

# CASE

## 2019 Seattle City Council Candidate Questionnaire

Thank you in advance for taking the time to answer this questionnaire, which was developed by 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 the screening process to determine which candidates are interviewed as part of our endorsement process.

*Responses will be accepted on a rolling basis but are due no later than Friday, May 24<sup>th</sup> by 5:00p.m.*

To submit your completed questionnaire, or if you have any questions, please contact Michael McIntyre at [Michael@casecampaigns.com](mailto:Michael@casecampaigns.com)

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### About the Civic Alliance for a Sound Economy

The Civic Alliance for a Sound Economy (CASE) is a political organization representing diverse local business interests. Sponsored by the Seattle Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce, CASE is committed to creating an affordable, livable, and safe city for all Seattleites to thrive.

CASE endorses candidates who demonstrate a strong commitment to improving the quality of life and economic opportunities for all Seattleites. CASE is focused on four core issues:

#### Good Governance:

**Trust:** Seattle deserves a City Council we can trust to put our city on the right track, not one that has failed to make meaningful progress on many of the critical issues we face.

**Accountability & Transparency:** Seattle deserves a City Council that is accountable to all of us and acts transparently. We need to know whether our city's resources are being used wisely.

**Solutions:** Seattle deserves a City Council that stays focused on issues facing our city and our neighborhoods - and offers ideas that work. We need leaders who will take a balanced approach and work collaboratively with local leaders, not fight them.

#### Homelessness:

**Big Picture Thinking:** Seattle deserves a City Council that will advance long-term systemic reforms to address homelessness in our city, which continues to rise while the U.S. average remains almost flat. We need to do better to help our homeless neighbors.

**Best Practices:** Seattle deserves a City Council that provides resources to effective programs and groups and holds contractors accountable for meeting performance standards.

**Regional Approach:** We need prompt implementation of thoughtful, regional solutions with clear leadership and accountability to ensure that homelessness is rare, brief, and one-time.

#### Affordability:

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**Housing for All Income Levels:** Seattle deserves a City Council that recognizes the importance of building housing for people and families of all incomes. We have a diverse population and broad-based economy, and we all do better when more people can afford to live close to jobs and transit.

**Local Businesses & Jobs:** Seattle deserves a City Council that is focused on the success of all our neighbors, especially those getting left behind as our city experiences incredible prosperity. We need leaders who will help grow local businesses and expand family-wage jobs.

## Transportation:

**Congestion & Livability:** Seattle deserves a City Council that prioritizes improving transit, reducing traffic congestion, and helping people and goods move around the city faster. We need leaders who continuously strive to make Seattle one of the best places in the nation to live and work.

### BASIC INFORMATION

<b>Candidate Name:</b> Sergio Garcia	<b>City Council District:</b> Dist. 6
<b>Party Affiliation:</b> Democrat	<b>Phone Number:</b>
<b>Email Address:</b>	<b>Facebook:</b>
<b>Website:</b>	<b>Twitter:</b>

### CAMPAIGN INFORMATION

<b>Political Consultants:</b>
<b>Campaign Manager:</b>
<b>Fundraiser:</b>
<b>Money Raised to Date:</b>
<b>Are you participating in the Democracy Voucher Program?</b>
<b>Total Democracy Vouchers Collected:</b>
<b>Money Raised Outside of Your District Vs. Within Your District:</b>
<b>Fundraising Target for Primary Election:</b>
<b>Fundraising Target for General Election:</b>
<b>Total Doors Knocked On:</b>
<b>Please list all endorsements you have received:</b>

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## ISSUE Questions

### Homelessness

Most Seattle voters rank homelessness as their number one issue and believe the current City Council has not offered workable solutions despite increased funding.

Q1: What are your top two strategies for addressing homelessness?

First, I believe that the complexity of this issue will require far more than two strategies. I also believe that we need to make certain changes in the short term to improve outcomes and public safety while focusing in the long run to prevent the root causes of homelessness and offer better resources to provide real exit strategies for those who find themselves on the streets.

