

City Council Position 9 Candidate Questions

These questions were developed based on submissions from Skyline Residents. They reflect a refinement and consolidation of the submissions – we have done our best to avoid duplication, and to clearly identify the sub-elements we would like you to address in your responses.

The questions below are organized by subject area for ease of review. In the actual forum the order of questions will be different, so that we can touch on each subject area. We do hope to get through all the questions, but time constraints may not permit this.

Finally, our Moderator, Frank Conlon, will read only the portion of the question in bold print to speed the process along. The audience (residents of Skyline) will be provided the full text below, and should know what to expect in your responses.

Homelessness

Do you support or oppose the approach often referred to as “Housing First” which seeks to place homeless individuals with mental illness or addiction problems in housing, and then treat the medical problems?

Background: Some homeless services advocates argue that providing shelter needs to be the first step in bringing individuals with substance abuse and mental illness to a point of normality. Treatment, tailored to the individual can come later.

Please share your thoughts on this, incorporating the following points

1. Do you favor this approach, and why or why not?
2. Should participation in treatment be voluntary or a mandatory condition of housing?
3. Should the city provide housing to individuals who choose not to participate in therapy, simply to hopefully reduce the incidence of illness resulting from living “rough”? (Cynically described as “wet dorms.”)

We have residents living in tents and vehicles in many unsanctioned areas of the city who are periodically forced to relocate. Should the City designate a few “safe” long-term parking and camping areas for them?

Background: Individuals and families living in tents are often forced to relocate frequently. The frequency appears to be driven by which neighborhood complains the loudest. The disruption does not necessarily benefit either the campers/vehicle occupants, and simply transfers the occupants to another geographic location.

Please use your time to address the following points:

1. Would be better to:
 - a. Consolidate encampments and places to park, in “safe areas” or

- b. Continue to have homeless individuals in smaller unsanctioned areas which are periodically “Swept” and the inhabitants forced to find another unsanctioned area?
2. Are you aware of any other municipalities that have tried consolidating encampments or parking areas to provide services, and the results of those efforts?
3. What supportive services and basic life needs should be provided for in these sanctioned areas?
4. Where should they be located – please be specific as to location and type of property utilized?

Public Safety

Did the City Council’s actions and public statements in 2020 contribute to the loss of sworn officers to retirements and transfers to other jurisdictions, and if so how can this be rectified?

Background: The Seattle Police Department has had a significant loss of personnel – both in the lower ranks and its Chief of Police, Seattle’s first female African-American Chief. This appears to many Seattle residents to be a direct result of the Council’s endorsement of cutting the police budget significantly, reducing the size of the department by transferring functions to other jurisdictions, and particularly proposing cuts to the Chief’s salary.

Please tell us:

1. Did the Council’s actions contribute significantly to the departure of sworn officers to retirement and other jurisdictions?
2. If the Council’s actions did not have any impact on the departure of officers, what do you believe did cause the increase in departures?
3. Did these actions also adversely affect recruiting of new officers?

What action should the City Council and the Mayor take to increase recruitment to bring the force back to full strength?

In 2020 the City Council transferred a number of functions out of the Police Department to other elements of City Government. Should any of those actions be reversed, or should further changes be implemented?

Background: the following is taken from the City’s adopted 2021 budget:

Cut 47 sworn officer positions

Cut \$3.7 million in the police overtime budget

Transferred the Parking Enforcement Division and the 911 Dispatch Office (260 positions) to a new Community Safety and Communications Center – to be effective June 1, 2021

Separated the Office of Emergency Management to a new independent element of City Government

Transferred the 11 member Victim Advocate office to the Department of Human Services

In discussing this matter, please tell us:

1. What has been the impact of these actions?
2. Should any of these 2021 actions be reversed, and if so, which ones and why?
3. If you believe the actions taken in 2021 were appropriate, are there other additional actions the city should take?

Crime has increased faster than our population from 2009 to 2019, and has significantly increased at a faster rate in 2020. Why has this occurred and what can be done about it?

Background: Violent crime (murder, rape, and aggravated assaults), which had been increasing faster than our population growth from 2009 to 2019 spiked in 2020. (The following is taken from the Seattle Police Department Crime Dashboard.)

