1. Looking at the current City Council, on what issues would you say it has been particularly effective and, in your opinion, where has it been less effective? Why?

I believe the places it has been effective is in its partnerships and public education supports, I’m particularly grateful for their work on the Families, Education, Preschool, and Promise Levy—it was a great levy and they successfully got it passed. I would also use the example of MHA for both places where it has been particularly effective, and where I believe it wasn’t as effective. In terms of its effectiveness, the MHA created a long runway for conversation about the idea of upzones in our city, which meant they dispelled myths and misinformation. This took a lot of work and community engagement so I’m happy it passed. However, I think MHA could have gone further in creating buy-in from developers, rather than providing what I consider as an ‘out’ through the payment option. Since 2010, we have lost 60% of affordable housing stock across the country and the same is roughly true for our region.

2. More than 52,000 daily transit riders from across all seven City Council districts use Third Avenue daily to get to and from their jobs in downtown Seattle. While Third Avenue acts as a front door to our downtown, it’s also the epicenter of the Seattle’s largest outdoor drug market. A recent report commissioned by DSA and neighborhood district partners has outlined a large amount of criminal activity across the city, including property crime, assaults and robberies, is being perpetrated by a small number of prolific offenders who cycle through the criminal justice system. Have you read the report? If elected to the Seattle City Council, what policies might you pursue to curb property crime and address these issues in downtown in order to make our streets safer for all? How might you work with your elected colleagues to enact these policies?

Public safety is one of my top priorities, and I see it as a crucial aspect of a thriving downtown Seattle. First and foremost, the most effective way to address this issue is to solve people’s urgent and immediate needs, to keep them out of a survival mode. This includes access to no-barrier shelters, as well as increasing the availability of quality mental health treatment and addiction treatment centers so that our struggling community members can get the assistance that they need. Addressing these upstream services will prevent these problems further down the pipeline. In order to address the existing public safety concerns, a solution as simple as well-lit streets can have a positive impact of decreasing injuries and increasing overall perceptions of safety. I am also supportive of the types of programs that DSA carries out surrounding cleaning up our streets in the way of: removing litter, cleaning up graffiti, removing empty/unused newspaper boxes and other outdated aspects of our built
environment, as well as increasing ‘beautification’ projects. This all feeds into the idea that a clean, well-maintained street that has the perception of safety and cleanliness actually does influence the behavior in these areas. Finally, I believe that the answer is not always to just increase police patrols in these areas - let’s be creative, holistic, and compassionate in our approach to this issue.

3. Homelessness continues to be the top issue facing Seattle, yet we have made little progress toward housing our homeless population. In your estimation, what is the City’s role in addressing this crisis? Where would you spend your energy, leadership and resources to have the greatest impact?

Watching my representative’s lack of urgency in addressing this issue is what motivated me to run for this seat in the first place. Both as someone who has experienced homelessness/housing instability and in my current role as Program Manager with All Home King County, I have grown deeply in my expertise on the issue of homelessness. My work at All Home centers around two important areas, youth homelessness and prevention & diversion services. As it pertains to youth, we know that 48% of adults experiencing homelessness experienced homelessness as a young person. This means, if we shift our focus toward preventing and addressing youth homelessness, we can easily disrupt the pipeline into an experience of homelessness. Plus, the Diversion approach in homelessness has shown to cost a fraction of other interventions with high rates of exits to permanent housing. We need to more deeply invest in what’s working and right size our funding for other interventions. Overall, the role of local government is to ensure that our city is a place where everyone, regardless of means, can live with dignity. This means meaningfully and thoughtfully addressing the homelessness crisis. This issue is intricate and complex, and will require all of us to come together to implement effective solutions. Fortunately we already have evidence-based solutions that work, programs such as Diversion; enhanced shelters; by name lists; increased bedcounts in no-barrier shelters; a ‘housing-first’ approach - which believes that getting people into housing, even temporary housing, is the first necessary step towards helping them address their other problems; increasing summer employment and other opportunities for our young people; and others. I will not only work carefully with the funds we already have dedicated towards this issue, to ensure we are investing in the most effective and cost-effective solutions, I will also fight for other progressive revenue sources to combat this crisis.

Additionally, this is not a problem that the city of Seattle can, or should, solve on its own. It is time that our surrounding cities step up their investment, and partner with us. It is also imperative that we work with at the state level on funding and investments in this crisis.
4. Seattle's lack of housing options that are affordable to our low and moderate income employees is an important issue for DSA and its members. In the wake of MHA passing at Council, what kinds of new policies would you pursue to help expand the availability of affordable housing in Seattle? How might current zoning fit into your thinking? Who would you imagine working with to enact these policies?

