

# insight

A NEWSLETTER FOR MEMBERS & FRIENDS

OF PROTEC17

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## On the Cover:

Katie Rand, Chapter President for Spokane Regional Health District, and her PROTEC17 colleagues have worked alongside the new Health District Administrator to expand the popular Infants in the Workplace policy, which now allows employees to bring infants up to 12 months old into the workplace, or have more flexibility to work from home. Read more on page 7. ■

## News, Features & Political Action



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# PROTEC17 Executive Board Election Notice

Nominations are now open for the following PROTEC17 Executive Board positions: Trustee #1 (Membership-at-Large), currently held by Joseph Opoku, and Trustee #5 (State Employees), currently held by Mason Emrys. The terms are three (3) years and will expire in 2030.

### Details:

- (1) Only members who work for the State of Washington are eligible to be nominated for the State of Washington Employees Trustee position. Any member may be nominated for the Membership-at-Large Trustee position. The City of Portland, King County, and Greater Northwest Trustee positions will be up for election in ensuing years.
- (2) To be eligible for nomination to an Executive Board position, a member must have been in good standing in PROTEC17 for a period of at least six (6) months immediately prior to the nomination.
- (3) No member of PROTEC17 shall run for more than one Executive Board office concurrently.
- (4) Nominations must be in writing by the person making the nomination, and must be at the PROTEC17 office, 2900 Eastlake Avenue East, Suite #300, Seattle, Washington 98102, by 5 p.m. on Mon., Oct. 5, 2026.
- (5) Names of all nominees, except those who declare in writing that they decline the nomination, will appear on the ballot.
- (6) Candidates may submit a statement of up to 200 words and a photo of themselves. These will go out with the ballot and must be received at the union office by 5 p.m. on Fri., Oct. 9, 2026.
- (7) An electronic ballot will be emailed to each member in good standing at their last known email address the week of Oct. 12, 2026.
- (8) The ballots will be counted after 5 p.m. on Mon., Nov. 16, 2026.

To request a paper ballot, or if you have any questions regarding the election, please contact the PROTEC17 Election Chair at: PROTEC17 Election Chair, 2900 Eastlake Avenue East, Suite 300, Seattle, WA 98102, or union@protec17.org.

## insight

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Karen Estevenin  
Executive Director

## The World Stage to Everyday Life

**A**s I write this, the world has its eyes on Seattle and other North American cities hosting the FIFA World Cup – soccer’s biggest international event. Millions of people will see our stadium, ride our light rail, and experience our bustling neighborhoods and vibrant city life. But the foundation of all of this (and invisible to most of the millions of spectators) are the thousands of working people – especially public workers – who are crucial to pulling off this magnitude of an event.

PROTEC17 members along with other union members have been planning, coordinating, and ramping-up essential community services for months, if not years. From City of Seattle workers providing public safety services and King County employees supporting public health efforts, to Sound Transit members ensuring that light rail is ready to move a record number of riders around the region - working people are the backbone of this event and the reason why Seattle is ready to “welcome the world”.

Preparing to welcome the world provides an opportunity to reflect on what it means to be a truly welcoming place. Many people – based on fear of increased Immigration Controls Enforcement (ICE) agents at the World Cup – may not feel welcome and safe participating in the very events that they helped make possible. As union members, we understand the injustice in this, and know that it is our work to amplify voices and make sure everyone has a place at the table.

Public workers consistently provide a foundation of safety, health, and well-being for all of us. This issue of *Insight* highlights everyday champions who do just this, like the King County Public health members who work in the Women Infant and Children (WIC) program, creating life-saving support for new parents and children (p. 6); Spokane Regional Health Department members (p. 7) and Chapter President Katie Rand (front cover), who collectively continue to advocate for a strong and inclusive family-friendly workplace; and Sound Transit members and many other incredible PROTEC17 members who are engaging in collective action for fair contracts, workplace flexibility, and guaranteed raises and Cost of Living Adjustments (p. 8).

All of these PROTEC17 members and countless other union members and workers not only help support global events, they make everyday life possible. By doing so together, we are not only helping our communities thrive, but also working to protect dignity, and expand safety to all.

In compassion and solidarity,

*Karen*

## PROTEC17 Scholarship Deadline: July 31!



Since its inception in 2011, the PROTEC17 scholarship program has awarded over 30 scholarships – for a total of more than \$80,000 – to members’ children who are in pursuit of a college education.

