

**Answers from Mike O'Brien**

**Q2: For which position are you running?**

Seattle City Council position 6

**Q3: What do you know about the unmet basic human needs in your district? (150 word limit)**

It is significant. Today's economy is creating a lot of wealth for some people while leaving a significant number of folks unable to meet their basic needs. This means we must make ever increasing investments in subsidized housing, food programs, shelters, health clinics, child care, and public transit. It is critical that we do all of this, but we must also work to reshape our economy so that everyone who is working can fully support themselves and their families.

**Q4: How has race affected your life? (250 word limit)**

I was raised in a middle-class family and have benefited from the privileges that come from being white, often to the detriment of people of color. I grew up in communities that were very racially segregated, so to my detriment, I had minimal interaction with people of other races. I have seen the massive disparities that communities of color face in all aspects of life and I have come to better understand how our entire society is suffering because people of color are being held back, held down, or oppressed. As a city councilmember, I have worked hard to build relationships and be accountable to people of color. I have a lot of work to do as an individual and as a councilmember to achieve the goals of eliminating racial disparities and creating equal opportunities for everyone in our community.

**Q5: What strategies do you see as the most promising to create and preserve affordable housing in Seattle? What steps would you take to make those things happen? (150 word limit)**

I have been fighting for an Affordable Housing Linkage Fee which would significantly increase the amount of affordable housing created in Seattle. Our economy and housing market are booming right now and we need to get a program like this implemented as soon as possible. We also need to renew the Housing Levy at a higher level in 2016. I also support changing some of our zoning codes to allow more mother-in-law apartment units and backyard cottages throughout Seattle's neighborhoods.

**Q6: Describe how you would represent your district to ensure there is equal access to the emergency food system. What policies and investments would you support so that Seattle residents have access to equal access to adequate, culturally-appropriate, healthy food? (150 word limit)**

I am proud to have been a continuous supporter of the Fresh Bucks program that for the past four years has doubled the buying power for people using EBT cards at farmers markets allowing greater access to fresh, healthy produce. We recently received a federal grant to extend this program throughout the county. I will also continue to support the work of organizations such as Got Green that at the neighborhood level are working for more access to healthy food through efforts to locate grocery stores and produce stands in food deserts. I will continue to support all of our local food banks and other food programs. I was a strong advocate during last year's budget cycle to secure funding for the new University Food Bank. I will also continue to advocate at the state level to prevent cuts to our local programs.

**Q7: What do you see as government's role in preventing and responding to domestic violence, sexual assault, and commercial sexual exploitation? (200 word limit)**

Domestic violence and sexual assault have no place in our city and should never be tolerated. The city of Seattle spends nearly \$5 million annually to create safe places for victims, to support communities in ending violence, to hold offenders accountable, and to make sure families have access to the variety of services necessary to live a violence free life. I will continue to support city funding for these services, work to collaborate with regional and state partners in delivering services and ensuring funding sources, and where appropriate advocate for increased funding.

**Q8: The number of people experiencing homelessness in Seattle and King County is increasing and local, county, state, and federal resources must increase in order for us to help and house**

**people. Homelessness and insufficient affordable housing cannot be solved at the neighborhood level. As Seattle shifts to District representation on the City Council, how will you ensure that your role on City Council supports a robust city-wide response to homelessness? (150 word limit)**

I am excited for the new district system and to be running in district six because I believe it will bring a greater level of responsiveness to the people of Seattle, but I will still be setting policies and making investments on behalf of the entire city and I plan to continue to be accountable to people who live and work throughout the city. Many of the issues facing district six, such as homelessness and people living in their vehicles will need citywide (and often region-wide and statewide) solutions. I strongly believe that when I work on citywide solutions to these problems I will be benefitting people of the entire city including those who live in district six.

**Q9: The population of Seattle is growing at one of the fastest rates of any city in the country, bringing more families. How can the city build capacity to serve the early learning and child care needs for the growing number of children? (150 word limit)**

The universal Pre-k levy passed last year by Seattle voters is a good start. We will need to learn from the pilot years and scale it up in a thoughtful and culturally sensitive way to ensure that all children in Seattle have access to high quality pre-school. Additionally, we currently require new buildings in certain neighborhoods to provide child care through the incentive zoning program. As we build capacity, we need to also ensure that the people who are working in these fields are earning living-wages. This means both adequately funding these programs and ensuring that where the educators want to, they have opportunities to collectively bargain for their work conditions.

**Q10: What are your ideas for how the city can insure a built environment that supports people who are older and or living with disabilities? (150 word limit)**

Aging or living in place should be an option for all people who are interested. In cases where people live in an owner occupied home, this may mean help with design changes to allow for greater accessibility. For folks living in rental housing, we need to find creative ways to support the challenge of continual rent increases while living on a fixed income. We also need to create more flexibility in the zoning code to allow for a greater variety of living situations that better reflects the diversity of cultures we have in Seattle. An example would be to allow housing types that support multi-generational housing. In addition, I support programs that encourage the types of social interactions we all need to stay healthy. Senior centers throughout Seattle fill some of this need, but they are often underfunded and can only support a fraction of the need in the community.