

## 2021 Tree PAC Port of Seattle Commissioner Questionnaire

### 1. RACE AND SOCIAL JUSTICE INITIATIVE

**BACKGROUND** – The 2016 Seattle Tree Canopy Assessment found there is a statistically significant inverse relationship between tree canopy and both people of color and people within 200% of the poverty level. The report found that in Census tracts with lower amounts of tree canopy, more of the population tends to be people of color and have lower incomes. These same conditions have been found across the country.

**QUESTION** – Given this relationship, how can the Port of Seattle create opportunities to work with underserved, low income and previously redlined neighborhoods with insufficient tree canopy, to protect remaining existing trees and increase new tree planting and forest canopy, thus reducing heat island impacts and other climate damage impacts?

As a fourth generation Japanese American, I grew up in the South Seattle neighborhood of Beacon Hill because it was the only place people our family was allowed to live, due to redlining. I've seen first hand the Port's impact on our communities. Families like mine in South Seattle and South King County are impacted by the intense and growing pollution from airport and seaport operations, leading to disparate health outcomes like lower life expectancy, higher infant mortality, asthma, cancer, and more. I grew up buying salmon from the natives on the docks of the Duwamish. Now, we have the most endangered rivers in the United States and communities host, "fun to catch, toxic to eat" educational campaigns in multiple languages, warning of carcinogenic toxins. The Port is one of the top polluters in Washington State and has a huge role to play in shaping the environmental and public health issues we face today.

Climate change is painful to experience in real time, but it pisses you off when you realize that its structural. It's intentional, it's oppressive, and it's for profit. Communities with proximity to the problem are historically brown, they're historically indigenous, and historically working class. ***This is what environmental justice is about.*** The Port has historical harms to address, and it must actively work to undo them.

That means a full clean up of the Duwamish River. Specifically, we must honoring the 2014 agreement to see it restored. That also means saying "NO" to destroying forested land that mitigates pollution and provides beloved green space to communities.

Specifically, that means removing North SeaTac Park from ***both*** the Sustainable Airport Master Plan and Real Estate Strategic Plan that propose its development. Additionally, ***neglect is a form of abuse.*** Experts estimate that we have just 50 years to save North SeaTac Park, which suffers from noxious weeds choking out the growth. The Port of Seattle must dedicate staff and resources to restoring and maintaining green spaces ***as a critical component of port infrastructure.*** It should also lobby the state legislature in support of Governor Jay Inslee's proposed Evergreen Communities Act, so that

communities impacted by pollution can have access to resources to expand and vitalize health green canopy.

Indigenous people are the original stewards of this land, with the knowledge and wisdom to nurture it. Statewide and here at home, Tribes are leading the effort to salvage our wilderness, and we must empower them with resources and authority. As Commissioner, I hope to establish a MOU with tribes to codify how and when we engage on projects relating to clean-up and restoration. I'd love to rename land and water ways back to their original identities. We have so much work to do to protect the integrity of our Earth.

We can plant trees and native flora in Port buffer zones, utilizing them as green areas for community members. And we can create public housing to help address the growing crisis of our region, which disproportionately impacts immigrants and people of color. As we build, we need to make sure communities have access to jobs, contracts, grants, and other opportunities offered by the Port.

We can also implement the HEAL Act's principles. I will require an environmental justice evaluation to be completed before the start of projects which impact the community. Additionally, community engagement will be integrated into planning meetings for the Port. As Port Commissioner, I will provide space and uphold the decisions of the Environmental Justice Council when they give feedback on and guide the work of the Port. I hope that one day, we can see the environmental disparities map completely blue.

As a daughter of the labor movement, my parents demonstrated that you have to **fight for what you believe in. They taught me that the power of people fighting together for change can overcome the power of big money and corporate capitalism. We have to stand in solidarity with one another to reach our shared goals.** Today, as a candidate, I am proud, and I am affirmed, that I am running with the full might of the environmental advocacy community right beside me, including the sole endorsement of every environmental advocacy group that has endorsed in this race, including Washington Conservation Voters, Sierra Club, Puget Sound Sage, 350 Seattle Action, and more. A full list of endorsements can be found online at <http://www.hasegawaforport.com/endorsements>.

