

# 2017 Seattle Mayoral Candidate Questionnaire

Thank you in advance for taking the time to answer this questionnaire, which was developed by members of the Civic Alliance for a Sound Economy (CASE). Please note, answers will be shared with CASE members and we reserve the right to publish any information provided in this questionnaire.

Your responses to the following questions will be used as part of CASE's endorsement process.

**Responses are due by noon, Wednesday, May 24.**

To submit your completed questionnaire, or if you have any questions, please contact Monica Fouts [monicaf@seattlechamber.com](mailto:monicaf@seattlechamber.com) or 206-389-7303.

## About the Civic Alliance for a Sound Economy

The Civic Alliance for a Sound Economy (CASE) is a political action committee sponsored by the Seattle Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce. CASE is the strongest political voice for businesses, large and small, in the Seattle metropolitan region. We represent employers and organizations from every industry sector in the region.

CASE supports local candidates and issues that help create a healthy economy, competitive business climate, and high quality of life for the Seattle metropolitan area.

## BASIC INFORMATION

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## QUESTIONS

- 1) Please describe why you are seeking CASE's endorsement and how you would use it in your

campaign.

The business community has many groups and associations representing economic interests but I believe the Greater Seattle Chamber of Commerce to be one of the premiere organizations concerned about the city's business vitality. As Mayor I will represent all interest groups in the city and ensure a balanced and fair partnership with businesses of all sizes and sectors.

Oftentimes business is portrayed as the driving forces of history. I prefer to think of the productive activities in our communities as the driving forces of our economy. A growing economy in any community in the world rests on five pillars: workforce; infrastructure; market; capital and regulations. Each of the pillars must be defended in it's own right but advocates must be mindful of the networking influence each segment has on the other. Some say this is the position of a generalist who is aware of the need to bring in individual experts when necessary. This is my method of approaching challenges and I believe the Chamber shares that strategy.

I welcome a partnership with the Chamber in order to spread a healthy, growing economy in all areas of our city. A successful city is an inclusive city and I believe our partnership would bring inclusive prosperity for all who live and work here.

I would use this endorsement to bring communities long considered outliers, especially communities of color, into a vibrant, inclusive partnership with the Chamber, based not on white privilege but on unity with diversity. We can do this.

**2) Seattle is one of the fastest growing cities in the U.S. Is this a good thing? What steps can the City take to help effectively plan for continued growth?**

Growth can be good and it can be bad. The value judgment is made when viewing how that growth impacts the residents of the city. The full impact of the growth has not been subjected to a "mainstream" analysis measuring the impact on all residents, not just some of them.

Planning based upon a genuine impact analysis of growth on our communities can be lively and inclusive. But too often, in the name of the "greater good", the needs of the existing communities are swept aside, ignored, and denigrated. Particularly in the "up zoning," existing residents of communities are simply ignored. This is not good.

Proposed public policy initiatives often require property tax increases, which make many long-time family homes unaffordable for people living on low or fixed income. The impact of growth financing becomes one of clearing the land of the existing residents so new, more affluent people can move in and remake the area. What are the citizens of a city to think of public policy proposals that destroy their neighborhoods? What are we to think of proposals that drive people out of their homes and their families into homelessness, all in the name of the greater good? The first step is to keep people in their homes rather than drive them out because they cannot afford new taxes or utility rates.

A world class city has room for all of us, not just the wealthy or the high tech talent. A world class city recognizes the value of diverse cultures, of the dialogue between diverse cultures that brings about innovation and change. But we need to all move forward together.

3) What constitutes a healthy business climate in a city, and why is it important?

A healthy business climate is one in which all boats rise. That is not what is happening at the present time. The extreme inequality in income and wealth is obvious in our city, state and nation. The mobile labor force that has now occupied South Lake Union is without doubt generating a great bottom line for their employer, and themselves to a much lesser extent. However, that great bottom line does not extend on down the income levels. This is not healthy. Even contingent workers making six figure salaries are in fear that their job may vaporize tomorrow and are living in the shadow of income insecurity.

A healthy business climate is one in which we pursue an economic development strategy that entices businesses to locate here with well rounded infrastructure and supports systems, rather than bribing them with tax breaks, which depletes resources from the 'well rounded infrastructure strategy.' Educated workforce, adequately developed transportation systems, access to capital that's not usurious, diversity of cultures, ethnicities, respect for our beautiful natural environment, sustainable practices, nurturing neighborhoods, mutual respect for each other's humanity, all make workers and business leaders feel good about locating their businesses here.

A barometer of a healthy business climate is one in which the needs of the most vulnerable are met. There are at least 2,942 people in Seattle each night who are unsheltered. In the Seattle King County area there are about 10,000 homeless people living on the streets or in shelters. There are over 4000 young people who are homeless and should be in school. This is not indicative of a healthy business climate. It's indicative of an exploitative economy.