There are two \$5,000 scholarships to award to the child, grandchild or dependent of an active member who wishes to continue their education beyond high school at a college, university or technical institute. One scholarship will be for an individual starting their first year, and the other will be for an individual continuing their education beyond freshman year. Applicants are judged on a wide range of criteria including: academic achievement, extracurricular activities, educational goals and a labor-themed essay reviewed anonymously by the PROTEC17 Executive Board.

If your child or dependent will be heading off to college this fall, please encourage them to apply. The application can be found on our website ([protec17.org/benefits](http://protec17.org/benefits)) and the deadline to apply is Fri., July 31, 2026 at 5 p.m. Winners will be announced in the fall 2026 issue of *Insight* magazine. ■

## King County members deliver giant check to demonstrate the cost of RTO

PROTEC17 members at King County organized an event to protest King County Executive Girmay Zahilay’s three-day in-office mandate, and hand delivered a giant blank check to his representative on April 21. The check, made out to “Downtown Landlords” at a cost of “Who Knows?”, was meant to symbolize the cost of the return-to-office (RTO) mandate to taxpayers.

While many King County employees, including PROTEC17 members, have already been working in-person due to the nature of their jobs, many PROTEC17 members have been successfully working from home since the pandemic – so much so that back in 2022, King County closed offices for the Department of Natural Resources and Parks (DNRP) and others, citing the increased costs of maintaining empty buildings.

Currently, the County does not have enough office space to house all the workers who would return to the office if the mandate is enforced, as Zahilay aims to do. That means that the County will likely need to invest in new spaces and to update and re-outfit existing spaces so that every-

one can fit – not to mention budget for ongoing operations and maintenance.

In addition to protecting taxpayer money, PROTEC17 members also want to maintain flexibility in their work so that they can best serve their communities.

“All of us know our jobs and what we do in our communities better than anyone,” said PROTEC17 member and DNRP Stormwater Inspector, Brad Moore, who presented the check to Zahilay’s representative. “King County already had existing telework infrastructure that we felt worked really well for us, and we think that this mandate gets rid of that flexibility.”

PROTEC17 King County members have organized other actions against RTO like a petition, a button and sign-making party, and testifying at County Council meetings. In May, the DNRP got a short reprieve in the three-day mandate when it was reduced to a one-day in-office requirement through summer, presumably to coincide with the World Cup games taking place in Seattle from mid-June to mid-July. For the latest updates on RTO, please reach out to your PROTEC17 King County Union Representatives. ■



Find more news on our website: [www.protec17.org/news](http://www.protec17.org/news)

## Meet the 2027-2029 State Bargaining Team!

**N**egotiations for the 2027-2029 contract with the State of Washington began in April and will continue through the summer in order to reach a deal by the state-mandated October 1 deadline to be included in the Governor's budget.

The bargaining team is comprised of PROTEC17 members who represent their Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT), Department of Licensing (DOL), and the Washington State Patrol (WSP) colleagues from across the state. These PROTEC17 member-leaders act as subject matter experts for their respective agencies, provide invaluable insight, and play an integral role in ensuring their coworkers' interests are represented at the negotiating table. They also sacrifice many hours of their personal time to prepare and present proposals identified as priorities in our statewide member survey.

While the time commitment and the process can be taxing in many ways, bargaining team members often report that the experience of negotiating the contract is enlightening and fulfilling, and they enjoy helping to ensure the State is a good place to work.

Brandi Wilkins, WSDOT Engineer and first-time member of the bargaining team said: "I really enjoy the work I do at WSDOT for the communities we serve, but workers' voices are not always heard in a meaningful way when important decisions are made. By participating in this process, I feel like I'm making a real difference for myself and my colleagues and the important work that we do."

WSP Communications Officer and bargaining team member Rachel Crittenden is motivated by her fellow 911 operators: "We do a lot of heavy lifting to make sure Troopers, DOT workers, and others are able to safely do their jobs every day, while also being left behind where pay and benefits are concerned. I wanted to do my part to make sure Communications Officers are fairly compensated for their hard work."



*The 2027-2029 PROTEC17 State Negotiations Team (back row, l to r): Joseph Opoku (WSDOT), Paul Austin (WSP), Annette Dinkel (WSDOT), Jason Clutter (DOL), Sarah Lorenzini (PROTEC17), Rachel Crittenden (WSP), Brian Brannies (WSDOT), Brent Wagar (PROTEC17); (front row, l to r): Bill Hicks (DOL), Alexis Young (PROTEC17), Steve Morgans (WSDOT), and Brandi Wilkins (WSDOT).*

Paul Austin, WSP Commercial Vehicle Enforcement Officer initially got involved to ensure the voices of his colleagues were heard, and is now serving on the team for a third time. He said: "I know I've really made a difference for myself and my colleagues through this process."