Zoning restrictions are a major source of the strain on our current available housing stock. I was very happy to see the passage of MHA and related legislation, and would propose to continue aggressively investing in these endeavors. Our city has incredibly diverse needs, and currently apartment developments are banned in approximately 65% of our city. We must work to lift those bans, and continue diversifying our housing stock by allowing construction for single-family homes, multi-family homes, apartment complexes, condos and townhomes, and that all of this construction must also be balanced out to meet the affordability needs of our neighbors. We can also look at the overly burdensome permitting process, and providing more staffing allocations in order to speed up this process.

One idea that I am interested in is working with colleagues at Building Changes on piloting a shallow rent subsidy. A shallow rent subsidy could be targeted to people who don’t have more than $400 to their name. In our region, about 40% of our neighbors don’t have more than $400 to their name and could easily have one financial circumstance push them into poverty or homelessness. We could target a low subsidy of, say, $500 a month to families in need for a year. Provide them stability and an opportunity to save. But, and I will say this all throughout the campaign: we need to make sure that the precision of our solutions match the precision of the harm initially inflicted. We need to be specific and precise in who and how we’re supporting our most vulnerable neighbors. Plus, we need to be doing more upstream, such as focusing on evictions and free civil legal aid similar to New York, or providing more pathways to home ownership, supporting smaller landlords that are providing affordable places for people to live.

What might be an interesting idea is to prioritize diverse housing types around our public schools. In the 2016-2017 school year, we had around 4,200 students experiencing homelessness in our public schools. That’s one in 13–students are likely to have at least one peer student experiencing homelessness in their classroom. Zoning is one of the leading indicators of segregation in our schools. I wrote about this in Real Change last year.


5. Between 2010 to 2018, downtown Seattle added over 85,000 jobs. During this time, we have seen a major shift in how the majority of people get to and around downtown, with percentage of people driving alone to their jobs shrinking to roughly 25%. Still, as the regional
transportation and economic hub, downtown street space is at a premium. What steps do we need to take over the next two-to-four years to ensure that people can access downtown and that our streets work well for all users?

The downtown area is a hub of activity for all sorts of commuters - motorists, pedestrians, and cyclists - and we need to prioritize the safety and accessibility of all. For me, this means continuing to promote alternative means of transit - especially by increasing our availability of protected bike lanes throughout downtown, and availability of bike storage. Well-maintained sidewalks with ADA compliant curb ramps are critical for our pedestrians. Additionally, we must work closely with SDOT as our public transit system continues to grow. I would like to see us also more deeply integrate our schools into our neighborhoods - this can be accomplished by ensuring that public bus schedules take into account school class schedules when making their schedules, so that teachers and school staff can better utilize our public transit.

This is also relevant to our affordability crisis, as more and more people are finding it impossible to live where they work. Many who work in the downtown area are being pushed further and further out of the city to find housing. We need to be sure that people are able to live within reasonable distance of their workplace.

6. DSA currently manages and activates Westlake and Occidental Square Parks through an agreement with the City, which has allowed us to bring furniture, programming, staffing and security into these parks, as we work to make them welcoming for all. We also manage McGraw Square with some of the same types of activities. What is your view of this type of public/private partnership as the City contemplates major new public space opportunities along the waterfront and above Interstate-5?

I am such a fan of activating public spaces for public good. It’s also a great strategy to bring life to areas—and preventing and reducing crime. I also believe that municipal government officials need to be creative in both our solutions and our revenue streams - a public-private partnership is a perfect opportunity to explore both of these opportunities. Frankly, we need to be partnering with people who share the city’s values of providing a positive and meaningful quality of life to our citizens. And as someone who has been supportive, particularly as an early endorser of the “Community Package” and the Lid I-5 folks, I would love to see the city supporting more of these opportunities, however, I would be interested in working more closely to design these spaces with women, young families, and people with disabilities in mind.

7. Downtown Seattle is the economic center of the region, with large and small businesses employing more than 300,000 people. However, economic success for
Employers and employees are continuously strained by unpredictable and burdensome regulations and taxes being imposed at the city level. How will you work to ensure that there is more predictability and consideration for employers to support growth in jobs, retail, restaurants and investment in downtown?

First, we need to talk to small business owners and quit conflating large corporations with small businesses. Nearly 90% of businesses in the Seattle region are small businesses. We know that for many people of color, queer folks, immigrants, starting your own business can be very hard. We’ve got to ensure we’re supporting more representative businesses that come from many different communities. Plus, the city should have a positive working relationship with small and large businesses to illicit ideas, feedback, and identify places where there are burdens and ways that businesses can provide more support. My priority if elected will be to foster these positive working relationships, and to actually listen to our small business community in what they need to thrive. Then, we should expand the great work that’s already happening, such as the OED tenant improvement support for smaller businesses, free education for new and just beginning business owners about taxes and running a small business, and working with developers to translate the needs of small businesses into their commercial development, such as ensuring the commercial space isn’t too big for new small businesses. They did this in the International District and we continue being a voice for our smaller businesses in this regard.

