



## 2015 Seattle City Council Affordable Housing & Homelessness Candidate Questionnaire Responses

### **Lisa Herbold City Council Position 1**

There is unmet need for affordable homes in Seattle. The 2015 One Night Count found 2,813 people surviving outdoors within city limits after the shelters were filled. Of all Seattle households 15-20% pay more than half their income for housing costs. This number includes 62% of those with the lowest incomes.

#### **1. If elected, what will you do ensure everyone in Seattle has the opportunity to live in a safe, healthy, affordable home?**

I believe an effective housing strategy recognizes that we must:

- a. Build new affordable housing, focusing on the greatest needs first, through the 2016 Housing Levy renewal and the enactment of stronger low income housing production regulations (linkage fees and inclusionary zoning), as well as new financing tools like a new City Housing Bond
- b. Include housing preservation as an important component of our affordable housing strategy. I worked on the design, passage, funding of the City's Rental Registration and Inspection Ordinance. This innovative program will result in the investment in maintenance of rental housing that will result in the preservation of our housing stock, making older housing less vulnerable to speculative redevelopment.

I support the development of a broader preservation program that identifies both subsidized and non-subsidized rental housing that is likely to be redeveloped into more costly housing without preservation. I believe this should be a funding focus of the 2016 Housing Levy.

- c. Improve tenant protections like a stronger Just Cause Eviction Ordinance, closing the loopholes in the Tenant Relocation Assistance Ordinance, and support efforts to repeal the state prohibition on discussion of any ordinances related to rent.

People of color are disproportionately challenged by access to affordable homes. In Seattle, 52% of White households own their home, compared with just 29% of Black households and 27% of Latino households, according to 2010 Census data cited by the Mayor's office. According to the National Equity Atlas [<http://nationalequityatlas.org/node/7156>], in the Seattle area, people of color are more likely than Whites to be paying more than they can afford, whether they own or rent. Displacement and gentrification are pressing concerns as more low-income people, disproportionately people of color, are forced to move outside the city into areas with fewer opportunities.

## **2. What is the city's role in addressing these disparities?**

The City should play a leading role in addressing this modern day redlining. The City can use its regulatory authority to ensure that housing serving the diversity of lower incomes be built in areas experiencing greatest growth and with the many benefits that come with that growth. It is critical that the private sector be a partner to mitigate the need for low-income housing created by new commercial and residential development in our city. Taxpayer funded housing alone through the Housing Levy cannot solve this problem, nor should we accept the adage that by adding enough supply, affordability will trickle down. New developments create jobs for workers, yet there is no housing for these new workers. As a result, they and others are rapidly being priced out of the city altogether. This results in longer commute times and higher transportation costs for low-income people, and it also clogs our streets and adds to auto emissions.

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Currently only 30 affordable homes are available for every 100 very low-income households in need of housing in Seattle (2015 Washington State Housing Needs Assessment [<http://1.usa.gov/17BlyKr>]). Rapid growth in Seattle is causing an even greater need for more affordable housing, according to the Seattle Affordable Housing Nexus Study [<http://bit.ly/1Rrug1n>] commissioned by the City Council.

## **3. Do you support an inclusionary housing policy that goes beyond voluntary incentive zoning and requires that development contribute to affordable homes?**

Yes

I believe it's time for Seattle to lead in raising the question of what we expect from our developer community. Just like we have recently done with employers, we

need to have a dialogue about what it means to be a good developer, to insure prosperity beyond the latest building boom.

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**Housing costs in Seattle are outpacing incomes. According to data collected by the Mayor's office, at the average wage for their profession, a medical assistant living and working in Seattle cannot afford the average 1-bedroom apartment. An elementary school teacher cannot afford the average 2-bedroom apartment. The situation is not improving on its own: gross median rents in Seattle have increased more sharply than in any other large city in the U.S. in recent years (Seattle Times, 9-18-2014 [<http://bit.ly/1zPZidy>]).**

**4. Do you support asking the state legislature to remove the state ban on rent regulation?**

Yes

It is important that localities have the ability to address their own unique problems. I will lobby and fight for the city of Seattle and our right to enact our own policies.

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**The Seattle City Council recently passed an ordinance authorizing encampments in certain areas for people experiencing homelessness. An amendment called for studying the impacts of allowing encampments in residential areas.**

**5. Should encampments for people experiencing homelessness be allowed in residential areas?**

Yes

As a clarification, encampments are currently allowed in residential areas through the City's Temporary Use Permit process and the Ecumenical encampment ordinance.

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**People experiencing homelessness often face local regulations making it difficult simply to exist. Seattle has banned sitting on sidewalks in some areas during certain times of day. Brushing teeth in public restrooms was recently banned in a neighboring city. Attempts to ban "aggressive"**

panhandling and smoking in public parks are efforts to address public comfort and safety, but could result in targeting people experiencing homelessness.

**6. How should the city balance the rights of people experiencing homelessness with the comfort and safety of all Seattle residents?**

A recent SU School of Law study analyzed the impacts of certain laws that target homeless people. These impacts included those on individuals as well as on City resources. The study found that the investment of enforcement resources in addressing the survival needs of homeless people is more effective. The way to balance the rights of homeless people is to fund those survival services, not punish people for surviving in public.

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**According to Zillow, more than a quarter of Seattle’s “low-end homes” (those valued in the bottom third of home values for their market) are underwater. These homes tend to be occupied by low-income and fixed-income homeowners or renters.**

**7. Do you support a mortgage premium reduction plan to address foreclosures in Seattle?**

Yes

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**8. Please suggest other strategies to prevent low-income people from losing their homes that you would support as a city council member:**

Comments for the previous question: I have been working on the development of a principal reduction program for the last two years. People of color have lost all of the gains in the accumulation of wealth experienced since civil rights. Restoring home equity is a more lasting solution than traditional mortgage loan programs that do nothing to "right size" the mortgage to its true value.

Other strategies: We need to commit in our Seattle 2035 Comp Plan update to displacement risk analysis on all upzones, together with replacement housing resources when displacement risks are identified.