Joining the team for the second time is Licensing Services Representative Jason Clutter, who said: "everyone sacrificing the perks of private employment to perform State service deserves the best working conditions we can give them!"

As a union member for over 30 years, Annette Dinkel started attending the monthly Chapter meetings at WSDOT because she wanted to learn more about the contract and what members could do to improve it.

"Being on the negotiating team opened my eyes to how our state and agencies operate, and motivated me to continue providing input to help change rules, codes, and legislation that can make being a state employee more challenging and less rewarding," said Dinkell. "I also want to better our union community and our support for each other," she continued.

For Transportation Planner and self-described "proud PROTEC17 member" Brian Brannies, serving on the bargaining team is one of the most rewarding things he's done in his tenure at WSDOT.

"I've always been impressed by how much our union is able to deliver for the small amount of dues that we pay. I didn't realize until I got involved in bargaining exactly how much labor and service that truly is! I want to do my part to continue to advocate for our members, and move our union and agencies forward."

So far, the PROTEC17 team has presented many proposals, from improvements to rest periods at WSP and the permanent incorporation of plexiglass barriers at the DOL, to stronger telework language, the establishment of a new type of unpaid sick leave, and stronger rights and protections for immigrants in the workplace - to name a few. Once the State's economic forecast is released in late June, the team will begin focusing on wage adjustments. State members should check their personal email for details on the proposals and the latest updates, or reach out to a member of the bargaining team. ■

## King County Public Health members reach more clients virtually in the Women, Infants, and Children program

**F**or parents, newborns, and children under age five in King County, the Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) program is a lifeline. Throughout the county, this program provides food benefits and nutrition education to low-income community members. The North Regional Team, led by PROTEC17 member, Dietitian, and WIC Coordinator Holly Krawiec, alongside Nutrition Assistants April Arend, Amanda Hanstad, Jane Karumba, and Carmen Palacios, are the friendly faces that WIC clients see when they arrive at their King County Public Health clinic.

“I let clients know they are in the right place and they’re not alone; I encourage them and check on how their children are doing,” explains Karumba, a former WIC participant, now Nutrition Assistant. “I know firsthand they are faced with so many challenges.”

Karumba credits the WIC resources and support she received when her children were young for enabling her to obtain a degree from the University of Washington, then return to work in the program. She uses her experience as a former client to connect with WIC families.

The WIC program has been in place since 1972 when federal legislation was

**“I let clients know they are in the right place and they’re not alone; I encourage them and check on how their children are doing. I know firsthand they are faced with so many challenges.”**

Jane Karumba  
Nutrition Assistant  
Public Health Seattle-King County



PROTEC17 members of the WIC team at the Eastgate clinic of King County Public Health (l to r): Carmen Palacios, Holly Krawiec, Jane Karumba, and Amanda Hanstad.

passed as an amendment to the Child Nutrition Act. For over 50 years, eligible clients receive benefits such as vouchers for nutritious food and formula, nutritional education, and breast/chest pumps. WIC staff screen clients for eligibility, counsel them on the benefits of breast and chest feeding, and also connect clients with other services when needed.

Palacios, a Nutrition Assistant for over 25 years, joined as a staff member after participating in the program, too. She has shared the nutrition education she received as a WIC participant all those years ago with countless clients. Palacios also works with Spanish-speaking clients in their own language.

For Hanstad, the program is a form of preventative care that provides security to families. Many clients have reported to her that they don’t know what they would do without WIC.

Before the pandemic, the services that WIC staff provided were entirely in person. During the early pandemic, services transitioned to entirely virtual appointments. In 2022, when clients had

the option of choosing between virtual or in-person services thanks to a remote provision in federal legislation, 99 percent of WIC clients within the North Regional Team chose virtual appointments.

Given the barriers to actually getting to a clinic – including work and child care schedules, as well as transportation issues – it is not surprising that most clients choose virtual services. Not only are virtual services more beneficial for clients, but they are allowing clinic workers to reach more people. Yet, King County was unreasonably denying staff the ability to telework one to two days per week – even on days when clinics are closed to the public and all appointments are virtual.

