Rob Foxcurran Questionnaire 2026

King County Assessor

What are your top three priorities to achieve in your term?

My top three priorities are accuracy, transparency, and affordability. Accuracy means rigorous, consistent assessments across all 700,000+ parcels in King County, including large commercial properties that too often escape their fair share through aggressive appeals. When assessments are sound, they are also defensible. Transparency means replacing the black box of property valuation with plain-language explanations, digital tools residents can actually use, and proactive data sharing with policymakers and community advocates. Affordability means using every tool available to keep working families in their homes: expanding exemption program outreach, advocating for a homestead exemption and circuit breaker programs at the state level, and ensuring the property tax system does not accelerate the displacement crisis reshaping our region.

What policy changes will you pursue to ensure mobility for all road users and reduce car dependence?

Transportation policy falls outside the Assessor's direct authority, but land use and assessment policy are deeply connected to mobility. I will ensure that underutilized urban land in transit-connected neighborhoods is assessed at its true market value reflecting development potential. Underassessment of these properties subsidizes car-dependent land use patterns and discourages the density that makes transit viable. I am a daily light rail commuter, a member of Seattle Subway, a board member of a high-speed rail advocacy organization, and served as an appraisal consultant on the ST3 project. I will use the platform of this office to advocate consistently for transit investment and transit-oriented development as the backbone of a more mobile, less car-dependent King County.

What will you do to address our homelessness crisis and to fund deeply affordable housing?

As an acolyte of UW professor Gregg Colburn, I believe that homelessness is a housing problem, and the Assessor's Office is more connected to that problem than most people realize. I will address it through three channels. First, ensuring accurate assessment of underutilized land to discourage land banking and encourage housing production. This can be done properly without a land value tax, however, a land value tax would be the most effective way to address this issue. Second, aggressively expanding outreach for senior, veteran, and low-income exemption programs that keep vulnerable residents housed. Third, using the data and platform of this office to support broader housing policy conversations about supply, affordability, and anti-displacement. The path from inadequate housing supply to homelessness runs through decisions made at every level of government, including the Assessor's Office. I intend to ensure this office is part of the solution.

How do you see the role of the assessor's office on housing policy and increasing housing affordability? What strategies and actions would you take to support that role?

This is the question I am most prepared to answer, because it describes work I have done throughout my career. As a certified general real estate appraiser with over a decade of experience conducting highest and best use analyses, I understand how assessment decisions shape development incentives, displacement patterns, and housing affordability in ways most candidates for this office do not. My strategies: rigorous assessment of underutilized land to remove the quiet subsidy for land banking; accurate valuation and timely processing of affordable and multifamily housing to support their financial viability; proactive exemption program outreach; and using the office's data to drive state-level advocacy for a homestead exemption, circuit breaker programs, and progressive property tax reform. The Assessor is not a passive administrator. This office can be a genuine tool for housing stability if led by someone who understands both the technical levers and the human stakes.

Multi-Family Tax Exemption (MFTE) programs in cities across the county are supposed to create moderate-income units in new buildings at virtually no cost to local governments. However, due to assessor policies around the timing of valuations they often do end up shrinking property tax bases over time. Would you seek to address this problem? Do you see a fix?

Yes, and the fix starts with discipline in how land values are assessed during the exemption period. When only land value is taxable under MFTE, that base must be kept current and accurate throughout the exemption window, not allowed to stagnate. I would also work with city partners to improve data sharing on MFTE enrollment so the office can identify and address valuation gaps proactively. But the deeper question is whether MFTE is the right tool at all. I support exploring Funded Inclusionary Zoning (FIZ) as a long-term alternative. Rather than exempting improvements in exchange for fees that may or may not produce on-site affordable units, FIZ ties tax incentives directly to the inclusion of affordable units in the development itself. It treats density as a public good worth incentivizing rather than an impact to be mitigated. As Seattle's housing production slows and MHA revenues fall, the case for a fundamentally different approach grows stronger. The Assessor's Office should be a credible voice in that policy conversation.

The assessor's office sits on a large amount of data about land ownership, land value, and how land is being used across the county. How would you make it more useful to the public, housing advocates, and policymakers?

The Assessor's Office holds some of the most valuable public data in King County: land ownership, assessed values, sales histories, exemption program participation, and development patterns across 700,000+ parcels. Most of it is technically public but practically inaccessible to anyone without specialized tools or knowledge. I expand on existing (but very limited) tools provided by the office to build an open data infrastructure that makes Assessor's data genuinely useful to housing advocates, researchers, journalists, planners, and policymakers. That means machine-readable formats, clear documentation, and active partnerships with advocacy organizations and academic institutions to ensure the data informs the policy conversations our region needs. Transparency is not just about making information available. It is about making it usable.

Corporate and wealthy property owners are more likely to be equipped and knowledgeable about the property tax assessment appeals process. How do you weigh and address this imbalance of power and resources?

I watched this imbalance play out firsthand for three years as a Hearing Examiner on the King County Board of Appeals and Equalization. Corporate landowners arrived with teams of appraisers and attorneys. Homeowners and small business owners arrived alone, confused, and often unprepared. The outcomes reflected that disparity. As Assessor, I will address this from both ends. On the front end, I will ensure assessments are accurate and defensible so that large commercial operators have less grounds for successful appeals. On the back end, I will invest in plain-language guidance, proactive outreach before the official appeals process is initiated, and community partnerships to help ordinary residents navigate the process. Increased proactive outreach alone could save months in the appeals process for many homeowners, or even resolve the appeal before it's filed. The appeals system should not be a tool that primarily benefits those with the most resources. My experience on both sides of that process will inform every decision I make.