As a member of the Seattle City Council, the first thing I would do with respect to this crises is demand that others on the Council and in local Government begin treating it as an actual “crises”.

In terms of actual strategy I would channel my efforts in two directions:

First, I believe that we need to fundamentally restructure our outreach to the homeless population and demand accountability from all stakeholders. What we are spending as compared to the outcomes we are seeing is shocking. I would demand an independent audit of all current services contracts as well as an internal audit of all existing city administered and funded programs. Once we have an idea of where the funds are going we can start to understand the public return on its investment and we can begin to have an informed conversation about which programs to expand and which ones to kill.

Second, we must begin to ask ourselves why services are not being accepted and why so many chose to live in squalid conditions rather than in a shelter or transitional housing. There are many ways to answer this question but I believe at the most basic level it comes down to incentives and disincentives. Do we need more shelter beds that serve a more diverse set of needs than we currently have? Absolutely. Do we need service providers that can afford to do more than pay lip service to the needs of those suffering a mental health or addiction crises? Of course we do. I believe that we can dramatically improve the effectiveness of outreach and the services currently available by disallowing camping in public spaces such as parks, sidewalks and under bridges. This practice, which has been given the green light by our current Council represents a failure of leadership which has diminished the quality of life for all Seattle residents and placed the homeless community at even greater risk than they would otherwise be.

Q2: Do you believe that achieving these objectives will require additional financial resources?

My gut tells me that in the long run we will need more direct funding for housing and services to get out of this hole. However, I would not at this time argue that this funding necessarily needs to come in the form of taxes on businesses or more increases in our property taxes. Going back to my previous

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response, we need to better understand how we are spending our current budget on this issue and find money there first before any discussions surrounding new revenues can be had. When it comes to transportation, education and infrastructure spending, we rarely self-fund major projects. So, why are we as a single city in the most populous county in the state self-funding our efforts to combat the homelessness issue? The answer is that because, as a city, we are being irresponsible and we have largely not been willing to find consensus and work with our regional partners. We have to scrap the go-it-alone strategy and demand accountability and help from the County, State and Federal Government. This may require concessions but I believe that we can do better when it comes to leveraging outside public revenue streams to assist in this process. I also believe that we should embrace and champion any business or philanthropist that is willing to chip in or get their hands dirty. After all this is a crises, right?

Q3: What are the most critical things that must change in order to implement your strategy?

Most importantly, the public conversation needs to change. This is not just an equity or poverty issue. This is not just a race and gender issue. This is not just a drug and mental health issue. It is all of these things but we need to be honest with each other about what the primary drivers of this epidemic are and we need to do a better job of listening to each other. I think that if we can have honest conversations that are not dominated by ideologues, activists and angry soccer moms we can actually get to the heart of the issue and start to build consensus toward productive and meaningful action.

## Transportation

We need to meet our region's growing mobility needs, allowing employees to get to work and efficient transportation of goods. Traffic, congestion and public transportation are also top issues for Seattleites. Considering the approval of the 9-year, \$930 million Move Seattle Levy:

Q1: How would you pursue budget transparency and accountability for these funds, and what are your metrics of success?

I believe a thorough, independent audit of SDOT and particularly the Move Seattle Levy is in order. The results of internal audits have been shrouded from the public eye, so really only the mayor, her consultants and inner circle *really* know what is going on and why specific decisions are being made. That is not fair. We voted for better roads and sidewalks, protected bikes lanes, traffic light sequencing and improved rapid transit. We were told that increasing our property taxes would improve our transportation system and commute times but now SDOT tells us they are two years behind schedule and will be removing massive segments of promised deliverables. This is unacceptable.

Q2: What are the top transportation needs in your district and how would you address them?

