



2015 Seattle City Council Affordable Housing & Homelessness Candidate Questionnaire Responses

Jon Lisbin City Council Position 6

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?

Homelessness is a wicked problem that must be tackled head on. I am not the expert in reducing homelessness so I would rely on the advice of those who work with the homeless population day in and day out. I would also support whatever means are available to reduce housing cost or build more affordable housing. The mayor has goals to build 20,000 additional affordable housing units in the next 10 years and I support that goal whole heartily.

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 can target this issue by building more rent stabilized units in neighborhoods with higher low income and black populations. Similarly, targeted transportation initiatives to provide better access to employment is essential to moving people out of poverty. The \$15 minimum wage is another tactic the city is using and we will see how that goes.

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

Yes, I support with mandatory affordable housing provisions for developers; which most likely will be in the form of linkage fees.

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?

No

Rent control has been tried and failed in major cities like New York and San Francisco. Typically it's reserved and held by those who got in early. Additionally, the republican led legislature would be very unlikely to remove the ban so the council would be wasting their time and effort.

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

I would like to see the results of the study before making a definitive decision.

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?

Hate to divert my answer, but what we should be concentrating efforts on are reducing homelessness so these issues are minimized. Homelessness has only increased in Seattle despite goals to reduce it. That's why I would rely on expert advice on dealing with homelessness and find ways to fund it. We should all be ashamed knowing we let so many people live on the streets every night.

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

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

I support improving transit, especially in low income areas. Reliable transportation options have been empirically proven to reduce poverty more than almost any other factor, including having a two parent home.

I support mandatory developer fees, in whatever form, to create more affordable housing.

I support removing the 1% cap on property taxes so the city has the funding to tackle issues of social equity.