## 2. COMMUNITY POLL ON TREE PROTECTION

**BACKGROUND** - In September 2021, poll results were published by NPI showing strong support by voters for strengthening Tree Protections in Seattle.

See "[Seattle voters overwhelmingly favor policies to protect and expand the city's tree canopy](#)"

See "[Seattle voters back strong tree protection in recent poll](#)"

King County has a 'five-year goal from their 2020 Strategic Action Plan to plant, protect and prepare a combined 3 million trees by the end of 2025. This effort contributes to

climate change mitigation, forest health, improved salmon habitat and more tree canopy in urban areas.

**QUESTIONS** – Do you agree or disagree that the Port should work with neighboring cities and the county in supporting stronger tree and urban forest protection ordinances and helping meet canopy and environmental equity goals in neighboring cities and King County?

I agree that the Port needs to work with neighboring cities and the county to support stronger tree and urban forest protection ordinances. The Port of Seattle is the largest polluter in the region and it is vital that it takes action to remediate this.

If you agree, what measures do you support that the Port currently does and what additional measures would you propose the Port take?

The City of Seattle currently employs a Seattle Green Factor which requires buildings in areas zoned as urban villages, neighborhood commercial, multi-family residential, and more to invest in the quality of their landscaping. Well-designed landscaping reduces stormwater runoff, cools cities during heat waves, and improves the mental health of the neighborhood. I want to partner with the City of Seattle and King County to increase greenery on sidewalk strips, medians, and other government-run land parcels to recreate the Seattle Green Factor in all South Seattle and South King County neighborhoods. I am interested in expanding the Seattle Green Factor to South Seattle and South King County communities. I am not interested in requiring families of color to suddenly start spending money on landscaping to meet the city's requirements.

### 3. IMPACTS FROM PORT OPERATIONS

**BACKGROUND** - Many environmental issues are part of the Port's jurisdiction and operations, including airport and waterfront operations and maintenance, shipping impacts, cruise ships waterfront use and airport adjacent land development, oil and coal and other commodity transportation through Seattle and King County, and other port properties. Trees and urban forests are green natural infrastructure that helps to reduce air, carbon, heat, water, and noise pollution.

**QUESTIONS:** What do you perceive are the key environmental and open space issues before the Port?

Policies getting people back to work and revitalizing our environment are my top two priorities, which I believe work in tandem with each other. The Port of Seattle is one of the top polluters of carbon emissions in our state, and it has a critical role to play in shaping the trajectory of our future. The Port is uniquely positioned to bring together players in industry, business, labor and community advocates to help us rebuild our

economy, reach our sustainability goals, and stimulate job growth. Right now, much of the Port of Seattle is zoned for industrial use only, but we can utilize resources and strategies available to us to ensure open spaces are also given precedence.

Would you propose changes to address these issues differently from past port activities with an eye to protecting and expanding the local tree canopy already on Port-controlled property and neighboring areas and in the county?

The City of Seattle's industrial lands task force must focus on strategic land banking. It is incredibly important that the Port efficiently facilitates the loading/unloading of cargo, so that workers, travelers and residents aren't impacted by absurd backlogs. Strategic land banking also protects residents from the impacts of industrial work. Tree canopy and greenspace are also beautiful and improve the overall landscape, and neutralize industrial outputs of pollution. Finally, strategic land banking will allow zoning enough space for high speed rail, bike lanes, affordable housing for workers. These strategic land banking objectives pursued by the City of Seattle's industrial lands task force will lead to the economic recovery and stabilization of the region.

#### **4. LACK OF PARK SPACE, OPEN SPACE AND TREES WITH DEVELOPMENT**

**BACKGROUND** - King County has been one of the faster growing areas in the United States. The overall population of King County has increased from around 1.5 million residents in 1990 to over 2.26 million residents in 2020, an increase of 50%. This growth and loss of green space is occurring across urban areas in King County.

**QUESTIONS:** How can the Port of Seattle help to protect and increase open space, greenbelts and tree canopy, as Seattle and King County grows, and Port operations increase?