After bringing this issue forward through the grievance process, PROTEC17 staff and members recently won an arbitration in June that will allow the team to telework on days that clinics are closed, as well as during inclement weather. The WIC team is grateful that they will be able to continue to work with their clients remotely so that these valuable services can be accessed by all. ■

# PROTEC17 leaders, new Administrator unite to expand infants in the workplace policy at Spokane Health

**S**ince 2015, infants up to the age of six months have been welcome in the workplace at Spokane Regional Health District (SRHD). Back then, current SRHD Chapter President Katie Rand advocated for the progressive policy when she had a newborn and was facing the dilemma so many working parents face -- wanting to continue working but grappling with the reality of costly childcare and losing one-on-one time with a new baby. Fortunately, SRHD was in agreement that having infants in the workplace is possible and should be encouraged, especially at a public health agency focused on fostering a community of healthy and happy families.

In the years since, SRHD has gone through some tumultuous times, with Health District leadership experiencing major turnover; multiple Administrative Officers (the agency head) leaving amidst investigations, misconduct, and conflict; a Health Officer being terminated at the height of the pandemic; and threats to privatize Washington's largest public opioid treatment clinic. SRHD staff have been in



survival mode anxiously waiting for the next regime change; not knowing who they would be reporting to next week; and living in a culture of fear of what might come next.

Despite being surrounded by uncertainty, PROTEC17 members began advocating for an update to Infants in the Workplace policy due to a wave of new babies being born and new parents questioning the old policy. One mom who had been bringing

her infant to work was facing a looming deadline with her baby turning six months old -- normally a happy milestone, but one that meant she would no longer be allowed to bring him to work with her. Another mom had been told she could not work from home while caring for her child since the policy barred it on the grounds that "working from home is not a replacement for childcare."

At a Labor Management Committee meeting, President Rand and other member leaders advocated for an update to the policy that would not punish parents for simply working from home or for their child reaching six months of age.

This year, the new Administrative Officer, Danny Scalise, has come on board at SRHD and instituted an open-door policy with a willingness to make changes at an agency whose unofficial slogan had been "we do it that way because we've always done it that way". Scalise has invited union members to come and talk to him to share their past experiences, recommend improvements, pitch ideas, and foster in a new era of collaboration.

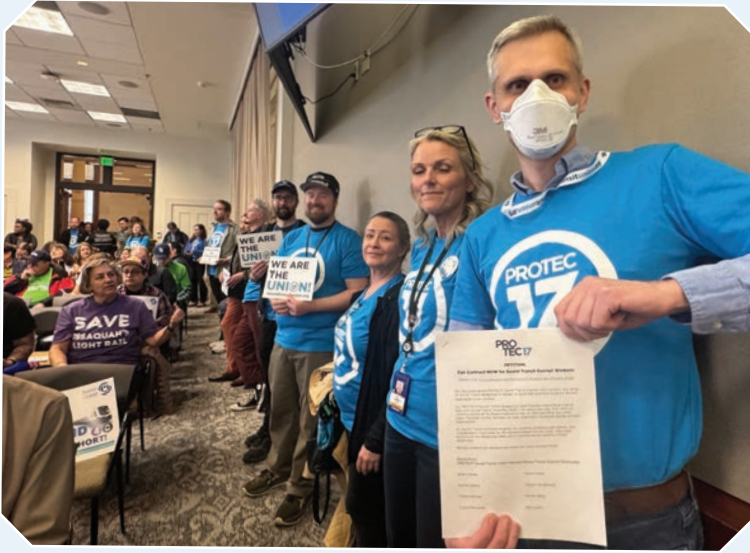
One of his first actions was to start up a new Policy Committee focused on reviewing existing Health District policies and finding areas for improvement. Rand was nominated to be the PROTEC17 voice on the committee, and she immediately got to work on Infants in the Workplace policy.

Within days, management had agreed to extend the policy and eliminate the disparate treatment of parents working from home. Now, parents can bring infants up to the age of 12 months in to work with them; or care for them while working from home without fear of retribution. Thanks to Rand's advocacy and experience as a union leader, along with a friend in management, new parents working at SRHD can rest assured that they can continue to support their families and their communities, without sacrificing important bonding time with their babies. ■



PROTEC17 SRHD Chapter President Katie Rand, pictured in 2015 with her newborn (top photo, right side), and today (above).