Property tax relief programs are focused on homeowners while lower income and working class renters have no equivalent relief as rising costs get passed through to them. What are thoughts on how to address this and what policies would you advocate for?

Renters pay property taxes. They just pay them indirectly, through their rent. In Seattle, where renters are the majority of households, a property tax reform conversation that only addresses homeowners is not a reform at all. I have advocated publicly in the Urbanist for a renter's property tax credit modeled on Washington's Working Families Tax Credit, similar to Minnesota's long-standing renter's property tax refund program. Minnesota recognizes that a portion of every rent payment constitutes property taxes and provides eligible low-income renters a direct, annual refund based on their income and rent paid. Washington should do the same. Senate Bill 5771, which stalled in the 2026 session, would have enhanced the Working Families Tax Credit to account for the property tax burden embedded in residential rents, providing up to $300 annually for eligible low-income renters indexed to inflation (which should be expanded). It was the right idea and it deserved a vote. I will continue to advocate for it as part of the broader reform package Washington needs: a responsible cap increase, a homestead exemption for primary residences, and direct renter relief, treated as one solution rather than three separate bills left to die independently.

Many golf courses in the county sit on large, valuable parcels of land that are located centrally in communities. Some are also private clubs. These properties are assessed based on their current use as a golf course instead of what they could support such as housing or mixed-use development with significantly lower property tax rates than surrounding parcels. This results in subsidized tax rates for golf course owners while individual homeowners and renters proportionally contribute more in taxes. Do you see this as everyone paying their fair share?

No, and this issue deserves a serious answer rather than a technically uninformed one. Private golf course land in Seattle has been assessed at less than $1 per square foot while nearby residential and apartment land carries values well above $100. That disparity shifts tax burden onto homeowners and renters and should be fixed. But fixing it correctly requires understanding why it exists. The 2024 King County assessment report reflects real legal and practical constraints. Private golf courses carry restrictive covenants limiting their legal use to golf, and Washington case law going back to the Supreme Court's 1987 Sahalee decision established that those restrictions legitimately factor into valuation. Comparable sales are scarce, out-of-state comparables require substantial adjustment, and private courses are not required to disclose income and expense data under Washington law. Proposals to simply apply an income approach as a quick administrative fix or disregard highest and best use constraints misunderstand the existing legal framework. The real fix runs through the state legislature. Directing assessors to disregard restrictive covenants for tax purposes is the legally coherent path, but it requires careful drafting to survive an inevitable court challenge. I have already begun conversations with legal experts and state legislators about what that legislation needs to look like. That is what serious leadership on this issue actually requires.

Beyond golf courses, how would you address your office's application and impact when assessing "highest and best" use determinations for underutilized land in dense, transit-connected areas such as surface parking lots and vacant parcels?

Surface parking lots and vacant parcels in dense, transit-connected neighborhoods are among the most underassessed properties in King County. Their current use generates minimal economic activity and minimal tax revenue, but their location often commands significant development value that is not being captured in their assessments. As a certified general real estate appraiser with direct experience in highest and best use analysis, I will ensure these properties are assessed at their true market value reflecting actual development potential. When holding costs accurately reflect that value, the financial incentive to sit on underutilized land diminishes and the incentive to develop increases. This is not a radical policy position. It is how assessment is supposed to work. Over the long term, Washington should seriously explore land value taxation as a structural reform. A land value tax would assess land at its full market value independently of improvements, creating a continuous and powerful incentive to put urban land to its most productive use rather than holding it vacant or underutilized. It would discourage speculation, encourage housing production, and align tax policy with the goal of building denser, more transit-oriented communities. Washington's constitutional uniformity clause presents a real barrier, but that is a reason to begin the legislative conversation now, not to avoid it.

When homeowners fall behind on property taxes, the path to foreclosure can move quickly and payment plan options come with fees and interest on top of an already high bill. What would you do to keep vulnerable homeowners out of foreclosure in the first place, and when foreclosure does happen, do you see your office as playing a role in making sure that property ends up serving the community rather than sitting in an investor's portfolio?

The best foreclosure prevention tool is early intervention. I will invest in proactive outreach to homeowners falling behind on taxes, connecting them with limited income deferral programs under RCW 84.37 and RCW 84.38 before their situations become critical. Too many eligible residents do not know these programs exist. That is a failure of outreach, not of policy. I will also work to reduce the fees and interest that currently compound hardship for struggling homeowners seeking payment plans. When foreclosure does occur, I believe the Assessor's Office has a responsibility to advocate for outcomes that serve the community, supporting policies that prioritize community land trusts, nonprofit housing providers, and owner-occupants over speculative investors. We need to be doing everything we can to keep people housed and prevent further displacement in our communities.

Did you use a generative artificial intelligence (AI) platform to craft some or all of your responses? What was the extent of your use?

I have used AI tools (Claude) during my campaign for organizational planning and note-taking purposes. The responses in this questionnaire are my own. The positions, arguments, and specific language reflect my professional experience, my research, and my own thinking about this office and what it should do.