1. Many employers in the downtown and center city neighborhoods—including the City of Seattle—fully or partially cover the cost of ORCA transit passes for their employees. Incentivizing public transit and reducing drive-alone commuting is especially important during the next five years, with the “Seattle Squeeze” creating challenging traffic conditions. However, many employers don’t provide any transit pass subsidy. Anecdotally, higher-paid workers are more likely to receive employer-subsidized passes than lower-wage workers, who are disproportionately women and people of color. Many lower-wage workers earn too much to be eligible for the ORCA LIFT low-income reduced fare program, but not enough to afford housing in Seattle without being severely cost-burdened. For the following questions, please choose either Yes or No. You may explain your answers if you like.

- Do you think employers of a certain size should subsidize employee transit passes? (Yes/No) Yes, I would like to see them subsidize employee transit passes.
- Would you support city council action to make this a requirement? (Yes/No) Yes. City government can find ways to incentivize this behavior.
- Do you think the City should cover the costs of transit passes for employees of human service providers that are funded by city contracts? (Yes/No) Yes, though I would do so in a larger package (in coordination with King County) that provides fare relief for working people more generally.

2. Report after report—notably the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) report released in October 2018—tells us we need to cut carbon emissions dramatically NOW. What will you do to put Seattle on the path to decarbonization?

I am the only candidate taking a leadership position on this. Two main levers that we have to pull:

1. Rapidly electrify government vehicles – including the entire fleet of mass transit (working with King County to accelerate the 2040 goal Executive Constantine has already committed to), as well as providing incentives to private owners to transition to electric vehicles.
2. Encourage greater use of green building materials – including cross-laminated timber and fly ash, the later of which is used as an alternative to cement in concrete.

Together, transportation and buildings contribute over 50% of carbon emissions locally.

I should note that increasing use of mass transit is only possible if we make it easy for neighbors to use mass transit. To do that, we need to work with Metro to dramatically increase the frequency and reliability of bus service. We cannot wait until ST3 is complete to serve neighbors in District 7. We should also work to solve the “first and last mile” problem, as many live too far from a stop or station to walk from their homes.

Of course, we also need to preserve and enhance our green spaces as Seattle grows, and create safe routes for people to walk, bike, or scooter as an alternative to driving.

3. What is one community, specifically in your district, that you feel is being “left out” as our city grows and changes? What will you do to make sure their voices are heard?
I think seniors, generally, is the one community that is most “left out” in my district. I have met dozens of seniors who are retired librarians, firefighters, artists, and so on. While they are grateful that their home values have increased so much, the ballooning property taxes are putting a strain on their finances. Many are already actively looking to sell their homes. This is a shame because most of these seniors have been in their communities for decades. They are deeply entrenched in their communities, serving on church boards, volunteering at soup kitchens, and more. Our neighborhoods are stronger when we have diversity in class and backgrounds; that includes intergenerational diversity.

Upon taking office, I will look for ways to provide greater property tax relief for seniors. To offset the losses, we will need new progressive sources of revenue. I will also improve access to at-home care services so seniors can age with dignity in their homes.

4. What should the City’s role be in creating a healthy climate for business in Seattle?
We all benefit when Seattle grows economically because growth creates jobs. As such, the City should do its part to create a favorable business climate in Seattle. When I talk to business owners, the things they ask for most include: (i) greater stability and predictability in regulation; (ii) greater consultation with business, especially regarding technical aspects of an industry or business that the government lacks knowledge of, throughout the policymaking process; and, (iii) greater appreciation for the time and financial costs associated with implementing new policies. I believe that Seattle is better when all sectors – government, business, and society – work together to solve problems. As a councilmember, I will use this partnership approach.

I will note that not all economic growth is created equal. We need to improve equity in economic opportunity so all can benefit as Seattle grows. We also need to ensure Seattle is the best place to succeed as a small business owner. Small business is still the growth engine of our economy.

5. Seattle has the most regressive tax system of any city in Washington State, which has the most regressive tax system of any state in the US. Do you believe that the City has a responsibility to raise significant new revenue to address the challenges facing our communities? If so, what tax policies would you advocate for at the city level to generate new revenue?

I absolutely agree that our tax system is regressive. I also suspect that new revenue will be required to made rapid progress on the most acute crises of the day, including homelessness, affordability, and traffic congestions. That said, public outrage surrounding the “head tax”, as well as record-low approval ratings for City government, suggest the City needs to first restore trust and accountability before credibly asking for more revenue. Neighbors are looking to the new Council to get this right. I am inclined to take their feedback to heart.