# PROTEC17 members were busy this Spring!



Clockwise from top left: Members and staff at the Asian Pacific American Labor Alliance banquet; Portland members hold a renaissance-themed rally and testify at Portland City Council with their fellow city unions; King County members testify at Council against the RTO policy; PROTEC17 is honored by the City of Seattle in a May Day Proclamation; and Sound Transit members present a petition for a fair contract to the Board at their April meeting.

Find us on Instagram: [@weareprotec17](https://www.instagram.com/weareprotec17)

# PROTEC17 EVENT CALENDAR

## JULY

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30	31	

- July 1: Steward Training - Part 1
- July 2: Future of Work Member Action Committee Meeting
- July 4: **Fourth of July Holiday (Observed, 7/3)**
- July 7: PROTEC17 Presents - Union 101!
- July 7: Portland Chapter Meeting
- July 8: Steward Training - Part 2
- July 8: WSDOT Chapter Meeting
- July 8: Tacoma Chapter Meeting
- July 9: Seattle Chapter Meeting
- July 15: Portland Chapter Meeting
- July 16: King County Steward Meeting
- July 22: King County Chapter Meeting
- July 23: Seattle Steward Meeting
- July 30: Sound Transit Contract Action Team Meeting

## AUGUST

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
						1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30	31					

- Aug. 4: Portland Chapter Meeting
- Aug. 5: Steward Training - Part 1
- Aug. 6: WA DOL Revenue Auditors Meeting
- Aug. 12: Steward Training - Part 2
- Aug. 12: WSDOT Chapter Meeting
- Aug. 12: Tacoma Chapter Meeting
- Aug. 13: Seattle Chapter Meeting
- Aug. 19: Portland Chapter Meeting
- Aug. 20: Snohomish County Chapter Meeting
- Aug. 21: King County Steward Meeting
- Aug. 26: King County Chapter Meeting
- Aug. 27: Seattle Steward Meeting
- Aug. 27: Sound Transit Contract Action Team Meeting

## SEPTEMBER

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30			

- Sept. 1: Portland Chapter Meeting
- Sept. 2: Steward Training - Part 1
- Sept. 7: **Labor Day**
- Sept. 9: Steward Training - Part 2
- Sept. 10: WSDOT Chapter Meeting
- Sept. 10: Skagit County Chapter Meeting
- Sept. 10: Tacoma Chapter Meeting
- Sept. 10: Seattle Chapter Meeting
- Sept. 16: Portland Chapter Meeting
- Sept. 17: King County Steward Meeting
- Sept. 23: King County Chapter Meeting
- Sept. 24: Seattle Steward Meeting
- Sept. 24: Sound Transit Contract Action Team Meeting

This is not an exhaustive list of events, as things get added all the time! Please visit [protec17.org/events/](http://protec17.org/events/) for current listings and logistics.

# PROTEC17 Endorsed!

## Seattle Steward runs for King County Assessor

**F**or PROTEC17 member Rob Foxcurran, the role of King County Assessor feels like the perfect fit. Currently, he works for the City of Seattle as a Senior Appraiser where he works across departments to protect tree canopy, identify land for new parks, flag publicly owned parcels that could be used for affordable housing, and provide general real estate valuation services to the City. In addition to his current job, Foxcurran has also worked as a certified general appraiser in the private sector, and as a hearing examiner on the King County Board of Appeals and Equalization.

But it's not only his professional experience that has enticed Foxcurran to run for elected office. As a fifth generation Seattleite who has lived in rent-restricted housing for low- and middle-income earners, he wants families to feel like they have

**“Housing is a human right, and our region isn't treating it that way. I want an Assessor's office that works proactively for residents, not one that makes them figure out a complicated system on their own.”**

*Rob Foxcurran*  
PROTEC17 Steward  
Senior Appraiser at City of Seattle &  
Candidate for King County Assessor



the opportunity to raise their children here. He also feels a moral obligation to help ensure that property taxes are fair for working families, that relief programs reach the people who need them, and that the system works for all – not just the people with resources to navigate it.

“Housing is a human right, and our region isn't treating it that way,” said Foxcurran. “I want an Assessor's office that works proactively for residents, not one that makes them figure out a complicated system on their own.”

If elected, Foxcurran will focus on accuracy and transparency in how property taxes are assessed, as well as affordability that keeps people housed and thriving in King County. With his technical expertise and professional background, he wants to hit the ground running to reform the system so that it works for all residents.

