

Preservation and Elections – 2009 General Election Candidates’ Survey by Historic Seattle

Preservation of our heritage and built environment is a key quality-of-life issue. It is a primary component of sustainable development and serves as a valuable planning tool that helps build strong, livable communities.

Many voters, especially Historic Seattle members, are seeking to understand the positions of political leaders who will be responsible for protecting our historic places and thoughtfully balancing the preservation of Seattle’s unique character with other public goals.

Since 1999, Historic Seattle has conducted election candidates’ surveys. In anticipation of the upcoming November 3, 2009 General Election, Historic Seattle is conducting a candidates’ survey of those running for public office in the City of Seattle, King County, and Port of Seattle. The survey addresses local historic preservation issues, challenges, and opportunities. The survey’s intent is to gauge candidates’ knowledge of and sensitivity to preservation issues.

Please limit responses to each question to 200 words or less. We will post responses on our website as we receive them and will continue to do so through October 28, 2009.

Please save this Word document with your responses and email as an attachment to:

Eugenia Woo
Director of Preservation Services
Historic Seattle
EugeniaW@historicseattle.org

If you have any questions, please email Eugenia or call her at 206.622.5444 ext 245. Historic Seattle thanks you for taking the time to respond to our survey.

Candidates for Seattle City Council – please type your responses below (200 words or less)

1. Seattle is often viewed as one of the most desirable cities in which to live. How does historic preservation contribute to making our city more livable? What is your favorite Seattle landmark (officially designated or not)? For a list of the City’s official landmarks, go to http://www.seattle.gov/neighborhoods/preservation/landmarks_listing.htm.

City Council Position No. 2

Richard Conlin

I have a degree in history, and I am very aware of how important it is to put contemporary life in perspective. Buildings embody that history, and are part of the ways we preserve memory and context. They make our neighborhoods more meaningful, varied, and livable. Historic buildings link us tangibly with our past, reminding us of the importance of our predecessors in shaping what our city is now. They also help us to recall times that were different from ours, sometimes more accommodating to human needs and scales, and sometimes not. Historic structures also offer us an important sense of continuity and, like the Pike Place Market, Smith Tower, and Volunteer Park Water Tower, often serve as popular landmarks that inform our identity as a community. Combined with oral and written history, they preserve continuity from our ancestors to our descendents. Historic buildings also are containers for the carbon and energy that went into constructing them and their preservation helps fight climate change. I have a lot of favorite landmarks, from the Pike Place Market to the Carnegie Libraries to the historic

homes. I am also very proud of the new landmarks that the City has developed, and which are designed to be there for future generations, like the new libraries and City Hall.

2. **Background:** Preservation plays a key role in economic development, community revitalization, and sustainability. Donald Rypkema, an industry leader in the economics of preservation, states, “Historic Preservation has often been portrayed as the alternative to economic development—either we have historic preservation OR we have economic growth. This is absolutely a false choice. Increasingly around the world historic preservation is becoming a uniquely effective vehicle for economic growth. Historic preservation has moved from being an end by itself (save old buildings in order to save old buildings) to being a vehicle of broader ends—center city revitalization, job creation, small business incubation, housing, tourism, and others.” In Seattle, we have seen the success in revitalized neighborhoods that are also designated historic districts such as Pike Place Market, Ballard Avenue, Pioneer Square, and Columbia City.

Question: As an elected official, how would you ensure that preservation is valued and our historic properties are protected while achieving growth management, increased density, sustainability, and economic development goals?

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As I noted above, historic preservation is a key part of a greenhouse gas strategy, and adaptive reuse is a great way to create economic development while ensuring historic preservation. In a larger sense, our work to ensure good development and healthy communities in the City is an important part of historic preservation. The Growth Management Act is aimed at preservation of our farms, forest, and wilderness – all vitally important from an historical perspective, among other reasons. However, by revitalizing our neighborhoods and central business district and building transportation systems and land use patterns that encourage people to invest in Seattle buildings and communities, we not only contribute to maintaining the growth management boundary, but to the health of our community as well. A stagnant community where people shop in suburban malls is not a good environment for historic preservation: deteriorating historic buildings are a recipe for disaster, likely to be swept away in whenever the next development wave or fad takes place (remember the losses associated with urban renewal!). The best way to preserve historic buildings is to fill them with thriving businesses that can keep up the buildings and ensure that they remain a vital part of the fabric of the community. While we must have the right protections to resist development pressure on the historic structures, the economic vitality that we are aiming at with our policies will support these historic buildings and provide the interest and investors that can maintain their quality into the future.

3. **Background:** In 2006, City Council adopted new downtown zoning legislation that encourages residential housing in areas outside the main office core and greater office development in the office core through increased building heights and greater maximum floor area, among other incentives for developers. For more information, see http://www.seattle.gov/DPD/Planning/Downtown_Zoning_Changes/Overview/. As part of the City’s planning efforts for a more livable downtown, a survey and inventory of downtown buildings was conducted in 2006 in conjunction with the changes to the downtown zoning code. The survey, inventory, and preparation of landmark nominations for consideration

by the Landmarks Preservation Board are valuable, pro-active planning tools on the part of the City to identify potential historic properties. These efforts are of great value to property owners and developers. As a planning tool, they are helpful in understanding the development possibilities early in the process. For more information, see http://www.seattle.gov/neighborhoods/preservation/survey_and_inventory_07.htm.

Even in the current economic climate, workload related to historic preservation in the City has increased.

Question: Will you support sufficient funding for the City's Historic Preservation Program to ensure 1) the continued administration of existing programs that value and protect Seattle's historic places; 2) ongoing historic property surveys and inventories in our neighborhoods; and 3) ongoing preparation of landmark nominations for downtown properties identified by the City as potentially eligible for landmark listing?

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I have supported surveys to inventory and identify potential landmarks, including the downtown inventory. I opposed cutting back on survey funding, as was proposed by the Mayor for several years, and I am pleased that we were able to continue funding until the downtown survey was completed. I support funding to continue to designate downtown landmarks that the survey has suggested for nomination. When the Mayor reduced the funding for staffing the historic districts, I was a leader on the Council in finding resources that could be used to retain those staff and in restoring funding. We cannot reduce the staffing and other resources that are essential to maintaining these seven historic districts, the continued administration of our historic resources, and the continuing surveying of neighborhoods for historic resources.