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**COMPLETE**

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Page 1

**Q1**

Please share your information below:

Name	<b>Andrew J. Lewis</b>
District	<b>District 7</b>
City	<b>Seattle</b>
Position	<b>Seattle City Council</b>

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**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::  
Once we lose exceptional trees we never get them back. The guiding star for our tree canopy strategy has to be an assessment of where we are currently seeing attrition of canopy, and conversely where there is opportunity. Our recent survey of canopy loss indicates that Neighborhood Residential-zoned parcels are experiencing the most significant loss of canopy. This category represents 47% of total tree canopy. The biggest pressure in this category, 70% of the loss, comes from home owners illegally removing trees on their own property, a total of 220 acres of canopy removed in the last survey. Conversely, development only accounted for 35 acres of removed canopy. We need to continue to close loopholes and step-up enforcement to reduce the erosion of exceptional trees in Neighborhood Residential.

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**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,**

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

I would consider amendments to, as the prompt suggests, require developers to consider alternative site design. But, this needs to be paired with incentives and an understanding that we still need to build considerably more housing in the City of Seattle. For example, one of the biggest tree killers is the requirement to build on-site parking. What if we allowed the suspension of parking requirements if it means a builder can protect exceptional trees? What if we conferred additional set-back, height, and floor-area-ratio incentives to further allow a project to pencil while also preserving on-site exceptional trees? This has to be part of the conversation. It cannot just be a mandate.

**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?

As I indicated above, increasing the incentives to preserve trees by reducing other regulations is something I am very interested in. Allowing buildings to be taller, bulkier, less set-back, and with no on-site parking requirement (or, bike storage requirement for that matter) can help make these projects pencil.

Part of this equation will inherently require trade-offs. I believe exceptional trees are worth significant trade-offs on other land use considerations.

**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::

I definitely support a unit like this. Whether it is an independent department or part of an existing department (say, the Office of Sustainability?) is something I want to continue to think about. We have 45 offices and departments at the City of Seattle. I think a conversation about consolidations is frankly long overdue as we face a coming budget crunch.

**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: If there were a "maybe" option that would probably better reflect my position. But, on the face of it, this sounds more beneficial than onerous, so I am tentatively saying "yes". It is notable that Portland is striking a good balance in missing-middle housing production and tree protection. So, if Portland does this, it likely is in the spirit of protecting trees and expanding housing supply. Happy to learn more about this.

**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: Yes. And, in fact, during my stewardship of the Metropolitan Park District we dramatically increased the investment in tree planting over the six-year investment cycle to work toward this goal. The initial investment cycle plan pitched by the department actually still had a declining projected canopy. Park canopy loss is one of the biggest categories of attrition. Bulking it up is one of the easiest policy interventions we have to make progress on building a stronger canopy.

**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,**

Please share why this is, or is not, important to you: Tentative "yes" on this. The scope of the requirement and how extensively we define "invasive species" is something I would want to delve into before committing to a final proposal.

**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: Tentatively yes. I haven't studied this rule extensively in Portland, but, the description sounds like the percentages aren't prescriptive on where the trees need to be on the lot. It also sounds like developers can perform by planting, rather than preserving, the exceptional trees. So, those are additional details I would want to run down. I refer back to some of my earlier answers as well to say regulations like this are generally fine as long as they are paired with reducing competing requirements. For example, would I rather have 20% of the lot be tree canopy than on-site parking? Yes! Can we require both of those things in an equitable way? Absolutely not. Again, what are our biggest priorities? They should be building housing and preserving and expanding tree canopy. We need to make exceptions in other areas if we are serious about both of those goals.

**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?

**No,**

Please share why this is, or is not, important to you: Again, I would answer "maybe" to this if it were an option but I lean toward keeping the percentage adopted in the recent tree ordinance. First of all, developable area can, and usually does, include landscaping improvements that include tree planting. I am open to alternative formulas that are less prescriptive and still allow for maximizing the dual goals of housing production and tree preservation, but I would have to know the specific alternative I am committing to before abandoning this policy. I will again reiterate that a broader examination of making land use rules more permissive in other areas as an incentive should be part of any such proposal.

**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,**

Please share why this is, or is not, important to you: I guess. But, I would sooner put our marginal dollar toward increasing tree canopy on public land like right-of-way and parks. Right-of-way in particular is a great potential growth area for canopy.

**Q12**

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

As a northwestern through and through I love the western red cedar. I love how they smell, I love drinking their bark in a tea broth, and I love how intimately connected they have been to the history of our region since the beginning of human habitation.

Truly, it should be the cedar, not the western hemlock, that is our state tree.

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**Q13**

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

I am surprised this questionnaire did not ask about how candidates propose to increase tree canopy on public lands as part of their strategy to reach our canopy goals. We have the Move Seattle Levy coming up in 2024. Almost certainly that ballot measure should include a robust right-of-way tree planting scheme. Public right-of-way makes up 27% of Seattle's total land area. By implication, right-of-way is everywhere. Bulking canopy on right-of-way is the best and most effective way to increase our canopy. Currently, it represents about 23% of our total tree canopy, and it is not equitably distributed. Indeed, one of the biggest reasons for the disproportionate heat impacts on South Seattle is a paltry right-of-way canopy relative to the rest of the city. We can and must do better.

Similarly, Parks make up 5% of Seattle's total land and 14% of its canopy. Building on our progress in the Metropolitan Park District to expand tree canopy in park and natural areas.

This questionnaire candidly felt less about expanding tree canopy and more about the interplay between housing development and tree protection. While that is an important component of our tree preservation work it is hardly the only policy area we need to focus on to reach our canopy goals. And even in the sub-category of neighborhood residential, it is clear that MOST of the attrition of acreage is not from development at all, but from home owners cutting down trees on their property for whatever personal reason (building a deck, safety concern, lawn expansion, etc). As mentioned above, 220 acres of canopy removal were unrelated to housing development versus 35 that were.

We need to reach our tree canopy protection goals. I am committed to that work. I have led by dramatically increasing our park tree planting contributions. I will fight to bulk up right-of-way planting as part of the Move Seattle Levy renewal. These are critical investments to reach the canopy target we all want to see.

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