The Port of Seattle needs to re-evaluate its Seatac Airport Master Plan which threatens the safety of adjacent greenspaces which currently serve as buffer zones between the airport and the community. North SeaTac Park should be removed from all development proposals listed in the SAMP and the Real Estate Strategic Plan. The Port lied by saying it took North SeaTac Park off the table, just to reveal only the proposal for lot 06 to be developed into a parking lot was removed; there still to this day remains a proposal to develop North SeaTac into a warehouse, and the Port had to issue a correction to its original press release, which misled the people. Much of the park will be developed per the Real Estate Master Plan, as well. This is against the will of communities from across King County who have signed a letter in support of preserving the forest, which provides substantial environmental benefit, and is a vital part of a regional green belt that is home to flora and fauna via its marshlands, fields and forest. It has a critical role to play in connecting the flight path for owls and other aves that are suffering because of the destruction of their habitat. The Port of Seattle also needs to prioritize the preservation

of its green buffer zones between the marine port and nearby communities such as South Park and Georgetown. It's not enough to have work parties every now and then. The Port needs to invest in the long-term health of these green spaces by planting native plants which can outcompete invasive ones.

Has the Port inventoried its significant trees, canopy coverage, and exceptional trees?

To my knowledge, the Port has not inventoried its significant trees, canopy coverage, and exception trees. I personally looked into old growth at the Port and could not discover what old growth is on Port-owned land. It is noteworthy that this is the first time in recent memory that the Port of Seattle has declined to host a candidate training. Usually, they host a training for candidates county wide. This year, they declined to host this opportunity, stating it would give an "unfair advantage" to challengers.

Does the Port have a tree and urban forest management plan and a tree canopy goal?

The Port does have an urban forest management plan, but no tree canopy goal.

## 5. WATER QUALITY ISSUES

**BACKGROUND** - Urban storm water runoff, especially from impervious surfaces, is considered the number 1 polluter of Puget Sound, affecting salmonids and other local marine life. Seattle Port operations and their proximity to Elliot Bay, the Duwamish River, Puget Sound and other water bodies which are critical are in protecting habitat for salmonids and other wildlife in both marine and freshwater habitats.

**QUESTIONS:** What role do you see the Port playing in improving riparian and adjacent areas under its control?

The Port of Seattle needs to ensure that all stormwater runoff at maritime terminals and the SeaTac airport are treated before returning to our local waterways. Currently, SeaTac Airport employs treatment for stormwater which contains high concentrations of deicing fluids, metals, or other contaminants prior to discharging stormwater to local streams. I intend to translate this practice to our maritime terminals. This ensures any spillage from loading or unloading processes do not contaminate the Puget Sound and other local waterways.

Are tree plantings and protection being implemented in those areas adequate, or how could they be improved?

Human treatment of stormwater runoff is not perfect, but I believe nature's ability to prevent toxins in runoff from entering our water systems is something we can promote. More trees, underbrush, and resilient native plants will ensure that toxins which do manage to make it out of our stormwater treatment facilities can be filtered once more by a dense system of roots and healthy soil. So in this way, my answer is we need more trees, more underbrush, and healthier soil.

Can the Port buy more properties to serve as public open space, or plant more trees, to help mitigate the loss of canopy associated with SeaTac airport and maritime operations?

Yes - I would put a hard stop on the proposed construction of new developments at North SeaTac Park, which is the only open green space left available to this marginalized community, that is also majority minority. This proposal is counter to our state's transportation and environmental goals. There is also a conversation about where to expand the airport, with proposed sites from Moses Lake to Thurston county. I will do everything in my power to ensure that any construction of a new airport, wherever it may be, will include open space and tree plans to mitigate its impacts and beautify the project.

## 6. RESPONSE TO CURRENT HEALTH IMPACTS

**BACKGROUND** - The Port of Seattle's Sea-Tac Airport airplanes fly over 250,000 plus living people within 10 miles of the airport with 50% vulnerable people of color and 29% vulnerable immigrants and refugees. Bad, polluted air quality in south Seattle is a leading cause of asthma for both youth and the elderly. It is already a critical environmental justice issue for underserved communities surrounding both the SeaTac and King County airports.