District 6 desperately needs to see improvement of the East/West Corridors that move people in and out of the district. We also need to start talking about how to expand the capacity of existing North/South bridges across the ship canal or build more. D-6 is defined by its bottlenecks and we can do a better job of widening those bottlenecks and expanding capacity elsewhere to take pressure of those major choke points that cause all of us so much stress and loss of time. We need more bus service at peak hours and we need to stop removing lanes of traffic which results in not only the restriction of cars but throws busses into the same mess. I sit in traffic all day every day lack of good decision making at the top levels is obvious.

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Ultimately, I believe that our transportation agenda has been dominated by certain interests that represent one means of transport over another. I believe that we need to do a better job of addressing the needs of all and spending our dollars in a way that will reduce transit times for everyone. I believe heads need to roll and the revolving door between the transportation lobby, activist groups, the private transportation related interests and SDOT needs to stop. As a member of the city council I would work hard to change the culture at SDOT and hold City Hall accountable to the rest of us who are just trying to get from A to B.

## Housing

Seattle must have more affordable housing to address critical workforce needs. The passage of Mandatory Housing Affordability is a first step in addressing this pressing issue.

Q1: Now that MHA has passed, what would be your top legislative priority be for creating more affordable housing options in your district?

So far the rezoning and development we have seen in the district has not brought about the desired result of producing more affordable housing. The new apartments I see going on the market cost more than twice what I would consider paying for a one bedroom unit. I think we need to look long and hard at the current system of allowing developers to pay an impact fee to avoid construction of affordable housing on site. This is resulting in mass displacement of lower income residents and those on fixed incomes. The “Grand Bargain” that Ed Murray negotiated years ago is not working for low income Seattleites but it certainly seems to be working for everyone else. How can we expect our business community to thrive if a one bedroom apartment costs over \$2000 per month? How can we expect families working for those businesses to live in the same communities they serve? I believe we need to either look at increasing these impact fees or require developers to construct new affordable units on site or within a close proximity. If 3 low rent units are demolished to build 15 row houses at \$900K apiece then I believe the developer should be responsible for funding the construction of at least the number of affordable units (in this case 3) that were removed to make way for new construction. Ideally, I would like to see these units folded into the same new developments with a mix of market rate and subsidized units. I would also like to see displaced residents getting first crack at new affordable units.

## Growth and Competitiveness

Seattle is a geographically constrained city experiencing unprecedented growth. We need City Councilmembers who can plan for the needs and challenges that come with that growth, including how the city can physically accommodate large increases in people and jobs.

Q1: How and where should our city direct new growth?

As a member of the City Council I would push for a comprehensive strategy that spreads the load around without undermining the existing neighborhood commercial zones and town centers that make Seattle so unique. We can not solve our needs for growth by ripping down what has made this city so great. I would like to see the low hanging fruit picked before we re-zone single family neighborhoods and I would like to see more attention paid to how new residential growth (specifically) harms and/or benefits many existing small businesses. This does not seem to be the focus with current leadership. When I talk about low hanging fruit I am referring to the many large tracts of underutilized and undercapitalized lots in places like Interbay, Rainer Valley, Northgate and Lake City. Let’s look at creating low cost housing and new businesses in those areas while increasing density in neighborhoods in ways that appeal not only to those who would like to live there but also to those who currently live there.

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Seattle voters will not find “land use policy” or “urban planning” on my resume, after all I am a police officer. Personally, I believe that this may be more of a strength than a detriment because I look at this subject through the eyes of someone on the ground and through the eyes of the residents I serve every day. The elected officials and bureaucrats that currently call the shots at City Hall and consider themselves “experts” on this subject are not serving the interests of the *entire* community. It is not okay the city to allow the removal low rise retail and commercial buildings on arterials to be replaced with row houses with no requirement to replace the business friendly lease opportunities that existed there prior. The small business community is already dealing with more obstacles than ever, the last thing we need is for our low cost commercial and retail spaces to be replaced by residences whose front doors open on to the sidewalk at bus stops and intersections where cafes, boutiques and pubs used to reside. This to me shows a lack of understanding.

