

August 14, 2023

Seattle City Councilmember Candidate Questionnaire

Thank you for taking the time to complete the candidate endorsement questionnaire for the Washington Technology Industry Association (WTIA). Your responses will help us inform and engage the 200,000+ tech sector employees who live and work in the City of Seattle. This, in turn, will help you engage them more effectively as an electorate.

We will also offer virtual candidate interviews with members of the WTIA Policy Steering Committee for a discussion to gain a more thorough understanding of your answers. Following the interview process, we will make our endorsement decisions.

Please send your responses to Kelly Fukai at kfukai@washingtontechnology.org by Monday, August 28th.

Please note that this questionnaire and your responses will be published on the WTIA website and used in a digital voter guide provided to Seattle-based tech employees.

Candidate Questionnaire

1. What are your top three priorities for the City of Seattle, and what will you do to accomplish them?

Priority 1:

My top priority is housing. This encompasses both housing affordability and homelessness.

To address both, I'm focused on housing policy that clusters into three areas: supply, subsidies, and stability.

In Seattle, we have some of the most amazing neighborhoods but we haven't shared most of them very well. We must massively increase our housing supply by upzoning all the residential areas of the city, especially those with amazing



resources like the neighborhoods in my district. We should change our zoning and building code, move to single-track permitting with objective criteria and a time limit + builders' remedy, abolish design review, and legalize "micro" apartments and SROs. We need to eliminate all parking requirements.

For subsidies, we need to aggressively expand our investment in affordable workforce housing, deeply affordable housing, social housing, and tiny homes. And for those who struggle with chronic behavioral health issues on top of financial challenges, we need to provide permanent supportive housing. We also need to provide rental assistance to move people into housing or keep them there when subsidized units are unavailable.

These all need to be funded by modest, progressive taxes (like I've outlined in my article in the Stranger, "Seattle Needs Money").

Finally, we should protect renters from displacement. This means an anti-rent gouging trigger law, anti-rent gouging excise taxes now, and best practice "right to return" legislation for builders that build new buildings that displace low-income residents. It also means targeted funding to keep people who are at risk of falling into homelessness from doing so.

Priority 2:

We've got to take public safety seriously instead of the constant theater we keep seeing from politicians.

Right now, that means investing in prevention through structural policies that change people's life prospects, like the housing policy mentioned above, like wraparound support to get people into apprenticeships and other training programs, and like direct support to families in need. It also means prevention through programming designed to turn the attention and energy of kids or at-risk adults toward positive actions through evidence-based community violence intervention programming. And it means significant additional investment (on top of the crisis care center levy) in our mental health care capacity.

For drugs, it means using science-based means for getting people better and getting drugs off the street. That means scaling up treatment and offering overdose



prevent centers, and then prohibiting public use near those centers (because then people have an alternate). It means using those centers as a pipeline into treatment as well.

It means that when we have a crisis we send the right responder, which will require us to scale up a significant behavioral health “fourth response” for 911 calls, which will better handle behavioral health crises. It means automating routine traffic enforcement with robust safeguards for civil liberties that ensure we do not continue to over-police the same communities as we always have. It means letting all first responders revive overdose victims without a uniformed offer present as well. This modernization and specialization will allow SPD, which is down almost 400 officers, to focus on where it can be most effective and where the need is most acute - like violent crime, sex crime, and attacks on small businesses, and it will shorten wait times for their arrival when they are needed.

We need to restore public trust as well. That means bringing basic good governance to our policing, which means robust civilian oversight. It means using evidence-based, best-practice de-escalation training for all first responders. And it means we invest in rehabilitative practices that reduce recidivism and restore people to their roles in their families and communities and make it possible to build a life without additional criminal activity.

Priority 3:

I want to make it as quick, convenient, and safe to get around this city without a car as it is with one, no matter what kind of abilities a person has.

This will require transformational investments in infrastructure and our multimodal network, and we will have to significantly improve the frequency and reach of our transit network, which will also require a large investment in workforce development.

Delivering a life that is as convenient without a car as it is with one will drastically improve the quality of life for families, seniors, people with disabilities, people who cannot afford or would rather not drive a car, and anyone who happens to live near a road, which is all of us.



It is also the best thing we can do for the climate in this city as 61% of our emissions come from cars. It's also worth noting that building electric cars still produces enormous emissions at this point as well—the cleanest car is the one that never has to be built!