8. In 2015, a city report looked at Seattle’s commercial development capacity and determined we could absorb another 115,000 jobs by 2035. Yet, in the last three years alone, we have added over 23,000 jobs, indicating that we are likely to surpass our growth targets much earlier than anticipated. Seattle has limited existing zoning capacity, and inadequate permitting systems in place to accommodate the future demand for commercial development. Where might you look to expand our city’s capacity in this regard?

In 1926, the Supreme Court of the United States, under the opinion of Justice Sutherland, wrote that apartment houses were a mere “parasite” and a “nuisance” to the neighborhood. I often think about how some of our residents’ current feelings about zoning are “otherizing” and stigmatizing to folks living in apartments. We’ve got de facto apartment bans in almost 65% of the city. I believe MHA was a great first step, we should be more bold and ambitious in our planning around development and zoning relief to allow more housing types, missing middle, and apartments/multi-family housing across more areas of the city. It’s going to take a lot of tough conversations with neighbors about change but change that we need in order to welcome in all of these new neighbors. Additionally, we should look to parking lots, surplus land the city owns, golf courses, and SODO (where we might be able to get creative about projects that look and feel similar to Portland’s Pearl District). Plus, we cannot overlook that zoning and apartment bans are having negative effects on our public schools-making them more segregated. And while what I’ve described affects residential zoning, I see potential for another green opportunity. We have 105
schools spread across this city, I would be interested in looking to these schools as future hubs, much like the organizing work we've done for transit-oriented development at light rail stations, for example. I was grateful to be a part of the Capitol Hill Champion to work on the community vision and values for the Capitol Hill station. We should be making our 105 public school hubs, as well. We could dedicate a certain amount of the zoning around our schools for upzone/affordable housing, small businesses and smaller non-profits, as well as senior centers, child care centers, and transportation hubs. More of our neighborhoods could be welcoming to smaller businesses and absorb some of the impact of adding more jobs in our city and provide economic impacts in more places across the district.

9. As the City strives to allocate limited resources to manage and activate our complex urban environment, it has increasingly turned to Business Improvement Areas (BIAs) for support. These BIAs build community capacity and give agency and tools to local communities to address their own priorities. What is your view of these groups and their impact?

I am supportive of these initiatives, and see them as a great opportunity for local neighborhoods to have a stake and a voice in developing their unique character, particularly the BIA’s in Capitol Hill and the Chinatown/International District neighborhoods. During my time on the Capitol Hill Community Council, we worked closely with then Executive Director Michael Wells on supporting BIA in our neighborhood and I appreciate that they can be a helpful tool in supporting hyper local community development.

10. Downtown is not only one of the fastest-growing residential neighborhoods in the region, but also the jobs center of Seattle. If you are elected to serve on the City Council, how would you go about balancing the needs of your district with the City has a whole? What are the top issues facing your district and how do you see them intersecting with the issues at play in downtown?

I am deeply enmeshed in my community, and have been fighting for my Capitol Hill neighborhood since first moving there in 2012. I see the issues in my district as many that have been mentioned already - homelessness, affordability, and transit/accessibility. In addition to being motivated to run because of our homelessness crisis, I was also motivated to run because I have witnessed the massive displacement our Capitol Hill neighbors are facing - many are people of color, and many have lived here for generations. They are now being pushed out because they can’t afford to continue living in their homes. All of these issues are not just intertwined in my own district, but intertwined with the needs of the city as a whole.
I will balance this work much like I’ve been intentional about doing as a Director on the Seattle School Board. As a representative of the same geographic area as the City Council, I’ve had to be responsive and speak up for the schools in District 5, and I’ve made it a point to better understand how the system is working overall by visiting other schools, examining school specific programs, speaking to students/schools, focusing on student homelessness. All this to say, my understanding of public office has been finding that balance between the city as a whole and my district.

Homelessness is such a complex conversation. You have neighbors in Madrona who may see it less or from further away than First Hill and Capitol Hill see it and we have to thread the conversation by utilizing those with lived experience. Affordability is also a huge issue. We have 80% renters in Capitol Hill and other areas more single family—we know certain neighborhoods can include more housing types. Public safety is another issue. Many folks see issues of gun violence and harm towards our neighbors as nothing a few more cops couldn’t fix. But our problems—the deeper issues and unmet needs of many of our neighbors—can’t be solved by just having more cops. Income inequality continues to affect people. Our job as government is to work with whomever is willing and able on solutions to avoid ever making people feel they need more cops in their neighborhoods: we need to invest in youth programming all year round, and provide more meaningful support to victims of violence.