



Rashell Lisowski Urbanist Questionnaire 2025

Burien City Council, Position 3

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

First, I will Increase Housing Stability and Affordability. I want to expand truly affordable housing for new families moving to Burien by prioritizing and simplifying the building of ADUs, DADUs and other small-scale build options while also putting safeguards in place so working families and seniors aren't displaced by rising rents or regressive property tax increases. Second, I will enforce and strengthen tenant protections with just-cause eviction standards, longer terms to pay move in costs, and a rental/landlord registry so people can make more informed decisions about where they live. Third, I will bring more working-class and community leadership into every city decision by creating community advisory councils, running workshops and paperwork support for small and immigrant-owned businesses, pushing for local hiring and a strong minimum wage, and doing concentrated outreach to youth and residents in underinvested neighborhoods until everyone has a real voice at city hall.

How will you boost housing options, particularly for families of all incomes to live where they work? How will you engage the public for new shelters, transitional housing, emergency housing, permanent supportive housing? How do you weigh community objections with the housing goals for your jurisdiction, while encouraging engagement from neighbors?



To boost housing options, I will change our zoning to allow backyard cottages, duplexes and small three-unit buildings in every neighborhood. I will also require that a share of new units in larger housing construction projects be permanently affordable. I'll also work with King County at the regional level to support Social Housing across the county, including in Burien.

When we plan a new shelter, transitional site, or permanent supportive housing, I will go door to door in the surrounding neighborhood, hold small meetings with neighbors and other stakeholders, and host community conversations so that everyone has a chance to speak up before final plans are moved forward.

I will meet neighbors individually to understand whether their concerns are about actual impacts, like parking or noise, or if they come from fear of change or stigma. If a concern is valid, I will work with the contractor and building team to adjust the plan and address concerns when possible, while still delivering the homes we need. When objections reflect stigma or misinformation, I will share stories and data showing how these goals are great goals for everyone in our city. New housing brings customers to local shops, reduces emergency calls, and keeps rents from rising across the city as the need for more housing continues to grow. I will keep the conversation open by hosting small meetings at community centers and sending regular updates to voters.

Do you support adding progressive revenue sources? Which ones would you support to fund your priorities? Or what cuts would you make to balance budgets facing increasing strain under Trump?



Yes, I support adding progressive revenue sources. We need new funding tools that reflect where the real wealth is in this state. I would support a wealth tax on extremely high-value financial assets, further taxes on capital gains, and lifting the cap on Washington's business and occupation tax for the most profitable companies in the state, paying less than 5% of their profit in taxes. The biggest corporations should not be paying a lower effective rate than small businesses. I'd push for loopholes on various industries to be closed as well. All tax policies stemming from the 1980's should be investigated, and many of them should be altered considering the abundant changes in our state between the 1980s-now. I'd also support adding targeted fees on short-term rentals and high-end real estate sales to help fund local priorities.

Those funds should go directly into building deeply affordable housing, keeping people housed through anti displacement measures like rental assistance and property tax assistance, and expanding transportation options that don't require a car. If federal cuts under Trump create more strain on local budgets, we should start by freezing nonessential hiring, ending consultant contracts that aren't delivering value, and bringing more work in-house, so we protect frontline city services from shutting down without shifting the burden to working people.

What do you think is the most important strategy your jurisdiction can pursue to limit cost increases and make the region affordable to live in? How would you go about implementing that strategy?

The most important strategy is building more deeply affordable housing. That means allowing more small-scale housing like backyard cottages, triplexes, and apartments in every neighborhood. It also means making sure the city prioritizes



homes for low and moderate-income families, not just market-rate development that drives up prices without any guarantee of rent stability. I would work to speed up permitting for affordable housing, remove barriers that delay good projects, and use tools like public land and state funding to support nonprofit and community-driven development. I would also strengthen renter protections, minimize move-in costs or allow them to be paid over a longer time period, and expand rental assistance so people are not pushed out of their neighborhoods. Additionally, I'd make sure folks on fixed incomes, working families, and seniors are not being pushed out of their homes by increasing costs related to property taxes, utilities, etc.

But affordability is not just about rent. I would also fight for better bus service, safer sidewalks, and connected bike routes so people are not forced to rely on a car to get around, and could instead commute to work more conveniently and for less. If we want people to stay in this region, we have to expand housing, transportation, and access to services that help people meet their basic needs and serve as a safety net to prevent displacement.

Traffic deaths are rising across Washington state, with pedestrians composing an increasing share statewide. What is your approach to making our streets safer for all users?

In Burien we need to take pedestrian safety seriously. My approach includes building sidewalks where there are none, adding physical barriers between sidewalks and the road so people feel safe walking, and creating dedicated bus and bike lanes on busy streets like Ambaum and First Ave S. Our main roads were built for cars, not for safety or public transit, and it shows. People walking to work, school, or the bus stop



should not have to risk their lives to get there, but that is the case for many folks living in Burien right now. I would focus first on the neighborhoods where people are already walking but the infrastructure is missing. I would push for a plan that fills sidewalk gaps, installs safe crossings, adds more speed bumps, slows traffic near schools and parks, and improves lighting for those walking/biking. I support raised crosswalks, better visibility at corners, increase curb height, and curb extensions that shorten the distance people have to cross. Transit riders also need to be part of this conversation. We need bus lanes that keep buses moving and shelters that keep people safe while they wait for the bus. No one should have to cross a wide dangerous road just to get to a patch of dirt and wait in the rain for a late bus with no lighting and no bench. Additionally, more signage in areas with a large number of pedestrians about slowing down for safety should be put up.