2. What do you see as the role for the tech sector in Seattle's future? How would you partner with the tech sector to foster a robust and resilient community?

The tech sector is one of the core differentiators for Seattle, and it is our leading economic differentiator. As a former venture backed tech CEO myself, and as someone who has consulted with fistfuls of startups and mentored entrepreneurs at UW—I have a deep appreciation for the critical role this industry plays.

I believe Seattle's future will involve both doubling down on our tech strengths, and a portfolio strategy that involves aggressively investing in complimentary areas. However, I think most of those complimentary areas are already tech related or tech adjacent. So, while we are the world leader in travel software, e-commerce, and cloud—we are rapidly growing our edge in AI, bioinformatics and other areas of intersection with tech and life sciences (e.g., new methods of discovery for immunotherapy). I'd like to see us work diligently on moving into more and more of the tech industries like these that we are not leaders in yet. (I'd also like to see us build up our clean energy and clean economy muscles a bit too!).

How would I partner? Directly. Even though I'm a progressive, I have already built a working relationship with a number of commercial leaders downtown. I'm already well known by most local venture capitalists through my direct work, and some of them call on me when their companies need help. I'm endorsed by Tech4Housing as well, a grassroots group of tech employees who are fighting to make this an affordable place.

I would love to work directly with the industry on regional competitiveness, on increasing the pipeline of people with diverse and working-class backgrounds into the industry, on the discovery-to company inception-to scaling pipeline, and on making this place as livable and affordable it needs to be to attract the world class workplace of tomorrow. I plan to regularly meet with all the major constituencies in Seattle and our tech industry is one of the biggest—and I'm already deeply



enmeshed in parts of it.

3. Given the importance of the tech sector's contributions to the Seattle economy, what would you do to increase Seattle's competitiveness vis-a-vis emerging tech hubs like Denver, Miami, and Austin? What initiatives would you put forward to support tech employers, entrepreneurs, and employees?

I believe the biggest problem right now is that it is extremely expensive to live here (and thus pay someone here), *and* public services and safety are in a shoddy state.

We need to make our neighborhoods safe, attractive, and affordable—and have the kinds of public goods and services available –like childcare, parks, great schools—to make it so anyone can and will want to start a career, raise a family, and live out their golden years. We have failed to do that and we are making the problem worse—with restrictive zoning and permitting, high regressive taxes, failures to fund basic mental health and treatment, and a problematic relationship between our populace and police.

Seattle has immense intellectual capital, and we have a wonderfully ambitious commercial sector. Our political sector (with some exceptions, like ST3—though we are now talking about major deletions that would destroy lots of its value) is a sad shadow of what it should be. I'll bring the same ambition our industrial sector has to our politics. Seattle has the capacity to be one of the greatest cities in the world.

4. How would you work toward ensuring the successful advancement of policies and programs that create equitable outcomes for underrepresented communities and BIPOC individuals in the tech industry?

I'm currently having conversations on this topic with groups like labor unions and libraries (which often provide services to people looking to make career changes) and think that this is going to require serious cross-sector collaboration. I was a member of the Young American Leadership Program a few years ago at Harvard Business School, and we studied a number of programs that have been successful in other cities. Still, none have really scaled up their approaches yet.



1595 NW Gilman Blvd, Issaquah, WA 98027

509.666.1457

kfukai@washingtontechnology.org



It seems the key is that we need to segment by industry and/or function, need to identify what skills are actually needed to do a job (rather than excessive credentialing as a shortcut), what is preventing people who want upward mobility from getting those skills, and find the credible ambassadors (community leaders, teachers, pastors) to recruit and then also as a city provide the wraparound services (possibly things like transportation, childcare, and living stipends) to get people those skills and into work.

This is going to require serious, all-hands, cross-sector collaboration—from our high schools and community colleges, universities, labor unions, public sector, and of course the companies hiring folks themselves.

This can be run through particular hubs or partnerships—they key is that we have to get each of the steps working in concert—each industry/function needs a certain level of scale to make it work, with clear identification of skills and an agreement to hire based on those skills—the programming in place to deliver those skills and the supports in place to ensure people enter and are successful.

Thank you again for your willingness to serve our community.

Kelly Fukai
VP, Government and Community Affairs
WTIA