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Q1

Please share your information below:

Name	Alex Hudson
District	District 3
City	Seattle
Position	City Council

Q2

As a City of Seattle Council Member, will you commit to prioritizing amending Seattle's Tree Protection Ordinance to include maximizing the retention of existing healthy trees, especially large ones, and planting more trees, as part of a climate resiliency plan for low income and economic justice communities to respond to environmental inequities?

Yes,

Please share why this is, or is not, important to you::
Trees, especially mature and established ones, provide an unbelievable amount of benefits to our city. They clean the air, mitigate stormwater runoff. they cool our city, and they increase our social well-being and public health. It is vitally important that we meet - and exceed - our tree canopy goals to build a climate resilient city for the future and address deep inequities in our city.

Q3

Seattle's new tree ordinance would allow the removal of all trees when lots are developed without considering alternative site design and building options to save trees.Would you support an amendment to the Tree Protection Ordinance requiring developers to consider alternative site designs to protect more trees? Many trees are the edge of lots.

Yes

Q4

As Seattle's population increases, so does the pressure for increased housing. Significant tree loss occurs in Seattle when lots are clear-cut for development. Advocates for more tree protection believe with better planning and regulations, we can both increase housing and save more existing trees. Trees create healthy communities. Can you think of additional ways Seattle can succeed at saving more of its exceptional and significant trees while building new housing?

I wholeheartedly agree that we've been prevented with a false choice - trees vs. housing. This is simply not accurate, both are incredibly important climate solutions and we have to find a way to ensure neighborhoods like mine - First Hill - with abundant housing and a high tree canopy coverage, are not the exception. One way we can do this is to add more Urban Forestry staff to be able to work with housing creators to find ways to preserve trees during construction.

Q5

The Seattle Department of Construction and Inspections (SDCI) currently oversees tree protection on private property. SDCI is mainly funded by money from development permits but gets no money for tree protection. This creates a potential conflict of interest. Additionally, SDCI has no Urban Forestry Division or Urban Foresters. Trees and our urban forest need a city department to represent them that does not have conflicting priorities. San Francisco has a Department of the Environment with responsibilities for a diversity of issues, including the urban forest and climate. Would you support moving tree and urban forest protection and oversight to a new independent Department of the Environment and Climate that includes an Urban Forestry Division to specifically coordinate and prioritize tree and urban forest protection?

Yes,

Please share why this is, or is not, important to you::
We should be anticipating a huge swell of people moving here as the flee an increasingly uninhabitable climates in other parts of the country - and we need to be doing anything and everything we can to prepare for that while we focus on mitigating the worst of the climate disaster here. Our urban forests is a huge part of that equation.

Q6

Portland, Oregon requires that a comprehensive Tree Inventory and Tree Plan be done at the beginning of their development permit process. Developers enter the inventory and information into an Excel spreadsheet which can easily be added to a city database. This allows developers to plan around trees from the start of the development process and not a later add on, complicating an already moving process. This will also help Seattle more quickly track tree loss and replacement during development. The current tracking is requiring SDCI staff to remove data from a site plan which is both time consuming and frequently incomplete because all the information is not on the site plan. It also eats up employee time and the SDCI budget. Do you support amending the current Tree Ordinance to add this requirement?

Yes,

Please share why this is, or is not, important to you::
Time is important, as is good data. This seems like a reasonable way to save time, increase knowledge, and track trends over time.

Q7

Seattle, in 2007, set a 30 - year goal to reach a tree canopy of 30% by 2037. Yet there has been no specific plan developed by the city detailing how we can reach this goal. The recent record temperatures in Seattle and the Northwest confirmed the deadly impacts of urban heat island effects on human life, especially in areas where there is low tree canopy. Mapping has shown these areas to be mostly previously redlined areas and low- income areas. Seattle needs a detailed plan in place to plant in areas needing more trees to address environmental equity. Will you support developing a tree planting plan and prioritizing this goal by moving the 30% canopy goal to 2030 as is being done with other climate mitigation timeline goals in Seattle?

Yes,

Please share why this is, or is not, important to you::

I hope this is an explicit part of the City's current Climate Plan update and if not, I'll help push to make it so. I find it frustrating when government sets goals without plans. As the saying goes, that's just a wish.

Q8

Many trees in Seattle die as the result of invasive species like English ivy, killing them with their climbing vines. On steep slopes this greatly threatens slope stability and increases the risk of landslides. A good time to remove invasives is during development. The current landscaping plan requires that invasives be removed only where a replacement tree is being planted. Do you support requiring developers, as part of their landscape plan, to remove all invasives on the lot undergoing development?

Yes

Q9

Portland, Oregon in 2020 complied with an Oregon State law to require approval of building 4 plexes in their single-family zone. Last November, responding to continued canopy loss, they amended their building code to require a dedicated 20% Tree Retention and Planting area in multifamily zones and a 40% dedicated Tree Retention and Planting area in their 1-4 family zone as a planning alternative to save trees. Would you support a similar provision to help Seattle protect its tree canopy for climate resiliency and tree equity across the city?

Yes,

Please share why this is, or is not, important to you::

I also think we can support this with on/near site tree planting incentives and requirements.

Q10

The new Tree Protection Ordinance guarantees developers a 100% allowable development area in Midrise, Seattle Mixed and Commercial zones and an 85% allowable development area in the Lowrise zones. Seattle's multifamily zones currently have a 23% canopy cover and Seattle mixed zone has a 12% canopy cover according to the Seattle 2021 Canopy Report. Would you support maintaining the present building code which allows the city to work with developers to try to save trees in these zones instead of a one size fits all guarantee that will result in significant canopy loss in these zones?

Please share why this is, or is not, important to you::

I'd like to learn more about what that might mean from the cost of housing units in before I can confidently answer this question. As I said earlier, I reject the false choice between trees OR housing, and recognize that the single greatest thing we can do to reduce emissions and mitigate climate change are dense, walkable communities. I know it is possible to have both dense housing and thick tree canopy coverage, and would wonder how the City can step up it's own ROW tree planting and maintenance in such circumstances.

Q11

The Seattle City Council approved funds to scope a study of Seattle's Natural Capital but never followed through. Would you support funding a Natural Capital Study for Seattle to monetize the economic value of Seattle's trees and urban forest?

Yes

Q12

Share your favorite type of tree and how you like to spend time in nature?

It feels nearly impossible to pick a favorite kind of tree. I grew up on a farm, and our trees were as much a part of our family life as our animals, and I admired things about each of them.

I live on a block that has a cathedral of mature Horse Chestnuts, and looking at them out my window especially during lock-down has been soothing and kept me rooted in the rhythm of life. I love the cedar grove at my grandmother's house, the tulip and star magnolias in Freeway Park, big Beech trees in Volunteer Park. The sequoias and Redwoods in California are magical. I could go on and on.

I like to hike, ride my bike, garden, and anytime I get to be on water that's a good thing!

Q13

Is there anything else you would like to share about why tree protection is important (or not) to you?

I would like to find a way to connect the harmful impacts of the flight path above our city to funding for trees, and would love to work with you on how we might be able to do that.