



Seattle Mayoral Candidate Questionnaire on Housing and Homelessness, Summer 2017

Prepared By: [Solid Ground](#) and [Seattle University's Project on Family Homelessness](#), in partnership with [Housing Development Consortium](#) and [Seattle-King County Coalition on Homelessness](#)

Dear Candidate,

Thank you very much for responding to this questionnaire!

We are a non-partisan partnership of housing and homelessness providers and advocacy organizations with a combined substantial presence in Seattle. We will use your responses as part of an online **Voters' Guide on Housing and Homelessness**, which we'll publish to coincide with ballots arriving in mailboxes in mid- to late July.

Because we all are from 501(c)(3) organizations, we are unable to make endorsements; but we will share the questionnaire results with thousands of people interested in housing and homelessness.

Please complete and email this form in Word or PDF format to Catherine Hinrichsen, Seattle University, at hinrichc@seattleu.edu by **5 p.m. Thursday, July 12**, if you would like to be included in the Voters' Guide.

- If you send it as a pdf, please ensure your links are live.
- Please either attach a photo or indicate you give us permission to use a photo from your campaign website.

Please direct any questions to Catherine. Thank you!

*In addition, please save the date: We will invite the candidates who advance to the general election to a **Seattle Mayoral Candidate Forum on Housing and Homelessness¹**, **Tuesday evening, Sept. 12** (tentative) at Seattle University. More details will come after the primary.*

Questions begin on the next page.

¹ We decided to cancel the forum previously scheduled for July 12 after counsel advised us we would need to invite all 21 candidates, per IRS regulations for 501(c)(3) organizations. We determined that a discussion with up to 21 candidates would not be productive. We are distributing this questionnaire instead.

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Candidate's Name: Nikkita Oliver

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Candidate Photo: • Attached or • Permission to use photo from website

There are seven questions. You may choose to skip a question; if so, please indicate that you choose not to answer. Please limit your answers to 150 words each (about 1,000 characters, including spaces).

Question 1. King County and the City of Seattle have recognized that the crises of affordability and homelessness are complex, regional issues that require regional solutions, exacerbated by the threat of potential drastic HUD funding cuts. If elected, how would you work with other regional leaders and the state and federal governments to identify, enact and implement innovative, forward-thinking solutions to decrease homelessness and increase affordability?

Seattle's homelessness crisis goes hand in hand with the lack of affordable housing options in our city. Seattle has tremendous amounts of development yet very little of it actually meets the needs of our residents. I will push for the development of truly affordable housing by 1) redefining "affordability," 2) holding developers accountable to provide 25% mandatory affordable housing, 3) leveraging Seattle's bonding capacity to build city-owned public housing units, 4) re-assess the current budget/divert funds to our immediate needs, and 5) address the issue of speculative capital.

We Will Also:

1) increase the number of low-barrier shelters and shelters, 2) building housing options that incorporate wrap around services, 3) address the current opioid crisis as a public health issue, 4) work closely with King County and cities in our region to develop a regional plan for quality affordable housing.

Question 2. What is your position on the policies contained in the Housing Affordability and Livability Agenda (HALA)? What do you agree with? Disagree?

We recognize the hard work from community organizations and residents that went into developing HALA. And though several of the recommendation including MHA are good starts to addressing the housing crisis, our city needs more. Many of our residents have already been pushed out by rising rents and property taxes, and many more continue to be at risk. In order to stop this trend, I believe we need to demand more from developers. We need to push for 25% affordable housing in new developments. We also need to develop our own public housing to better serve middle to low income residents. Additionally, I am concerned that HALA is not doing enough to stop housing segregation in our city. If developers continue to pay linkage fees instead of providing affordable housing units, it won't be too long before we see our neighborhoods further divided across economic and racial lines.

Question 3. How would you balance the disagreement and anger expressed by some neighborhood residents towards increased density and affordable homes in specific areas of the city, with our unprecedented growth and need for increased housing options that must be shared equitably across the city?

