

Answers from Sandy Brown

Q2: For which position are you running?

Seattle City Council, District 5 (North Seattle, open seat)

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

District 5 residents struggle with many of the same issues that as the rest of Seattle - lack of affordable housing, lack of livable wage employment opportunities, and accessible transit options. The Lake City area is also a hub of unsheltered homelessness. Crime and prostitution on Aurora are symptoms of serious social problems, and most treatment and service programs are outside District 5.

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

My own attitudes about race are affected by my upbringing in a second-generation Mexican-American household -- my mother's family emigrated from Mexico. My mother was not allowed to speak Spanish, was told by her family not to marry a Mexican man and, if asked, to tell people she was Spanish, not Mexican. Her father, Pedro, believed in the importance of education and urged my mother to attend college. He also saved a substantial sum of money from his small income so that his five grandchildren could attend university. In fact, all my siblings graduated from the University of Washington and my parents, too, returned to college via night school and graduated with their degrees just one year before I did. We had some college classes together! My grandfather wanted us to be "white," not Mexican, and to have all the advantages of white people in the American culture and economy. By being well-educated and appearing white, my grandfather's project for his family became complete -- his grandchildren benefited from white privilege and our Mexican cultural linkage was erased. So, as with all Americans, I see racism in a cloudy and personalized way. For me, I lament the loss of my Mexican cultural heritage, yearn to recapture it, and benefit from the privileges granted me by my skin color. My background has taught me to appreciate deeply the cultural diversity of those whose heritage is intact, to celebrate it and to urge them to hold it dear.

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)

As a co-founder of the Committee to End Homelessness in King County and a long-time anti-homelessness advocate I've supported programs like Seattle's Housing Levy, the Housing Trust Fund, and other efforts to build and incentivize the construction of affordable and workforce housing in our community. Though we did not eliminate homelessness, we were successful in creating over 4500 new housing units during the 10-year plan. I support Mayor Murray's HALA effort and anticipate an important and helpful report at the end of this month. The final package should include a mix of incentive zoning, an expansion of the Multi-Family Tax Exemption program, use of surplus city property for additional housing units, expansion of the Housing Levy, and implementation of a Development Impact Fee, among other options. In addition I support creating a city-based Revolving Loan Fund to retain and improve housing stock that might be lost to redevelopment.

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)

In District 5 we are justifiably proud of our North Helpline organization and applaud its success at providing high quality emergency food to our increasingly diverse neighborhoods. These programs are increasingly important as skyrocketing rents take a larger share of family income. Food programs often have limited selection from what is available at Food Lifeline and other emergency food suppliers. These providers must continually work to be certain their inventories include adequate and culturally-appropriate food to meet the needs of low-income people in our area.

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)

The government must take every effort to prevent and respond to domestic violence, sexual assault and commercial sexual exploitation. One victim of these crimes is too many. I was proud to see the Washington State Legislature take steps to reduce human trafficking in 2012, however we must do more. I will advocate for a wider training of educators to be able to recognize and report child abuse. Further, I believe we must invest in more resources for victims a domestic abuse so they don't feel trapped by their abusers, specifically more women and family shelters and effective intervention methods. We also need to fully implement programs like LEAD that offer alternatives for people who are victims of commercial sexual exploitation. Sadly, Seattle has become a capital for sex trafficking, with hundreds of young people victimized every day. Our residential facilities for people who want freedom from trafficking are woefully lacking. We need more intervention, more beds, more counselors and a more dramatic community response to this pressing injustice. North Seattle's Aurora Avenue is a haven for sex trafficking and we need a comprehensive police, criminal justice, and social service response that frees people from victimization.

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)

If elected, I anticipate becoming the City Council's leader on homelessness issues. As Executive Director of the Church Council of Greater Seattle and Senior Pastor of the First United Methodist Church of Seattle, I have been deeply involved in this issue as a homeless rights advocate, anti-homelessness strategist, and creator of a successful shelter. I am ready to take that background into City Hall and fight for housing and homelessness solutions, including new programs that prevent homelessness, expand emergency shelter, and provide a quick exit from shelter into transitional and permanent housing. My thoughts are spelled out in more detail in a Crosscut article from 2013 (<http://crosscut.com/2013/07/five-ways-to-end-homelessness-seattle/>). Homelessness is a regional and national issue and cannot be allowed to become a "downtown" issue alone. In addition to gathering support for citywide solutions, I will work tirelessly to build coalitions at the county and state level until we have addressed our homelessness epidemic.

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)

I applaud the city and its voters for creation of the new, universal Pre-K program. This will have an enormous impact on educational outcomes. We should continue to expand access to Pre-K education beyond the limits of this worthy start so that all Seattle children can enjoy better outcomes in the earliest stages of their learning careers. Further we must address systemic economic inequalities, which have created an achievement gap for kids from lower income families. It has long been known that the paramount key to educational success is having supportive parents. We also know that economic and educational inequities put families of color at a disadvantage in providing strong parent support. I would support the creation of a comprehensive parent education program that would help all Seattle parents and pre-parents understand how to better ensure excellent educational outcomes for our children.

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)

At 88 years old, my father is living with advanced Alzheimer's Disease and is unable to take care of himself. Through this and earlier stages of his illness my family came to understand the challenges seniors and their families face as they grow older. We need to have great community programs for seniors and excellent care opportunities for those with health issues. Our built environment needs to be adjusted so that we meet and surpass ADA guidelines in all public facilities, and public transportation needs to be affordable with excellent accessibility for seniors with disabilities.