the debate. They have been lightly curated to group them and reduce repetition. We are giving them to both candidates after the debate for your further information about what our community wants to know in terms of how you will lead Seattle to address issues of housing and homelessness.

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Racial Equity

To what extent do conversations with and feedback directly from those most impacted by homelessness play a role in defining a housing strategy in Seattle? How will you include voices of houseless people and those most impacted by housing instability? How will you be accountable for ensuring that they are leading the discussions about housing policy?

How is a commitment to racial and social equity reflected in your proposed solutions to our homeless problem?

How as a white, financially-secure woman will you put aside your privilege to allow space for people who experience housing insecurity and homelessness to achieve their goals?

LGBTQ youth are over-represented in our homeless population. Our shelter system is gendered, which means transgender people are not being served. What are your strategies for meeting the needs of people of color, LGBTQ youth and adults, and others who are not being served now?

Given that many people of color & native peoples don't feel well supported by predominantly white run homeless relief organizations, how do you and your team plan to reach out to these communities to facilitate providing these much needed support systems?

People of color are disproportionately represented in our homeless service system as opposed to our general community. What will you do to ensure that City policies, programs and funding decisions are designed in such a way as to reduce this inequity?

Jenny Durkan has said that she supports continued sweeps of houseless people. We know that these sweeps are an example of institutional racism because housing sweeps primarily affect people of color and those suffering from generational poverty. According to Real Change, African-Americans are five times more likely than white people in King County to be homeless—Native Americans are seven times more likely. Keeping in mind the impact of these sweeps, what better solutions are there?

Housing Affordability

Tech companies contribute to the lack of affordable housing with the massive influx of high-paid tech workers; will you push them to contribute financially in private-public partnerships to help resolve our homelessness and low-income housing crises?

What would you say to those people who support the cities affordable housing policies, but then fight the city when the affordable housing is being developed in their neighborhood? What are 2 concrete steps you would take to address the lack of affordable housing in Seattle caused by 65% of our land being Single Family zoned?

We don't have impact fees in Seattle, but they're being considered. Are impact fees appropriate for Seattle?

How do you plan to combat the market forces that make home ownership increasingly out of reach for Seattle's middle income households?

With the rapid development throughout King County, what conditions or requirements would you put on developers to accommodate low income households?

Capitol Hill Housing does great work preserving affordable housing. How will you support and expand programs like this for properties under threat?

What role do you see a community land trust playing in addressing housing affordability?

What are your views on innovative solutions, like premanufactured building modules, that can increase the supply of dignified affordable housing units at significantly less time & cost? What specific actions would you take to promote such innovation?

I have not heard the housing needs for seniors being addressed. I live in a tax-subsidized retirement and disabled apt. building. The rent just went up \$60/month for me and others. This is NOT reasonable!! What will you do about this crisis?

Is there a way to tighten up the HALA contract with developers that would require them to build the low income housing they have promised at the same site they are increasing density in Wallingford and other neighborhoods.

What are your plans for increasing transit-oriented development?

Will you commit to fully funding the Community Package public benefits; including funding to create 300 affordable homes for workers earning hospitality industry wages (50-60 percent of AMI) within 1 mile of the WA St Convention Center?

The median price for homes in King County during July 2017 was \$599,000, up 18.6 percent from July 2016 (northwestmls). While building rentals is important, how do you propose to move people up out of poverty into affordable homeownership with the current housing costs?

There are 15,749 total active listings of homes in King County (July 2017), down 13.9 percent from the year-ago (northwestmls). What is your plan to increase supply of homes and stop displacement of families?

While building more housing is important, what is your strategy to keep families in their homes and prevent displacement?

Homes built after 2010 are headed by homeowners with a median age of 44 years, compared to homes built prior to 1969 and owned by householders with a median age of 58. What is your plan to preserve an aging housing stock and allow homeowners to age in place?

80 percent of millennials want the American dream of owning a home. (Nationwide survey by Apartment List, May 2017). The Seattle Times reported that as of 2015, more people own a home in King County than ever before and 100 percent of that growth since 2005 has occurred among people age 55 and older.

What is your strategy in planning for homeownership opportunities for millennials especially as they age and start families?

Seattle had a 6.3% rent increase from June 2016 to June 2017 (Zillow). Rents continue to rise, forcing families to move to progressively lower quality rental units with each move in order to simply maintain housing. Families often have to change school districts in their search for more affordable housing. Research has shown that kids can lose 4-6 months of education with each move. What are you going to do to create more housing stability for families and ensure a sound education for children regardless of economic level?

The average net worth of a homeowner is 36 times greater than that of an average renter. (NY Times, May 2017) Affordable homeownership gives low-income households opportunity to build equity providing a financial cushion, helping them fund college educations, save for retirement and pass on wealth to the next generation. How does homeownership fit into your overall vision for housing development here in Seattle?

