

King County Democrats 2024 Endorsement Questionnaire

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Candidate name pronunciation
Tonya
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She/Her/They/Them
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What type of position are you running for?
Municipal
What position are you running for?
Seattle Council, Position 8
Are you a Democrat?
Yes
Have you ever been a member of another political party?
No
Does your campaign have a code of conduct for staff and volunteers?
No
Will you commit to change zoning, permitting, and other obstacles in your city to increase housing availability for mid and lower income levels?

Yes

Will you commit to an increased percent of funding towards community and behavioral health services?

Yes

Will you actively support increased non-auto dependent transportation?

Yes

Do you support alternatives to the forced removal of unhoused people?

Yes

Do you support regulations to restrict police practices historically applied unfairly or abusively?

Yes

Do you support offering broadband internet access as a public utility?

Yes

Will you support allocating public safety budget dollars to the LEAD and CoLEAD programs of community-based intervention and diversion?

Yes

All municipalities are facing housing issues in their region. What changes will you make and how will you fund those changes?

There's substantial progress achievable without burdening the city financially. The prolonged permit process, spanning two to five years for construction projects, incurs a 30% rise in costs every two years, posing a threat to family-run businesses. Streamlining city procedures is essential to prevent pricing out families. Addressing inequalities in loan and insurance practices, alongside discriminatory zoning, is crucial to halt the displacement of communities of color.

Private-public partnerships, with an equity focus, are vital. Seattle must embrace land trusts and ordinances to counter gentrification, granting public development authorities the first right of refusal in at-risk communities. Renovating historic and office buildings offers further potential.

Expanding affordable housing is imperative. Collaboration, rent control, tenant protections, and homelessness prevention are key. Advocating for increased federal and state funding is vital. Modifications to MHA and expansion of the MFTE program are needed. I am working on Legislation incentivizing developers and nonprofits to build more.

All municipalities are facing behavioral health issues in their region. How is your community specifically affected, what changes will you make, and how will you fund them?

As both a small business owner and a volunteer for a police alternative group, I frequently engage with encampments and drug markets, providing crucial assistance like CPR and Narcan administration, suicide prevention, and conflict resolution. I emphasize continuous outreach to build trust and community bonds.

An expanded mental health workforce, utilizing evidence-based practices and cultural sensitivity, is essential. I am on the Regional Policy Council's Crises Care Center Implementation plan and I advocate for funding agencies that demonstrate tangible results and prioritize metrics of success for accountability and improvement. Sustained funding for initiatives like KCRHA is crucial.

Collaborating with organizations like LEAD, REACH, and We Deliver Care, I am advocating for safety ambassadors in the 12th and Jackson area. It's imperative to address disparities, such as the contrast between downtown's Third Avenue Project and the lack of similar resources in the Chinatown International District.

Our approach to tackling behavioral health challenges and supporting marginalized communities must be comprehensive, proactive, and founded on equity.

Ongoing inequity is an issue in King County. Other than housing, what are your immediate plans for addressing this injustice?

Many prominent equity issues in King County warrant attention. While strides have been made in awarding government contracts to local businesses owned by BIPOC and women, there's room for improvement. Currently, less than a quarter of the city's procurement spending benefits these demographics. Such contracts can uplift marginalized businesses and foster a more equitable local economy.

Moreover, social justice initiatives hold promise but face hurdles in effective implementation. King County's outreach efforts for impactful community projects often fall short of community expectations. Despite distributing our own Racial Equity Toolkit to highlight areas for improvement, meaningful engagement remains elusive. Elected officials and city departments frequently struggle to communicate effectively with communities of color, resulting in exclusion.

Addressing these disparities, I've prioritized ensuring translation access to resources for those furthest from government reach. By bridging communication gaps and promoting equitable participation, we can strive for inclusion.

Many cities have claimed a commitment to reducing carbon emissions. What specific actions will you take to ensure that your city drastically lowers net carbon emissions by 2030 and achieves carbon neutrality by 2050?

Seattle is a mosaic of diverse ethnic communities, including many low-income residents who face barriers to accessing clean energy programs due to language or cost constraints. We are not yet at our goal of achieving 30% tree canopy. To drastically reduce our city's net carbon emissions, specific actions are imperative. This includes transitioning the city's transportation fleet to electricity, revising building codes to incentivize energy-efficient construction, and integrating trees into zoning and city property planning.

As chair of the sustainability committee and Seattle City Light, I've ensured regular meetings where sustainability practices are discussed. This year, we're examining the Buildings Emission Program and advocating for Solar for All grants to empower communities of color and low-income groups with solar access. Securing federal and state grants and prioritizing community education are ongoing efforts.

I support Seattle's green technology sector. Supporting this sector fosters high-paying jobs independent of fossil fuel industries, benefitting historically marginalized communities. Through such initiatives, we can promote equitable economic development

Will you support allocating ongoing operational and future capital funding, as well as prioritizing public lands to ensure the Seattle Social Housing Developer (as enacted by I-135) is successful?