I believe our residents want to see our city grow in a healthy and equitable way, they just need to be part of the process. The tensions that exist presently have been exacerbated by the City in many ways. By moving forward with development irrespective of community input, our city has angered many neighborhoods. In order to balance these disagreements we need a formal way for community to voice and shape policy around housing and development. As mayor, I would:

- 1) Actually communicate with residents and neighborhoods in a meaningful way *before* the City takes action and/or makes a decision.
- 2) Ensure that the spread of density and affordable housing stretches throughout all of the neighborhoods within Seattle and is paired with equitable access to that housing and meaningful employment opportunities
- 3) Develop our city's transportation systems in a similarly equitable way

Question 4. Did you vote for the Seattle Housing Levy in 2016? Why or why not? What kind of funding mechanism do you believe is best to generate money for housing and homelessness services?

I support(ed) the levy, though I have not voted in every election for many reasons including institutional/systemic barriers and as a direct result of my own displacement due to our city's housing affordability crisis.

Some revenue options I would look into as mayor include:

- City budget- We have a \$5.6 billion budget with a \$1.2 billion general fund. We could tighten the budget and re-prioritize based on needs.
- Speculator tax- This would fund affordable housing options for moderate to low-income families and curb speculator behavior in our market, stabilizing it.
- Additional taxes: This would include luxury taxes, a progressive income tax, progressive corporate B&O, a corporate head tax, and taxing unearned wealth.
- Impact fees: We need to hold our developers and corporations accountable by requiring they invest into our city's infrastructure especially transportation.
- Partnerships: Non-profit organizations and corporations could help us build more affordable housing.

Question 5. Given that half the residents of Seattle are renters, what tenant protections -- above and beyond what the city has already done -- would you push to enact to ensure that potential tenants are being treated equitably?

I would work to curb speculation in Seattle which contributes to skyrocketing rent and home prices. A tax on speculation worked well in Vancouver and could help our city protect our residents from displacement.

Rent stabilization would be another option i would explore in order to stop displacement of our residents. I recommend we pair rent stabilization with other market intervention strategies though and that we are thoughtful in the policies we develop around rent stabilization, making sure we protect small building owners in our city.

Additionally, we should consider developing more community land trust options. This type of home ownership model enable residents, tenants and communities to be self-determined and own property while keeping prices affordable in the long term. Community Land trust programs keep families in affordable housing and create paths to co-operative ownership, which successfully curbs gentrification.

Question 6. Virtually every city in Washington has responded to the growing homelessness crisis by criminalizing behaviors such as sitting, lying or sleeping in public. If elected, (a) will you work to repeal and/or mitigate the impacts of ordinances that criminalize homelessness in Seattle, and (b) will you oppose attempts to introduce such ordinances?

Yes. Yes.

We can't keep criminalizing poverty! A study by Seattle University's Law school found that Seattle gave out 5,814 citations over a 5 year period for "crimes" like the ones you mentioned in your question. These citations were accompanied by penalties that required payments of anywhere from \$250 to \$5,000. These sorts of citations fuel a cycle of poverty and homelessness that will only hurt our city and our residents in the long-term. Individuals struggling to get on their feet are only set further back by laws like these that trap them in debt. We need to stop criminalizing poverty and reinvest the money we spend policing these "crimes" into strategies that work to end poverty and homelessness.

Question 7. The recent tragic killing of Charleena Lyles highlights the issues of police accountability and the intersecting systems of care in our community whose failures led to her death, including housing, mental health, child welfare, justice and more. How would you address the failure of these systems to work together?

Our city failed Charleena Lyles and her family. And, we will continue to fail our residents if we don't begin to transform our systems. As mayor I will work to develop a clear vision, articulated with goals & metrics, that sets out to meet the needs of our most vulnerable residents. I will partner with other cities and the county to develop a regional approach to our housing crisis, state of emergency around homelessness and the opioid epidemic currently affecting our communities. Most importantly, I will strive to address the root causes of poverty and eliminate institutional barriers to accessing jobs, education and land ownership which promote economic sustainability. This will cost more upfront but save lives and money in the end.

Candidate Signature for verification (electronic is ok):

Date: July 12, 2017

- END OF QUESTIONNAIRE -

Distributed on behalf of partners Solid Ground, Seattle University's Project on Family Homelessness, Housing Development Consortium and Seattle-King County Coalition on Homelessness, by SU's Project on Family Homelessness, Institute of Public Service, Seattle University/CASY 204W, P.O. Box 222000, Seattle, WA, 98122-1090.

Please return to: hinrichc@seattleu.edu by Thursday, July 12, 2017, 5 p.m. Thank you for participating.

Illustration of Seattle skyline by Mandy Rusch, SU '17.