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# Seattle University Law Graduate Efrain Hudnell Has Big Plans For City Council

Leila Bunker, News Editor

Seattle's City Council will be filled with quite a few new faces next cycle, as seven of nine district seats are up for election. This opens up an opportunity for Seattle University Law alumnus Efrain Hudnell, who is hoping to fill the District 3 seat left vacant by Kshama Sawant. With homelessness, mental health and public safety at the forefront of voter priorities, Hudnell brings an approach emphasizing preventative measures and a concern for people lacking resources.



Screenshot of Efrain Hudnell's campaign website.

Sawant, who is leaving her seat after a decade, will be accompanied by council members Lisa Herbold of District 1, Alex Pedersen of District 4 and Council President Debora Juarez, who represents District 5, leaving a relatively open field for new candidates.

"There is a bit of excitement in the air. There are four people not running for reelection and potentially a fifth person. A majority of the council will be filled with new faces," Hudnell said.

Hudnell currently works at the King County Mental Health Court as a prosecutor. Since joining the office in 2020, he has seen firsthand how people with a lack of resources often fall victim to inequalities within the criminal justice system.

"This work has shown me the importance of addressing underlying conditions, and for a lot of people we knew there was a problem before they came to court with their crime. I think that public policy needs to own that," Hudnell said. "When you ask what's happening, you see better outcomes because when these one or two things that arise, it's actually a dozen factors that are all interwoven leading itself towards criminal activity."

Many offenders are only connected to resources after they have committed a crime and mainly because there was not another system in place to support them beforehand. Hudnell is interested in prioritizing rehabilitation over punishment and utilizing the county's therapeutic courts as a solution. He emphasized that people should be given the help they need when in crisis. Public systems should seek to aid people in rebuilding their lives rather than put them through a continuous cycle that doesn't actually address the problem.

Another one of Hudnell's campaign goals is addressing the climate crisis, an issue which he believes is intertwined with urban transit options. Hudnell first saw the value in public transit firsthand, during his childhood in Washington D.C..

"We were barely making ends meet, but we had access to reliable transportation which meant we had access to opportunities. [D.C.] has a pretty well built out metro system and I think that's where I get my passion for transportation because I don't know what my family would've done had we lived in Seattle and been forced into owning a car," Hudnell said.

Designing an environment built around automobile usage means the city is precluding a significant amount of the population from participating in the economy while also preventing Seattle from meeting its climate goals. Hudnell embraces a plan to shift away from personal automobiles, expand Sound Transit to more neighborhoods, adopt a rail based system and alter roadways for bike friendly routes throughout the city.

As hopeful as Hudnell is for smaller projects, he is also pitching a grander vision to voters. His proposals, including intercity rail and lidding I-5, would reconnect the First Hill neighborhood to Downtown and could pose an opportunity to place a Cascadia passenger train station in Seattle. With Hudnell's plan, Seattle could become connected to Portland and Vancouver, and have significantly more space in the city with the I-5 underground.

"I think it'd be a waste of resources to repave the interstate and call it that. If we're going to spend that money we should take away some lanes and lay some tracks. Then we have more people traveling in a more climate friendly way, increasing air quality and reactivating the economy in a new way. The opportunities are boundless," Hudnell said.

Hudnell's policy changes are at the forefront of his campaign. The candidate is positioning himself as a down-to-earth policy nerd with a sincere interest in bettering circumstances for Seattle voters.

"I'm hoping that in this crazy, anxiety policy filled brain of mine I can concoct and put together solutions that make a better outcome for communities and society at large," Hudnell said. "I'm excited for these capital projects, to solve problems and create better outcomes. Seattle is the city that I lived in with the most potential and we're in a special place in which we can lead by example."

Hudnell will be up against candidates Alex Hudson, Joy Hollingsworth, Andrew Ashiofu, Ry Armstrong, Alex Cooley and Asukaa Jaxx for District 3 City Council in the November 2023 Election.