Candidate Name: Mark Mendez
City Council District: 5

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

- Would you support city council action to make this a requirement? (Yes/No)
  
  Yes

- 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

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?

('Solarize District 5' project, preserve and restore an ecological balance throughout our Thornton Creek watershed.)

In order for us to fight climate change we need to generate more of our power from the sun. District 5 Business leaders like Hellbent Brewery Company and Sphere Solar Energy are leading this effort by installing a solar system on Hellbent Brewery Company’s roof. [https://enjoylakecity.org/solar-power-in-lake-city/](https://enjoylakecity.org/solar-power-in-lake-city/) It’s the largest solar energy system for a brewery in Washington State. It’s a great example of what local businesses and residents of Seattle can do to fight climate change. [https://www.northwestbeerguide.com/home/2019/4/16/boasting-the-largest-solar-energy-system-for-a-brewery-hellbent-brewing-company-announces-solared-ipa](https://www.northwestbeerguide.com/home/2019/4/16/boasting-the-largest-solar-energy-system-for-a-brewery-hellbent-brewing-company-announces-solared-ipa)

I believe we should encourage more businesses, apartments, and business across District 5 and the City to install solar and other green technologies so that we can move towards meeting our climate change goals. I propose we create the “Solarize District 5” project which will provide incentives for solar energy projects on businesses, apartments, and homes all across District 5 and will train youth and adults at North Seattle College and in partnership with local unions to create living wage careers. The Thornton Creek Watershed is the heart and soul of District 5. Thornton Creek Watershed connects all of us and improves the quality of our lives, it’s important we work together to protect and restore the
watershed. District 5 community groups and nonprofits like Thornton Creek Alliance https://thorntoncreekalliance.info/ have been leading the way by “encouraging individuals, groups, schools, businesses, and government to work together in addressing the environmental restoration of the creek system preserving and restoring an ecological balance throughout the Thornton Creek watershed”. I believe we all have to work together to preserve and restore an ecological balance throughout our Thornton Creek watershed. There are many opportunities to restore the watershed and make it available for families to enjoy. I’ve been working with several community groups in District 5 to create new open spaces all across District 5.

I’ve also had the honor of creating the Little Brook Youth Corps https://www.seattleparksfoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/Youth-Lead-the-Way-in-Little-Brook.pdf, with community partners like Seattle Parks Foundation and Lake City Neighborhood Alliance. The Little Brook Youth Corps program empowers youth to take an active role in restoring Little Brook, a degraded creek that runs into the Thornton Creek Watershed, while gaining job skills and improving the community. I believe we need to work together to create more youth programs like the Little Brook Youth Corps, https://www.seattleglobalist.com/2018/05/04/up-north-and-down-south-young-people-of-color-are-greening-their-neighborhoods/73934 because programs like this deliver multiple environmental, economic and social benefits for District 5; especially for young people, low-income immigrant families, and other traditionally marginalized populations.

These types of youth programs increase community awareness of the Thornton Creek watershed and the need and opportunity for environmental restoration and neighborhood beautification. Beautified and restored open spaces along neglected and polluted places in District 5 will create a stronger sense of place in neighborhoods where residents have historically lacked community cohesion and will improve water quality and habitat.

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?

Lake City, Bitter Lake, Aurora Licton Springs

I am running for Seattle City Council because residents of North Seattle are ready for a new vision for D5 and accountability. I have a grassroots and collaborative leadership style. I have a record of ‘getting things done’ by bringing together and partnering with a diverse group of people and organizations to address the biggest challenges in Seattle and empower underserved communities across cultures. I worked with community partners to create the Lake City Mural project to transform the neighborhood, empower youth, support local business, improve public safety, and build community. I also created several community-based youth leadership programs and the Lake City Mural project to uplift our neighborhood and empower local youth. I want to bring this same vision and model of success working with community groups and organizations and apply it to D5 and the City. Together we can make District 5 and Seattle the best place to live, work, learn, and play.

4. What should the City’s role be in creating a healthy climate for business in Seattle?

The city should balance business interests with quality of life issues and community needs. Business interests will always want to pay as little as possible while getting the services and infrastructure they need to operate. It’s the City Council’s job to address those needs as well as the needs of the population. There should be reasonable solutions which can benefit both groups, and bringing together all the constituents is a good first step in reaching solutions which are win-win.

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?
The first step in addressing the tax system is to examine how current tax dollars are being spent. Programs which are performing as expected should be continued as is, and those which are not providing the desired outcomes should be subject to revision or elimination. Once that has been accomplished, current tax policies should be examined and altered to increase revenue while sparing the lowest income households from suffering from increased tax burdens. We should also look at creating a state income tax to make our tax system more progressive.

6. Seattle is deeply divided on how to address the homelessness crisis. How would you characterize these divisions, and how would you address them?
I would bring together working groups comprising representatives from groups with differing viewpoints to discuss the issues surrounding homelessness. Also, reaching out to community organizations of all types and listening to their concerns, as well as beginning a dialogue about possible solutions, is needed.

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) 4
- Mental health and drug treatment services (1, 2, 3, 4) 2
- Low-income housing (1, 2, 3, 4) 3
- Emergency shelter (1, 2, 3, 4) 1

8. What lessons do you think should be drawn from the experience of the “head tax” last year?
The council passed the “head tax” without consulting with the business community, which was expected to pay the tax, and without consulting with the general public, who work for businesses. Just having an idea which is “out of the box”, and then ramming it through, is not good governance. The city council is supposed to represent the citizens and businesses of the community, not “rule” it.