**QUESTIONS** - What is the airport doing about the adverse health impacts from current flights and can it do more?

The Port has doubled in size in the last twelve years, not everyone has shared in the prosperity. The expansion of SeaTac airport solely to meet the need of the ***unconstrained demand*** of travel has come at an environmental and human cost, and the pre-existing equity issues at the Port were only exacerbated by the covid-19 pandemic.

I believe the port can reduce air travel by 5%! Lots of unnecessary air travel is attributed to mandatory business travel. The Port should accommodate remote work for all employees, and could go further to lobby the state legislature for a tax credit to offer nearby hotels and the convention center to update their conference rooms to accommodate remote operations. Airlines would welcome this because they actually don't make money on short-distance flights, and nearby hotels and developers are for it to because they want to use the spaces that are available to them. Reducing travel by just 5% would be equivalent to removing 120,000 cars off the road. This is the type of stra

The Port can make systemic changes in long term investments that will reduce passenger air travel by investing in green infrastructure electric rail, offshore wind, shore power, solar panels and green new buildings, so that we meaningfully reduce our carbon footprint and embrace renewable energy. Specifically, high speed rail will meaningfully connect our region and give travelers an alternative to air travel to nearby

places like Oregon and Vancouver. Additionally, we must continue to fund innovative projects to develop Sustainable Aviation Fuels for jets and converters for boats to be compatible with shore power. We can also launch programs at the port to incentivize contractors and businesses to make meaningful transitions that will help us reach our goals.

Follow-up question - What is the airport planning to do regarding this issue to accommodate its planned increase in air travel and cargo which would increase adverse health impacts even more?

The Port must also think long-term about making systemic changes that will more meaningfully connect our region and offer alternatives to air travel for passengers. That's why I have been campaigning in support of working interjurisdictionally to see an effort to construct high speed rail into fruition. This could reduce the number of short trips airplanes take out of SeaTac to nearby destinations and effectively reduce the number of cars on the road, addressing issues of pollution as well as congestion impacting residents and workers. This strategy reduces carbon emissions from the transportation sector and manages noise pollution from frequent flights impacting the quality of life of communities living near the airport and along the flight path.

I also believe we can construct electric rail to connect the terminals and expedite the unloading of docks and promote the flow of goods around our region, addressing the ongoing and worsening issues with the supply chain that we are experiencing. We can make sure a just transition out of the fossil fuel paradigm so that all workers can keep pace with emerging norms of the growing green industries, equipping them with the skills and expertise needed to contend for job opportunities.

The Port can also collaborate with the City to implement the Seattle Master Bike Plan. SODO is notoriously unfriendly to pedestrians and bikers with light rail, train tracks, and transit corridors criss-crossing the region. Creating safe bike lanes is a priority.

## 7. URBAN HEAT ISLANDS

**BACKGROUND** – The EPA says “Conventional paving materials can reach peak summertime temperatures of 120–150°F (48–67°C), transferring excess heat to the air above them and heating stormwater as it runs off the pavement into local waterways. Due to the large area covered by pavements in urban areas (nearly 30–45% of land cover based on an analysis of four geographically diverse cities), they are an important element to consider in heat island mitigation.” The heat island effect also affects temperature in the surrounding areas for those living there and have proven deadly.

**QUESTIONS** - What is the best way for the Port to have a truly positive impact on reducing “Urban Heat Island Effects” on Port property?

The Port of Seattle needs to plant more trees in buffer zones between the Port of Seattle and adjacent neighborhoods. We need to revitalize the urban forests and open spaces we currently have available and if possible, expand on them. Trees help mitigate the impacts of carbon emissions which are a top greenhouse gas. Seatac airport is responsible for a majority of emissions in Washington state and we need to plant enough trees to offset what Seatac airport emits.

What emphasis does the Port give to protecting existing trees and planting more trees both it's on-site and offsite properties for climate impact mitigation?

I don't believe the Port of Seattle does enough to protect existing trees and plant more trees on on-site and offsite properties for climate impact mitigation.

Do you support increasing the use of the green infrastructure benefits of trees in helping to mitigate urban heat island impacts where possible in the Port's operations?

Yes! TREES ARE INFRASTRUCTURE!

Please return questionnaires as soon as you can to [SteveZemke@TreePAC.org](mailto:SteveZemke@TreePAC.org) Thanks.