Responses to Homelessness

What is your understanding of the causes of homelessness? Your (imaginary) 5-year old niece/nephew asks you why someone is sleeping in an alcove downtown - How do you respond?

Do you intend to continue pursuing the Pathways Home initiative launched by the Murray administration? Why or why not?

What is your opinion on transitional housing? While it is expensive relative to rapid rehousing, do you think it is a model that works?

What can downtown businesses do to help our homeless population downtown?

Do you believe the city's policies regarding unauthorized encampments and vehicles being used as shelter should be changed? If so, how? Please be specific.

What policy and procedures would you put in place regarding the use of vehicles as residences?

What is your stance on the sweeps? How will you protect the homeless from having their belongings stolen and destroyed?

What is your stance on providing funding to housing first programs that do not require sobriety for tenants?

Does your plan for homelessness include removing tent cities, and if so what is your solution for relocation?

What are your views on tiny homes? Are they a solution, or a step? What should their role be and how many do you think we need?

Please discuss your responses to "housing first" models. Can something that has worked in a (smaller, culturally- and climatically-different) city like Salt Lake City work in Seattle?

Tenant issues

Do you plan to support legislature approving rent control, particularly in neighborhoods that are experiencing extreme gentrification, such as the Central District.

How can we ensure that folks have adequate resources and information on their rights as renters, affordable choices, and landlord histories?

Systems coordination

What insights do you take from the data collected by the City on housing affordability and homelessness?

What are your thoughts on Coordinated Entry for All? What are your ideas for improving this system or for creating a new one?

King County has over 400 homeless service providers, more than any other county in the U.S. Do you think there would be value in decreasing this number in favor of a system with larger providers that are easier to coordinate and align?

General

How do you propose the tax funding structure at the city, county or state level to change or what funding mechanism do you propose to support homelessness and housing programs?

How will you work to make disparate systems, including homeless services, mental health, drug and alcohol and criminal justice work together better to address homelessness?

What will you do if Trump cuts off federal funding, especially given that we have no state capital budget?

Proposition 1 will be on King County ballots this November. Prop 1 calls for a renewal and expansion of the King County Veterans, Seniors, and Human Services Levy, which was previously passed by the voters in 2005 and 2011. It will cost the median homeowner in the county \$45 per year, raising \$350 million over the next six years to support job training, employment opportunities, and housing stability for veterans, seniors, and domestic violence survivors. Do you support Prop 1

What will you do to ensure there is safe & affordable housing for our immigrant & refugee neighbors who are very vulnerable and in fear?

What is your plan for families on disability that are unable to work? What is your plan for low income housing units based on poverty guidelines not Area Medium Income?

Which ancillary services do you believe are critical in ending homelessness and how would you prioritize and fund those ancillary services?

Do you think our homelessness problem can be solved without addressing addiction? Why do cities on the West Coast have steadily increasing homeless populations while other cities do not?

Compassion works for those who are willing to accept help. Time and time again, we hear that compassion is key to combating the homelessness issue, yet the situation never seems to improve. Other than more affordable housing and low barrier shelters, there is still a systemic issue with those who refuse help and most of these individuals seem to be mentally ill, suffer from substance abuse or partake in criminal activities. I've worked with the Seattle Police on a number of occasions concerning homeless individuals who are vandalizing public and private property, stealing, harassing neighbors, having sex, drinking, and shooting up in public parks. The police say that in most cases they are not allowed to arrest or ticket these individuals, and the current mayoral team has essentially created an environment where

the homeless are above the law. In short, 1) what will you, as Mayor do to ensure the police have the authority needed to enforce the laws they swore to uphold and 2) what will you do about the homeless that refuse support and city services?

OTHERS

How will you fund the building of additional housing and necessary support services?

Growth is a very contentious issue right now. I want to hear each candidate share an example of when they showed leadership in either taking a controversial position or bringing people together to find a solution on a controversial issue.

What can the City of Seattle do to rapidly move people experiencing homelessness off the street and into housing they can afford?

How would you look to increase resources for the development and long term operations of affordable supportive housing?

If a private citizen group would commit to partial funding with the city for the housing of the homeless, would you as Mayor consider that as a viable option instead of the city over new proposed taxes in the city?

Re the Mandatory Housing Affordability requirement (MHA): Do you believe it's better for developers to build units into their construction (performance option), or pay into an affordable-housing fund (payment option)? [Some say that the performance option is better because it yields units now, and gives more access to housing opportunities sooner/across the city; on the other hand, the payment option enables the City to leverage other funds to produce more affordable housing overall.]

RE MHA: In the rest of King County, the rate for the percent of residential units that must be provided as affordable housing (performance option) is 10%, but in Seattle it's as low as 5%. Would you work to change that?