



King County Council District 4 Questions

King County Council District 4 Candidate Name: Jorge L. Barón

Contact information: jorge@electjorgebaron.com and direct cell is: 206-412-7110

Hello, King County Council District 4 candidates: To provide a valuable service to our members and the Magnolia community, the Magnolia Chamber of Commerce seeks information about your candidacy for the King City Council, District 4. Your concise answers to the following questions will allow the Chamber membership and other engaged community members to make an informed judgment about your candidacy. As a reminder, the Magnolia Chamber does not endorse candidates, provide financial assistance, or provide campaign support other than sharing information. Your answers will be posted on our website, discovermagnolia.org, unedited and publicly available to website visitors. Thank you for your participation and for answering our candidate questionnaire.

1. Have you reviewed the Metro Connects plan, the approved 25-year plan *Metro Connects*, which acts as a guiding policy framework for the evolution of Metro to accommodate population growth and increase in services? What improvement would you like to see in Metro services, particularly in areas like Magnolia?

Yes, I have reviewed the Metro Connects plan and am supportive of the vision it outlines. If I am given the opportunity to serve on the King County Council, I will be committed to improving transportation and transit in our region. I understand that a well-functioning transportation system is essential for the economic vitality, livability, and accessibility of our communities.

I believe in investing in a comprehensive and multimodal transportation network that serves the needs of all residents. This includes prioritizing the expansion of public transit options, such as buses, light rail, and commuter trains, to provide reliable and efficient transportation choices for commuters, students, and residents throughout King County.

I will advocate for increased funding and resources to improve and expand our public transit infrastructure. This includes supporting measures to enhance bus service frequency, extend operating hours, and increase coverage in underserved areas. I will work to ensure that our public transit system

is accessible, affordable, and convenient for all, including those with disabilities and those living in low-income communities.

Recognizing the importance of equitable access to transportation, I will work to address transportation disparities and improve connectivity in underserved communities. I will collaborate with community organizations and stakeholders to identify and address transportation barriers, with a focus on reducing transportation inequities and improving access to jobs, healthcare, education, and recreational opportunities.

By championing comprehensive transportation solutions, investing in public transit, promoting sustainable modes of transportation, addressing transportation equity, and prioritizing safety, I aim to create a transportation system that enhances the quality of life for all residents of King County and supports our region's continued growth and prosperity.

I believe the investments I plan on making will help all residents of the county, including Magnolia residents, by ensuring that they can count on a reliable, connected, and safe Metro transit system. And, as a Queen Anne neighbor to Magnolia, I appreciate how difficult it is for Magnolia residents to rely on transit at present.

2. Are you in favor of the over \$600 million investments to protect workers and public safety, the environment, & ratepayer investments at the West Point Treatment Plant? How will you support increasing the resiliency of this county asset while also looking out for the residents of Magnolia immediately adjacent to the facility?

I am in favor of the additional investments to fund improvements at the West Point Treatment Plant. I believe these improvements are necessary to ensure our local wastewater infrastructure can meet the needs of our community while protecting workers, residents, and the environment in which we all live. As the county implements improvements to this important part of our infrastructure, it will be critically important to engage residents in the area near the Plant to make sure they are informed and have an opportunity to provide input on any actions that might impact them.

In addition, I see the investments in the West Point Treatment Plant as vital for the health and well-being of our Puget Sound and everyone who enjoys it. As a County Councilmember, I would seek to partner with Magnolia residents to enable us to meet the demands on our wastewater treatment infrastructure with the growth in the region; the concerns and needs of neighbors; the needs and safety of our workforce; and the future of Discovery Park where my family and I enjoy exploring with our dog.

3. King County released a 40-year wastewater services plan outlining strategies and costs to address our regional wastewater treatment system's future capacity, maintenance, and operational needs. Unfortunately for some, due to the plan, wastewater rates increased significantly this year. How do you plan to address the concerns of ratepayers as the county's Clean Water Plan is implemented over the next decade?

As I note in #4 below, I believe it is important for the County generally to identify ways to support the investments it needs to make through revenue options that would place the burden of that support primarily on those who are most able to afford it. I would therefore want to explore options that would support needed investments to our wastewater infrastructure while protecting ratepayers who may not be in a position to pay for increased service rates. I would also pursue partnerships with federal and

state lawmakers to secure resources at those levels of government that would help support the investments that are needed in order to lessen the burden of those investments on ratepayers, and especially those who may have limited incomes.

4. What are your views on levies impacting property owners? What statutory and constitutional changes would you advocate for, and do you want increases in property tax authorities? How do you envision the various taxing entities in King County and Seattle working together in proposing levies impacting property owners?

I support changes (which would require action by the state legislature) that would provide avenues for the county to be able to shift its tax system to one that is more progressive and that shifts the burden of paying for essential services to those who can most afford to pay for them. I do support for the legislature to lift the current 1% limit on the growth of property tax revenues as this limit does not account for inflation or population growth. However, I would also support changes to the property tax structure (including a homestead exemption) that would protect people from property tax bills that they are not actually able to pay. I also believe it will be important for the county to invest in ensuring that the processing of applications for tax relief exemptions and deferrals is done on a timely basis. I am concerned about the impact of our over-reliance on levies for homeowners on fixed incomes; for our seniors; and for our renters to whom this burden is passed.

5. The Interbay corridor and various transportation and growth-oriented planning efforts impact the 15th Avenue W corridor, the essential route to access the Magnolia peninsula's three bridges. The corridor's growth and transportation are under the jurisdiction of multiple governments, agencies, and authorities. What role do you play in helping coordinate or encourage collaboration among the numerous planning efforts affecting the 15th Ave W corridor? What are your positions regarding the Magnolia Bridge replacement, given that Metro busses depend on the bridge for the significant routes serving workers and residents working and living in Magnolia?

As someone who has worked for two decades in a field of policy (immigration policy) that frequently intersects jurisdictional boundaries, I am well prepared to tackle the challenge of coordinating across different levels of government to support the needs of Magnolia residents. Over the past 15 years, I have had the opportunity to work on the development of policy at the city, county, state, and federal levels and I will bring this experience to bear in ensuring that the transportation and development plans for the 15th Avenue West corridor are well-coordinated and take into account the views of Magnolia residents, as people who are directly impacted by the implementation of those plans.

I support the effort for a one-to-one replacement of the Magnolia Bridge and would use my position on the County Council to develop resources at the local, state, and federal levels to help ensure this long over-due project moves toward implementation.