What is your approach to improving public safety over the next five years? How will you actualize it?

I will work to build the infrastructure that keeps people safe - not just policing but housing, jobs, youth programs, and community support. In Burien, we need to tackle organized crime differently than we do small scale offenses tied to basic needs. That means working regionally with surrounding cities and agencies to address serious issues like coordinated shoplifting, drug trafficking, and gang activity that cross city borders and require shared solutions. Additionally, we need to invest in what keeps people out of crisis. That includes: youth diversion programs, more wraparound services for families, and opportunities for young people that are not limited to those doing well in school. Every teen in Burien should have a place to go after school and on weekends, and every family should have access to the support they need before things reach a breaking point. I would partner with nonprofits and unions to expand pre-apprenticeship and job training programs that connect young people and adults



to living wage careers. That creates stability, reinforces responsibility, keeps people rooted in the community, and reduces the conditions that lead to crime in the first place. Public safety also means preventing displacement. When people know their neighbors, communities are safer.

How have federal funding cuts impacted your jurisdiction and how do you plan to address those impacts?

Federal budget cuts are hitting families in Burien hard and one of the clearest impacts is rising food insecurity. This will only increase when programs like SNAP get cut and food funding drops, more people are forced to rely on food banks that are already stretched thin. This is not just a national issue. It is a local crisis and we need to treat it like one. As a city and as part of South King County, we need a coordinated response. That means standing with our food banks, supporting school meal programs, and working alongside community groups already feeding people. It also means investing in long term solutions like expanding community gardens, supporting local growers, and creating more ways for people to access fresh and culturally relevant food in Burien. I will make sure Burien shows up with real support and real action so every family can get the food they need. I will work with stakeholders, regional agencies, King County, and Burien activists and community members to craft a plan to support food security and sovereignty in Burien.

What are your views on the SeaTac Sustainable Airport Master Plan and how will it impact your jurisdiction? What plans do you have to address the impacts of the airport on your community?



The airport expansion will have major impacts on Burien, especially when it comes to air quality, noise, and public health. I need to convene more people with greater knowledge than myself on this subject and to truly understand and grasp the environmental impacts. So my first plan would be to learn more and make sure impacts and the equity of impacts are properly assessed. However, I will absolutely push for strong protections, including air filtration systems in homes, schools, and public buildings near the flight paths. I will fight to preserve and expand green spaces in Burien to help keep our air clean and give people access to safe outdoor space. I also support more tree planting and natural buffers along major roads and near the airport. We need a coordinated regional approach to keep our communities safe while working to meet the needs of a growing region with increased airport traffic. I will make sure Burien has a seat at the table in every conversation about expansion, and be sure to hear from residents, business owners, and anyone with an opinion, or who might be impacted by expansion. My plan includes fighting for real community input, stronger environmental monitoring and assessment, and mitigation funding for impacted neighborhoods before expansion is underway.

King County has good policies and codes designed to protect agricultural, forest and rural lands, including our natural areas, waterways, and small rural communities. However, these policies and codes are too often not upheld and enforced. How will you ensure that rural lands are protected, and that violators are subject to enforcement?

I believe rural lands, forests, and waterways are part of what makes our region livable, and the protections we have on paper need to mean something in practice. I would work with county and city staff to strengthen enforcement of existing codes, including following up on violations and making sure fines are actually collected and reinvested into environmental restoration. I will push for more transparency and



public reporting when violations do occur so communities can hold agencies accountable, and are more informed. I will also support more funding for enforcement teams and inspectors so rural areas are not treated like an afterthought, and have more presence from those enforcing regulations. In areas where there is a waterway, like Seahurst Park, I'd support greater fines and enforcement for things like littering and pollution. More funding for park aides and workers to monitor the situation and hold violators accountable as well as clean up discarded trash is something I'd also support.

Do you support camping bans or sweeps? If elected, how would you adapt or change current law/policies to protect and support our neighbors?

No, I do not support camping bans or sweeps. These approaches do not address the root causes of homelessness and only shift the problem from one block to another while wasting public resources on short term fixes. People should not be criminalized for experiencing poverty, addiction, or a public health crisis. If elected, I will work to change policies so that people have safe, dedicated spaces to exist while they access services and housing. That includes expanding access to sanitation, food, and mental health care, and putting real resources into outreach. I will also support measures that keep people safe in encampments, shelters, and the surrounding neighborhoods, including efforts to reduce gun violence and improve coordination between service providers. This is a regional crisis and I will work with nonprofits, the county, and other cities to build long term solutions that connect people to stable housing, not just move them from place to place.

In what ways could your city's comprehensive plan go further, and what would you push for to improve it during your tenure?



Burien's comprehensive plan sets some important goals, but it needs to go further if we want a city that actually works for the people who live here. I would push for a stronger focus on deeply affordable housing. That means setting clear targets for housing at low and moderate incomes, identifying land for mixed-income and nonprofit-led projects, and doing more to prevent displacement as the city grows. I would also push for real investments in safe streets. There are neighborhoods in Burien where people still do not have sidewalks, and that is unacceptable. We need to prioritize sidewalk construction, safer crossings, better access to the bus, and protected bike routes that make it possible to get around without a car. Finally, I would make sure the plan is shaped by the people who are most impacted. That means holding meetings in multiple languages, in places where people already gather, and making it easier for residents to help shape decisions and advise the process, crafting it with us, in a participatory fashion, instead of simply responding to a finished plan. A real comprehensive plan should reflect the voices and needs of the whole city, especially those historically left out of the planning process.