Category	2009	2019	Net Change	Pct Change	2021
Homicide	21	37	16	76.19%	30
Rape	127	381	254	200.00%	159
Robbery	1,794	1,555	-239	-13.32%	1036
Aggravated Assault	<u>1,728</u>	<u>2,711</u>	<u>983</u>	<u>56.89%</u>	<u>2038</u>
Subtotal	3,670	4,684	1,014	27.63%	3,263

In 2021, as of the end of July we have had more homicides, more rapes, and more aggravated assaults than in all of 2009. Lastly, despite the reassignment of detectives to patrol duty, response times for 911 calls have significantly increased.

Please tell us:

1. Why do you think violent crime is increasing faster than our city population?
2. What needs to be done to reduce this trend?

As a member of the Council you will be evaluating and confirming or rejecting the Mayor's proposed Chief of Police. What experience or characteristics will you require in the Mayor's nominee for your confirmation vote, and what characteristics would you like to see in a candidate?

Please tell us:

1. What experience, knowledge and abilities would you expect to see in a confirmation hearing for this position?

2. Are there any particular characteristics you believe are absolutely necessary, and without them would result in your rejection of a proposed Chief?
3. Which organizations or community groups would you like to see directly involved in the selection process
4. Are there any current SPD personnel you believe should be considered for this position?

Economic Viability of Small Business and the Downtown Core

What should City government be doing to help sustain small businesses in the downtown area who depend on office workers, particularly as major employers are extending “work from home” practices?

Please address the following in your response:

1. Does City government have any actual responsibility to provide financial or other assistance to these small businesses – retail shops, restaurants, etc. and if so, what?
2. If the City government has a responsibility, what specific things should we do, and how should they be paid for?

Should the City impose a congestion toll on commuters going into the downtown retail, professional and government core, and if so, what can be done to mitigate the anticipated parking and traffic congestion on First Hill?

Background:

1. The Mayor and Council have evaluated the possibility of a peak-period toll to reduce greenhouse gases and traffic congestion in the downtown core – do you favor or oppose this idea, and why?
2. If it gains currency with the Mayor and Council, how will you mitigate the impact on the likely parking and traffic impacts on First Hill?

City Livability – Graffiti, Trash, Neighborhood Infrastructure

What will you do to reduce the spread of graffiti, trash, human waste, needles, and other conditions that degrade the livability of our City?

Please Address the following:

1. Do these problems have a common origin, or separate causes?
2. What needs to be done to reduce each of these factors?
3. To what degree are these issues tied to the presence of Homeless encampments and to what extent are they the fault of other populations?
4. What will you do to gain WASHDOT’s attention to the impact of campers under the freeway? This was a major issue which was temporarily sweeping the area, and then closing it with cyclone fencing?

First Hill is the most densely populated residential neighborhood in the city, not just a collection of hospitals. What changes or public amenities to you believe are necessary to make this a more livable part of the city?

Please consider the following in your response:

1. While often regarded as a medical industrial site (Pill Hill) it is also the densest residential community in the City of Seattle.
2. First Hill is largely a uniform mass of paved concrete. What options exist for more open space, ideally with vegetation in this neighborhood?
3. Have you taken a walking tour with the First Hill Improvement Association, and if so, what did you learn? If not, do you plan to do so, and if so when?

Candidate Qualifications, Experience and Goals

It appears that neither of you has previously served in elective office. What specific skill sets, background experiences or knowledge will serve you, and us, in this new role?

Please tell us:

1. What personal or professional experiences do you bring to this role which shape your approach to representing the citizens of this city?
2. What technical background or skills do you have which will make you effective in this role?

If you are elected, what are your top three policy and program goals?

Please tell us:

1. What are your top three priorities for the next four years?
2. How do you plan to address those priorities?
3. What will each cost?
4. What will you consider to be a success?
5. How will the progress be measured?

Governance and Collaboration

Who do you believe will best serve the city and its citizens as our new City Attorney, and why?

Background: The City of Seattle previously had a “Corporation Counsel”, whose role was to manage an office responsible for prosecuting misdemeanor and gross misdemeanor cases, providing legal advice to elected officials, and representing the City of Seattle on legal matters.

In 1977 the title was changed from Corporation Counsel to City Attorney. (See the municipal archives for a far more detailed history of the growth, development and various reorganizations of the office.) Pet Holmes, a three-term incumbent

with the endorsement of almost every elected legal official from the Attorney General of the State of Washington was defeated by two first-time candidates.

This year we have two candidates for this position who are significantly different in perspective and goals. One candidate ran on the premise that the incumbent was lax in the prosecution of misdemeanors. The other ran on the premise that most individuals accused of misdemeanors should not be prosecuted because their crimes were the result largely of poverty.