Q2: As more neighboring cities develop the housing, transit, and commercial infrastructure needed to support larger employment bases, how will you as a Councilmember encourage employers of all sizes to locate, stay, and grow in Seattle?

This response may be oversimplified but for me it comes down to one word, “Livability”. Jobs drive growth and growth creates new prosperity but I fear that Seattle jobs will move out of the city to safer communities with better transit, traffic, schools and infrastructure. Today I hear more people talking about leaving Seattle than ever and I worry about how that will impact employers big and small.

I also believe strongly that the posture of the city towards business needs to change. Many business owners who I talk with and who support my candidacy tell me they feel persecuted and unappreciated by city regulators. They see the decisions made by the current Council and how those decisions impact their businesses and they ask “who is looking out for me, my employees and my customers?”

I think the Seattle Office of Labor Standards (OLS) is doing great work to protect workers who are being mistreated and punish bad actors in our business community. However, I am also aware of the fact that the mandate under which OLS operates has grown to a point of being oppressive and unmanageable for many good businesses who find themselves out of compliance with regulations they were unaware of. OLS can now investigate businesses without the presence of an employee complaint. This feels like over reach. I believe OLS should work harder to reach out and engage the business community rather than subject businesses to a seemingly unending investigative process and burdensome fines. Imagine how much progress we could make if more resources were spent on outreach, compliance and education instead of reducing the threshold for creating new investigations, which to me looks like an attempt to create as many investigations as possible.

## Public Safety

Every Seattleite deserves to be safe in their neighborhoods. However, many Seattleites feel less safe in their neighborhoods than they did just two years ago.

Q1: Please describe the top public safety concern in your district.

If you asked me this question a year ago I would have said that the number one concern I hear in Ballard and Fremont is property crime, today I would say it is the fear of assault and burglary. This change reflects a deterioration of public safety in general and I believe it is caused by a migration of violent felons, sex offenders and drug dealers into the neighborhood. The decision to allow tent camping anywhere and everywhere has created a dangerous sub-society/economy of drug production, distribution, sales, consumption and even prostitution. Much of this activity is based out of RVs and abandoned homes set for re-development. Law enforcement has zero tools to enforce existing laws so

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this problem grows daily as more RVs and tent campers move into the district. Parks are filled with feces and needles. Shootings and stabbings are on the rise. This needs to stop.

Q2: How would you better allocate resources to address this issue?

There are so many changes that need to be made to address this issue but I do not see funding as the primary restriction to success. We have a 6 billion dollar municipal budget, I am confident we can find the resources within our existing revenue streams to properly fund public safety. To me, our lack of public safety reflects a lack of political will.

First, I am working on a policy initiative to demand accountability from the owners of vacant lots and structures set for development that would require immediate reporting of vacancy, the securing of each property to prevent occupancy by squatters and a requirement to maintain these properties so that they do not become a health and safety risk to neighboring residents and communities. Law enforcement does not even know which homes are vacant let alone have the ability to conduct routine check-ins to ensure these properties are not being used as drug labs, bordellos and flop houses. This ordinance would extract fines from negligent foreign investors and developers which would be split evenly between mental health/addiction treatment and law enforcement spending. This will improve public safety on more than one level.

On more general level, we need more police and we need them to be allowed to get out of their cars and walk the streets in order to get to know the residents and businesses they serve. I would expand the budget for SPD using existing city funds, create a program to increase the numbers of local hires and create a pipeline for new recruits with the promise of at least two years of paid higher education.

## Government Accountability

We know that most Seattle voters do not trust the current City Council. They want a Council that is transparent, accountable and delivers results.

Q1: What would you do to restore trust and accountability?

First, I would be honest. Seattleites are one of the most educated populations in the country and I think they know when they are being lied to. Second, I would work hard to ensure that everyone from the community has a seat at the table when it comes to decision making time. I plan to establish local volunteer committees to help keep me informed about what is going on in my district and what my district needs from the City Council. Specifically I would establish these for business, public safety, transportation, housing/development, and arts/culture.