Qualified

Will you support re-funding JustCARE or a similar program to provide community-based public safety resources?

Yes

Do you support safe consumption sites in every city council district?

Qualified

Will you introduce or support legislation to fund affordable childcare facilities, with workers paid a living wage?

Yes

Will you support moving Seattle elections to even years to increase voter turnout?

Yes

For any Yes/No questions you answered "qualified", please explain:

1.) I support sustained operational funding and the prioritization of public lands to bolster the success of the Seattle Social Housing Developer. As an affordable housing developer and provider, I stress the necessity of a comprehensive financial development plan before considering any future capital funding allocations. I firmly believe that fiscal responsibility entails a clear plan in place.

3.) The decision to support or oppose safe consumption sites in every city council district would require careful consideration of various factors, including public health data, input from affected communities, legal considerations, and the availability of resources and support services. With Fentanyl being so deadly, should that drug be considered suitable for a safe consumption site? Ultimately, this is a topic for local communities and policymakers to engage in thoughtful and informed discussions to determine what approaches are best suited to address the issue.

What specific legislation would you introduce to reform the Seattle Police Department?

I advocate for legislation that expands and strengthens non-policing alternatives, such as expanding the Care Team and securing funding for diversion programs. Facilitating social workers' involvement in handling non-violent situations and establishing direct 911 access for social worker assistance, separate from police engagement, are key priorities. Scaling up these programs citywide with adequate resources can alleviate the workload of the police department (SPD). Moreover, I propose expanding initiatives like the Community Service Officers and Before the Badge programs. I emphasize the need for alternative public safety measures and prioritize community hiring.

Community groups like the Chinatown International District Community Watch, which has fostered community trust and effectively managed emergencies, serve as successful blueprints. Additionally, I'm working to lay the groundwork for community de-escalation teams to further enhance public safety and community engagement.

What are your policy priorities to ensure that Seattle residents are able to earn living wages?

To foster a fair and inclusive labor market in Seattle, several crucial steps must be taken. Strengthening labor laws and worker protections, such as combating wage theft and supporting paid sick leave, fair scheduling, and anti-discrimination measures, is essential. Encouraging employers to provide benefits like healthcare, retirement plans, childcare, and parental leave is also vital.

Addressing the soaring housing costs is imperative. This can be achieved through policies promoting affordable housing development, safeguarding tenants' rights, and preventing displacement. Investing in job training and education, in collaboration with institutions, nonprofits, and businesses, can equip Seattle workers with skills for high-demand industries. Ensuring ample opportunities for youth is also paramount.

Promoting economic development involves attracting businesses that prioritize fair wages and quality jobs. Supporting

small businesses with resources, financing, and regulatory guidance is crucial. Collaboration with labor unions is necessary to uphold collective bargaining, protect workers' rights, and identify opportunities.

Do you support the taxes recommended in the 2018 Report of the Progressive Revenue Task Force? Please share your thoughts.

I think it's important that we look at the results of these taxes which were created in response to the homelessness crisis. In 2021, it brought in \$234M, the jumpstart tax was divided so that 62% of it was going to go toward housing, 15% was designed to go toward small business, 9% toward the Green New Deal, 9% toward the Equitable Development Initiative, and 5% toward administrative costs. Of all the money generated, less than half, about 42% went to housing. Of the total about \$85.6M went to the general fund.

This policy demands ongoing dialogue with all stakeholders. However, I believe legal counsel found many recommendations from the 2023 Progressive Revenue Task Force potentially illegal. The two permissible recommendations were already implemented. I believe that advocating for a fairer tax system at the state level is imperative.

Will you support a Comprehensive Plan that includes upzones that allow for multifamily housing, light industrial, and commercial uses in all residential areas, as well as allowing for high rises near all light rail stations, as described in the proposed Alternative 6 plan?

As a public servant, I firmly believe in the importance of listening to the community. Attending most of the city's comprehensive plan open houses, I've observed a clear preference that people have favored primarily options 5 and 6. Option 6 notably addresses concerns of gentrification and displacement, issues that resonate with me deeply. However, option 6 also eliminates the design review process. While I recognize the cost and frustration associated with this process, I maintain that a streamlined design review remains valuable. It allows for community input and ensures culturally appropriate development, particularly in sensitive areas like the Chinatown International District. I advocate for a plan that combines the provisions of Alternative 6 regarding gentrification and displacement with a level of reduced design review.

There's a consensus emerging around the need for increased housing construction. I'm currently drafting legislation to ensure that this aligns with the outcomes of the comprehensive plan. The DEIS has not been done for option 6.

CERTIFICATION: The candidate hereby certifies that, to the best of their knowledge, the provided information is true and accurate.

Yes