One believes current City Attorney was derelict in prosecuting petty criminals, the other will halt almost all prosecution of misdemeanors and gross misdemeanors, including petty theft, car prowling, shoplifting and the like.

Neither of the general election candidates has indicated any significant experience with respect to the management of a large law firm. The City Attorney's office is generally perceived as the fourth largest law firm in the state of Washington, with a \$35 Million operating budget and a staff of 200 employees

Housing Affordability

Should the city change some of its single-family residential zoning to permit low-rise multifamily housing in an effort to expand the availability of housing stock?

Background: Contrary to most cities of similar size, Seattle allocates the vast majority of its residential land to single-family occupancy. Those single-family areas include:

Almost all of the residential areas north of the Ship Canal, with the exception of south and central Ballard, the University District north to Ravenna Park and strips along such arterials as 15th Northwest, Stone Way from the ship canal to Greenlake and the area following Lake City Way.

Virtually all of Queen Anne and Magnolia,
North and East Capitol Hill

West Seattle, with the exception of small pockets, portions of the shoreline area, and strips along California Avenue and Delridge Way

Southeast Seattle except for the core of the Rainier Valley and parts of north and Central Beacon Hill

The lack of available land for construction of multifamily housing is perceived as a driver of housing prices – the basic law of supply and demand.

In addressing this issue, please tell us:

1. Whether you believe up-zoning is necessary, or not, and why–
2. If it is appropriate, where should it occur (by neighborhood) and
3. If not, how will we accommodate the need for additional dwelling units?
4. Do you believe a change in zoning will lower the cost/value of existing single-family structures?

Do you believe additional workforce housing is needed in Seattle, and if so how can it be developed?

Background: Seattle appears to be separating into subsidized housing and housing for the wealthy. Working class families are leaving because they cannot afford the housing units available (either single or multifamily, purchased or rented), departing to outlying communities. This action contributes to all of the negative aspects of long distance commuting – energy costs, time, etc.

As an example, less than half of the employees of this community, and a significant portion of other First Hill employees live outside the city – many due to the cost of housing.

1. Do you believe Seattle needs housing for tradespeople, retail employees, service workers and the like?
2. If so:
 - a. Where should it be located?
 - b. Can it be done without a public subsidy?
 - c. If subsidies are necessary, where what existing or new resources would you commit to it (i.e. how will you pay for it?)
3. If not, are these individuals to be permanently consigned to extended commuting time?

Climate Change – What Should Seattle Do?

The city is failing to meet its own goals to reach carbon neutrality goal by 2030. What additional steps would you propose the city take to reach those goals

Background: On June 17, 2013, Seattle City Council adopted Resolution 31447, formally adopting Seattle's 2013 Climate Action Plan. The Climate Action Plan is composed of recommended actions to be taken to meet Seattle's goal of **becoming carbon neutral by 2050**. The actions called for in the plan continue to be implemented and managed by City departments.

In 2019, the Green New Deal ordinance was passed by Council and signed by the Mayor to support the planning and implementation of individual City Departmental actions, policies, programs, and practices, to make Seattle climate-pollution free by 2030. The Green New Deal oversight board, created by the enabling legislation is supposed to define how they want to tackle the goal set out in the ordinance, and build upon the good recommendations in the 2013 plan to spur climate action in 2021.

The 2013 Climate Action Plan centers on carbon neutrality, while the Green New Deal resolution opens the conversation wider to also develop strategies to make substantive reductions in black carbon, methane, NOX, and fluorinated gases

which are also GHGs but smaller percentages compared to CO2 (see this part of the GND resolution that defines climate pollution in the text below):

“Like many large cities, Seattle conducts GHG emissions inventories to better understand the scope and scale of our climate pollution and help identify where the challenges and opportunities are for the greatest impact. This most recent inventory includes data up through 2018 and is a sobering wake up call for us. We continue to be far away from our goals and have started trending in the wrong direction. Seattle’s core GHG emissions have increased 1.1% since our last report, and emissions from the building sector increased over 8%. It is urgent that we take action now to accelerate the pace of future emissions reductions.”

In your response to this question please address the following points:

1. What is a reasonable and achievable goal with respect to reduction in greenhouse gases?
 - a. Should we change the goals, or
 - b. Find new ways to reduce our carbon footprint?
2. If we need to improve our efforts, what should we do more of, less of or differently?