

Katie Wilson's Real Estate Plan

Katie Wilson narrowly defeated Bruce Harrell to become the next Seattle mayor. Following a long tradition of Seattle politics, she has promised to make housing affordable, plentiful, green, union-built, displacement-protected, and, of course, paid for by someone else.

Here's the real estate platform from her website (<https://www.wilsonforseattle.com/housing>):

- Build social housing
- Pursue a \$1 billion bond for union-built affordable housing
- Clamp down on bad-actor landlord practices
- Make it easier to build homes for people to rent and buy, while also protecting communities against displacement and keeping Seattle green.

I cringe, especially at the last one. She will, all at once, make it EASIER to build homes at the same time she PROTECTS communities from displacement, and save TREES? What is she, Spiderman?

Instead of bash her statements though. Let me just explain one simple measure that would do more than all of hers combined: **Force the planning department to respond to submissions and requests within 5 business days.**

Leave every rule on the books as they are. The restrictive zoning, the mandatory inspections of rentals, the forcing landlords to accept tenants based on who applied first, the restrictions on cutting trees, the parking requirements, the energy code mandates. Leave all that expensive garbage in place. No worries. Just do one thing:

That's literally it. Simply hire an extra 50 people in the planning department. Hell, hire 100. Stop making the private sector move at the pace of the government. Allow the private sector to move at its own pace. There would be a housing boom. It wouldn't cost the city a penny. Pass the extra administrative cost to the developers in the form of higher permit fees. They will be happy to pay extra to get responses in 1 week instead of 4 months. You haven't added any taxes, bonds, rules, nothing.

Katie Wilson's platform is a fat nothing IMO. It is the recycling of thousands of liberal politicians' platforms on housing. Zoran Mamdani in NY is very similar (at least he gives a shoutout to fast-tracking planning reviews and expanding zoning!). But largely it is always the same: The private sector isn't doing it! So, the government must build and operate housing! But when the private sector has to wait YEARS to see if their project can be built or how it will be impacted by the political process, they are running a marathon with shackles on. My proposal is to just take off the shackles and let them run. Keep the alligator pond they have to run through. Keep the poisonous darts that shoot out of the pillars. Keep the... I just watched Indiana Jones btw.

Let's say Katie Wilson is wildly successful at commandeering funds and builds a few affordable buildings. It will be SLOW and EXPENSIVE. During the 6 years it will take to build 1,000 affordable units (at a cost of 500k each)... the need for affordable units will grow by 5,000. So, then what? It's not enough! We need to think bigger! \$5B bond! \$20B bond! And on and on to infinity. It's not a solution that could ever catch up with the problem. You absolutely have to do it through the private sector. The government will never make a dent in the problem.

Look around the world. High housing costs are not unique and big cities failing at affordable housing is the rule. But there are exceptions. Take Tokyo. Cheap food, cheap housing, monstrous city. Their secret? The government allows the private sector to identify and supply what is needed. There is no zoning. The government is quick, responsive, and permissive to development. Why not learn from them? Instead of copying NYC, Katie, read up on Tokyo. (<https://archives.huduser.gov/portal/pdredge/pdr-edge-international-philanthropic-120324.html>)