“Property taxes are one piece of a much bigger affordability problem, and the Assessor's office has more influence over that than most people realize,” said Foxcurran.

“If assessments are wrong, people overpay or underpay,” he continued. “If property owners don't understand how their values are set, they can't easily spot errors,

let alone challenge them. And if we aren't actively getting relief programs in front of the people who qualify for them, those programs aren't doing their job.”

Foxcurran, who is a Steward, and member of the PROTEC17 Workers' Roundtable (PWR) – our union's political group that interviews candidates and makes endorsement recommendations – was inspired to run for office, in part, by seeing several other PROTEC17 members step up to run for office over the last couple of years. His experience as a union leader has also helped prepare him to run for office.

“Serving as a Union Steward taught me how to show up for people who are navigating a system that isn't always designed with them in mind,” said Foxcurran. “You learn to listen carefully, to understand the rules well enough to use them on someone's behalf, and to be persistent without being reckless. That's not so different from what I'm trying to do in this campaign.”

When he's not serving City residents, his union community, or running for office, Foxcurran enjoys time with his wife, his preschool-aged daughter, and their two corgis in the Beacon Hill neighborhood, and volunteers in Seattle Public Schools.

The PROTEC17 Workers' Roundtable has unanimously endorsed Foxcurran, and recommends a vote for him on the August primary ballot.

“I am honored to have earned our union's endorsement, and I would be just as honored to earn your vote,” said Foxcurran to his fellow PROTEC17 members in King County.

You can learn more about Foxcurran's campaign, including events, volunteer opportunities, and how to donate on his website at: [voterobfoxcurran.com](http://voterobfoxcurran.com). ■

**Find our endorsements at: [protec17.org/endorsements](http://protec17.org/endorsements)**

# Social housing coming to fruition in Seattle

**S**eattle is the first city in the U.S. to implement social housing – a public, not-for-profit housing development strategy that aims to provide high quality housing for residents across a wide spectrum of household incomes, namely everyday working people. After first being approved by voters in 2023, the initiative is finally coming to fruition thanks to many years of hard work by a broad Coalition of affordable housing advocates – including Labor and PROTEC17.

Social housing is common in Europe, most notably in Vienna, where successful housing communities are built around inclusivity, affordability, and environmental sustainability. Seattle aims to emulate this model with the creation of the Seattle Social Housing Developer (SSHD). It is a new agency funded by a five percent payroll tax on employers – approved by voters in 2025 – for every individual salary that is over one million dollars.



PROTEC17's Karen Estevenin (left) with Interim SSHD CEO Tiffani McCoy (second from right) and building trades leaders.

In May, the SSHD announced the acquisition of their first building – a 150-unit complex called Elara at the Market that is in the Belltown neighborhood of downtown Seattle, across the street from the Pike Place Market. The building was purchased for \$60 million -- well below the market rate of similar apartment buildings.

In Elara, SSHD will offer studios, one-, and two-bedroom units ranging from \$600 to \$1400 per month in rent, with a portion of the units dedicated to households at or below 30 percent of median income, and

another portion for households between 30 and 50 percent of median income.

When applications for housing in Elara opened for one week in early June, ten thousand people applied. The selection will be made on a lottery basis.

SSHD plans to offer residents free transit (ORCA) passes for a year, which are subsidized, in part, by King County Metro. They will review and remove hidden fees for amenities, such as those for bike storage or pest control. In addition, residents who lived in Elara prior to the conversion to social housing will also have their rents frozen for two years.

“This is a game changer for housing in Seattle, where most working people have been priced out of the city for years as costs have skyrocketed,” said PROTEC17 Executive Director Karen Estevenin, who also serves on the Board of SSHD.

“If this program becomes as successful as I know it can be, working people can actually afford to live in the city where they work again,” she concluded. ■



## Primary & Early Endorsements

There are several important races in the August primary election, and worker-centered candidates on the ballot for the general election this November. Below (and in the story on the left!) are the candidates who have earned the endorsement of the PROTEC17 Workers' Roundtable, our member-led political action group.



**Rebecca Saldaña**  
King County Council, District 2



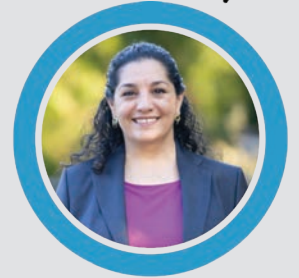
**Jorge Barón**  
King County Council, District 4



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King County Council, District 6



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