Q2: Specifically, how would you evaluate spending priorities and measure their effectiveness?

As a cop I have to make quick decisions based on tangible observations and gut instinct. We know what we need to be spending on as a community right now but most Seattleites have no idea what the City budget looks like. I would like to open the books and have public conversations about how the city is spending our tax dollars, especially when back scratching and insider deals are exposed.

As far as evaluating our spending priorities and measuring effectiveness, I think we need to take a hard look at how this is being done currently and improve these mechanisms so that we as a community can get a better ROI.

## Revenue

Many Seattleites believe that there is a spending problem, not a revenue problem.

Q1: Please list the different sources of revenue for the city of Seattle.

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Property tax, Sales tax, B&O tax, development fees, impact fees, traffic tolls, tourism and hospitality tax, public bonding, traffic & parking tickets, soda tax, ammunition tax, bag tax.....

Q2: Do you believe Seattle has enough revenue to address our most critical issues? If so, please explain which additional tools you would propose.

If we can get rid of the waste and inefficiency in our current budget and restore trust with the tax paying public I think we can start to talk about more progressive structures of taxation in the future to raise revenues as tax levies expire and decrease the burden on poor and working class households.

I think we have more than enough revenue to address our immediate needs and to create a brighter future for this city. I think that focusing on what we have is more important than focusing on extracting more revenue from a population that reports high levels of tax fatigue. We need to restore trust by cutting programs that do not achieve or even attempt to achieve their stated goal. We need to root out the culture of quid pro quo spending where everyone except the intended end recipient of public funding seems to get their back scratched.

## Child Care

Seattle is facing a child care crisis. There are more kids that need care than there are available child care services.

Q1: How would you support increasing access to high-quality, affordable child care for Seattle families?

I think that this is one of the biggest issues facing young families in Seattle. To address this need I would look hard at reducing the financial barriers faced by child care providers to incentivize the expansion of this industry in a meaningful way as quickly as possible. To me that looks like tax holidays for startups, providing short term assistance to offset the initial costs of high rents. I would also like to fund childcare vocational programs at our community colleges to create a path for young people and those re-entering the work force who are interested in this industry to receive the proper training they need to work for or create a childcare business.

## Labor Laws

Labor laws like Washington's Paid Family Leave Law are most effective when they benefit both employees and employers.

Q1: If a new labor law is proposed, how and when would you engage the business community to help inform your position and approach?

In my professional life as a cop, personal life, and campaign I have surrounded myself with members of the business community, from Amazon employees, small business employees, restauranteurs, and construction contractors. I believe that at the State level, legislators have done a good job of working with and listening to the business community. However, at the city level I believe businesses have been railroaded by OLS and other departments who have positioned themselves as the adversary of business rather than a balanced arbiter. I believe that small business particularly needs to have a bigger seat at the table and I will deliver that if elected.

## Business Climate

Seattle's business community is a willing partner and expects its elected officials to lead the public policy conversation around solutions to the pressing problems in our city.

Q1: How would you work with the Seattle business community if you were elected to office?

As mentioned earlier in this questionnaire, I would establish a D-6 Business advisory committee out of my office to ensure continual outreach and engagement. I would listen when businesses call and prioritize their needs rather than ignore them until I need their help to get re-elected. Despite what

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our socialist neighbors would have us all believe, business are *people*. They are the driving force in any thriving community and they provide the innovation and entrepreneurial spirit needed to forge ahead into the future. They put food on the table, they provide the basis for public revenues and they can create positive social change rapidly. I would like to do more to empower small businesses so they can operate at their best and help this city grow up and out of the major issues we are struggling with today.

Q2: Specifically, how would you collaborate with our members to address the city's current challenges while balancing the needs of a business community that drives economic opportunity?

**Engagement, cooperation, intelligent policy driven by outcomes rather than ideology.**

**(See previous responses as I have already covered many specifics on this matter)**