To mitigate the regressive nature of taxes, we might start by offering relief to those low- and middle- income persons who already live on the margins. And we can also work to provide relief in other ways, e.g., expanding ORCA LIFT to the working poor; offering a publicly-funded health savings account, akin to what San Francisco does; etc.

When new revenue is needed, I am inclined to start with fees on hospitality bills but would want to do it in a responsible way so small businesses are not disproportionately impacted.
6. Seattle is deeply divided on how to address the homelessness crisis. How would you characterize these divisions, and how would you address them?

This division breaks my heart. As a lifelong Seattle-area native, I have never seen such divisive political discourse. We should be coming together as a community to solve our problems.

From my perspective, there are two main camps:

1. “This is a housing problem”
2. “This is a lawlessness problem”

Both camps are right. And both are wrong.

The first camp has it right that homelessness is first and foremost a result of economic insecurity. Put another way, many people become homeless because they can’t pay rent. From 2010 to 2018, Seattle rents increased by 69%, double the national average of 32%.

The first camp has it wrong, however, in framing the problem only through the lens of housing. Affordability is a function of two things: income and expenses. Housing is but one expense. To be clear, it is among the most important levers for addressing affordability. But it is not the only one.

The second camp has it right to say there is rising substance abuse. They are also right to point out rising property crimes, which some link to drug addiction.

The second camp is wrong, however, to conflate substance abuse and property crime with homelessness. These are not the same thing. Many housed people abuse drugs.

Where both camps have it wrong is that there are other common causes of homelessness, such as domestic violence, medical bankruptcy and untreated mental health diseases.

So how do we address these divisions? It starts with approaching the problem with humility. Both camps need to acknowledge that there are valid points on both sides. This requires leadership on the Council. As the CEO of Forterra reminded me recently: elected officials, for better or worse, play a large role in setting the culture and tone of their communities. On the Council, I will lead with humility, use a partnership approach, and focus on solutions (not symbols).

And, at the end of the day, a problem with many causes is going to need many solutions.

(I should also say that I’ve noticed a division among those who think homeless persons need to take more personal responsibility, and those who think we need to simply offer more support. This division in many ways maps with the above camps, but not perfectly.)

7. There is widespread agreement that all areas of response to the homelessness crisis need to be stepped up— but in practice, an elected official’s job is often to prioritize. How would you rank the following in terms of relative priority for increased funding and attention? (1=highest, 4=lowest)

You may explain your choice, but if you fail to rank the options, we will not consider your answer.

- Homelessness prevention (1, 2, 3, 4) 1
- Mental health and drug treatment services (1, 2, 3, 4) 3
- Low-income housing (1, 2, 3, 4) 2
King County is exiting people from homelessness at a faster rate than ever before. The problem is that the rate of entry exceeds that of exit. That’s why we need to double-down on homelessness prevention. The City of Tacoma has recently done this, partnering with Solid Ground to implement Diversion programming. They’ve found Diversion to be a cost-effective way to address housing insecurity. Not only is it less expensive than building more housing, it is also more effective. I would like to see the City of Seattle leverage Diversion, combined with low-income housing, to improve the financial resiliency and economic security of at-risk households. I would also like to use Diversion as a platform, on which we can deliver mental health and drug treatment services. Research suggests that these services are more effective when beneficiaries are housed. I rank emergency shelter last simply because I would shift prioritization to homeless prevention.

8. What lessons do you think should be drawn from the experience of the “head tax” last year?

Some of my most conservative, business-friendly neighbors will concede that they could have been okay with something like a “head tax” if a few things were true:

(i) If the City had a good track record of stewarding funds to achieve outcomes;
(ii) If the City had more properly consulted residents and businesses prior to signing the legislation (to many, the legislation felt top-down and rushed);
(iii) If there was a serious plan in place for how funds would drive results; and,
(iv) If the legislation had backing of business or was otherwise framed in a friendlier way (instead of oppositional way).

I will oftentimes hear neighbors talk about the “head tax” in combination with the video that went viral a few months ago of the gentleman asking for attention from councilmembers at a public comment forum (the video went viral because he was rebuffed). This suggests to me that the “head tax” has in many ways become a symbol: it is the most salient data point supporting a belief that our government does not listen, that residents lack a voice in the political process. This is troubling to me because I believe local government is the doorstep to democracy. If we can’t restore faith in democracy at the local level, how are we supposed to achieve this at the state and federal levels?