A healthy business climate is one in which we support small businesses by improving access to capital, technical assistance, public contracting opportunities, and replacing the regressive tax on gross income with a progressive tax on net income, which would allow small businesses to actually not have to pay taxes until they're making money.

The State Constitution mandates, in Article 13, the safety net while Article 9 represents our paramount duty. A healthy business climate would address the needs of all the residents, not just a favored few. Is it important that people have a place to sleep and food to eat?

A healthy business climate is one in which there is a thriving market demand for goods, and consumers have discretionary funds in their pockets to buy them.

A healthy business climate is one in which the entire economic life cycle is locally sustainable, from education, to research, to concept, to financing, to production, to distribution, to retail purchase, to disposal.

The health of an economic region can be observed in relative balance/imbalance in the components of personal income and wealth. Imbalance in these systems driven by greed or allegiance to the "maximize profits, regardless" policy is indicative of an inhumane and sociopathic economy. Such an economy will inevitably polarize and collapse for lack of sustainability.



4) What is the City's role in supporting business growth and economic development?

The city should maintain, repair, replace the critical infrastructure that makes a community operate: water, waste water, power/energy, storm water, good streets and sound bridges. It should also have reasonable, but necessary, regulations. It should not use the tax dollars to capitalize private enterprise but create the necessary foundation for an economy to development.

Foremost, the city should provide a supporting role in workforce development, to assist workers and employers as part of the productive process, to gain the skills and knowledge needed for businesses to be successful.

5) What would you hope to accomplish in your first year in office? Do you have specific legislation that you plan to introduce? If so, please describe your strategy to get your idea implemented.

I hope to establish a publicly owned municipal bank in my first year that will dramatically increase our capacity to finance needed infrastructure, which are the preconditions that are necessary for an economy to prosper. This bank will allow the city to retain control over its own tax dollars and reinvest it back into our local economy. It will generate revenue for the city without raising taxes. And, we can leverage our revenue in the form of lending capacity for public projects by an order of magnitude, and not have to sell bonds to do it, i.e. pay profits to Wall Street. When we borrow from ourselves, it can be at a lower rate than Wall Street and without broker fees. When we repay the loans, we will be repaying ourselves and consequently building financing capacity for future generations. There is a model I'm working from called the Bank of North Dakota. The only publicly owned bank in the US, although public banking is common outside the US and an important tool for other countries to develop their infrastructure. I would be happy to present my thoughts about this to your organizations if they're interested in learning more about this game changing tool, and cornerstone of my platform.

6) Top areas of interest for the local business community include: a healthy climate for business and entrepreneurship, affordable housing, homelessness, taxes, transportation, and labor laws. As Mayor, how will you work with the business community to address these issues and what specific policy ideas do you have to tackle these complex challenges?

A healthy climate for business and entrepreneurship is one in which everyone is welcome. We are becoming a city in which the public policy is to move families who have been here for generations out of their homes and into the streets -- or in the streets of a far off suburb. Property taxes and utility taxes which are crafted to move lower, middle, and fixed income people out of the city do not happen by accident. People make those laws.

To meet the needs of an ample safety net, we need to acknowledge the role of policy makers in making the rules. Just as the business community objects to some of the rules and regulations made by the policy makers, so, too, do the long time residents who are impacted in much the same way as the business community. I intend to call a meeting to lay these concerns out in the open and really address them honestly. The cure for homelessness is to keep people in their houses in the first place and to build new homes for people who are without them. Over 50% of the people living in Berlin, for example, live in public housing. That is a challenge to consider for Seattle.

Financing capacity is the root of the problem. My publicly owned municipal bank is cornerstone of the solution. It can leverage our financing capacity ten fold to build public housing, schools, sidewalks, or whatever the people prioritize, but it can also generate revenue for the city without raising taxes. The Bank of North Dakota (BND), which has been around for almost 100 yrs. recently recorded it's 12<sup>th</sup> consecutive year of record profits for the people of North Dakota -- 19% ROI. By comparison, our State Investment Board, considered one of the top in the country, sets an ambitious 6% goal. Twelve consecutive years record profits brings it through the Great Recession and the crash of oil prices. The Bank actually returns more revenue to the state than oil taxes do. The BND has supported community banks by doing participation loans with them and also providing liquidity and secondary markets in a way that small businesses have much improved access to capital because that support has resulted in ND having the most community banks per capita of any state in the nation (community banks are the best way to increase access to capital for small businesses, as opposed to Wall Street banks). And incidentally, North Dakota had no bank failures or state budget deficits during the Great Recession. You might also find it interesting that BND has a very large Student Loan department.