



2023 General Election Candidates' Survey – Seattle City Council

Historic Seattle is conducting a candidates' survey of those running for Seattle City Council Positions 1 - 7. Please limit responses to 200 words or less for each question. If you can, please submit your responses by **Tuesday, October 17, 2023**, to Historic Seattle Director of Preservation Services, Eugenia Woo, at eugeniaw@historicseattle.org.

Responses will be posted on our website at www.historicseattle.org and shared with our constituents and the public.

Below are responses from Andrew Lewis, candidate and incumbent for District 7 (received September 28, 2023).

Please answer the following seven questions:

1. What's your favorite historic place in Seattle and why do you think it's important?

I am strongly biased because I used to live in the Delamar apartments in Uptown. I loved it. A great and affordable historic building retaining the charm of a previous era.

2. The City of Seattle is in the process of updating its Comprehensive Plan. What role does historic preservation play in planning and land use beyond designating landmarks and historic districts?

As we grow we need to protect select TRULY historic sites that are fundamental to our identity. What would Seattle be if we had bulldozed Pike Place Market? People come to Seattle to enjoy Pioneer Square, Ballard Avenue, and Pike Place Market because they have character and charm.

I have two guiding principles for the future of historic preservation in Seattle. First and foremost, we need to protect our existing historic districts and strengthen them through seismic retrofits and other critical infrastructure upgrades. Our historic districts are honeycombed with unreinforced area ways under the sidewalk and made up largely of unreinforced masonry buildings. First and foremost, let's protect what we have and preserve it for future generations.

Second, I do not support historic preservation purely for historic preservation's sake. We are the fastest growing city in the country and we need to make hard decisions about land use priorities to accommodate that growth. Moreover, limiting growth to preserve less culturally critical old buildings by elevating them to a protected status may, in the long run, increase the pressure for growth to encroach on our historic districts. Making sure we have a credible balance in the sites we choose to preserve is essential for the future of historic preservation.

3. There is a significant relationship between historic buildings and affordable housing (including naturally occurring affordable housing) that has existed in Seattle for more than a century. They are the fundamental building blocks of most of the city's neighborhoods. What programs or incentives would you create to promote the preservation of affordable housing in conjunction with rehabilitating historic buildings?

As mentioned above, I support investment in unreinforced masonry buildings to protect them and expand their life. I used to live in an unreinforced masonry historic building that was affordable. Making those buildings safe and sustainable is a critical policy objective of mine for my next term.

I also think there is substantial potential for increased historic office-to-housing conversion, especially in Pioneer Square. No potential project looms larger in that respect than the Smith Tower, but countless other office buildings in Pioneer Square would be great candidates to undergo a residential conversion given cratering demand for office. These conversions could reinvigorate and reactivate the neighborhood and maintain the viability of historically protected buildings.

4. BIPOC (black, Indigenous, and people of color) communities need greater investment in preservation of the places and spaces that are significant to them, and this can be directly tied to growing generational and community wealth. How would you work to identify potential strategies and implement them?

We need to listen to BIPOC led organizations when they come to the city seeking help to preserve historically significant spaces. Puget Sound Sage, Interim CDA, Africatown, the Urban League, El Centro De La Raza, and many other critical community partners have worked with the Council in recent years to protect historic buildings and activate them for community use. We need to continue to listen and work in coalition with community to activate and protect these spaces.

5. Many successful preservation projects involve adaptive reuse—rehabilitating and converting older buildings into new uses such as a former warehouse into housing, office, hotel, etc. How can the City help developers choose preservation over demolition? Please share with us how adaptive reuse contributes to reducing climate impacts and increasing resiliency of older buildings.

First, in many cases, especially with certain categories of office towers, conversion is better than demolition and new build. First, because it is more environmentally sound. Demolition can have severe climate impacts and release pollutants into the environment, as can the carbon accounting of new build from creating concrete. By retrofitting a building we change it to a more desirable use (housing rather than office, for example) and avoid those environmental impacts.

As I will allude to in future answers, flexibility on the use of historic buildings can build a strong case for continued emphasis on the protection of historic places. We need more housing in the core of Downtown Seattle, for example. By changing the use of a certain portfolio of historic office buildings we can protect our historic heritage and target increased population density on blocks greatly in need of more activation and dynamism.

6. The cultural spaces which many people feel define Seattle are increasingly at risk of redevelopment. The global pandemic made many of these places even more vulnerable. Do you feel that it is important to preserve these places, and how can we accomplish this?

Yes. And as I recently demonstrated with my role in bringing together a coalition to preserve the Cinerama and bring it into non-profit ownership under SIFF, I am strongly committed to protecting and expanding our arts and cultural spaces. Critical to this work is not just preserving them, but finding the partnerships necessary to activate them. We are seeing this in action at the old Coliseum space in Downtown Seattle. Formerly a retail space, now an arts collective, this activation will protect this building for future generations to enjoy. Next step for the Coliseum? Let's bring back the theater!

So, protect and preserve these spaces. But, also work to secure the partnerships necessary to activate them and incorporate them into our arts and culture spaces.

7. There are hundreds of unreinforced masonry (URM) buildings in the Seattle. Seismically retrofitting these historic buildings is a green investment, but more importantly an investment in community and public safety—saving housing, offices, restaurant, retail, health care, cultural venues, and places of worship. Do you see this need, and how do you plan to support it, particularly since the City of Seattle is actively working on a legislative mandate for property owners to upgrade URM buildings?

As I have alluded to several times above this is a very high priority for my office. I have supported several legislative measures to direct the Seattle Department of Construction and Inspections to develop a plan to expand support for reinforcing masonry buildings. In the major updates to Seattle's Comprehensive Plan I want to include a transferable development right (TDR) for URM buildings which they can in turn sell and use the proceeds to reinforce. Further, I want to follow the example of cities like Berkeley California that have successfully sought FEMA support to subsidize resident reinforcement of their buildings.

Thank you for taking the time to respond to our questionnaire! We greatly appreciate your dedication and service to our wonderful city!

Historic Seattle's mission: saving places to foster lively communities

We pursue our mission through education, advocacy, and preservation. Our community programs raise awareness and appreciation of Seattle's architectural and cultural heritage among the public, while we advocate for preservation to policy makers and citizens alike. Historic Seattle is also in the business of acquiring and rehabilitating historic properties through our status as a preservation development authority (chartered by the City of Seattle in 1973). We own 11 historic properties including Washington Hall, the Good Shepherd Center, and the Cadillac Hotel, among others. We are also a 501(c)(3) charitable foundation (founded in 1996).