



## **Carmen Rivera Urbanist Questionnaire 2025**

Renton City Council, Position 2

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

1. Effective implementation of the Renton Resource Hub, Expand mental health, addiction recovery, and workforce services. 2. Build accessible, walkable, transit-connected neighborhoods that are safe for pedestrians and cyclists of all ages and abilities. 3. Advance renter protections and expand affordable homeownership pathways, including stronger tenant assistance programs, just-cause eviction protections, and strategic partnerships with nonprofits like Habitat for Humanity.

**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?**

We need a comprehensive housing strategy that includes middle housing, affordable rentals, and real pathways to homeownership. I've supported increased density near transit and partnered with nonprofits like Habitat for Humanity and the Renton Housing Authority to create permanently affordable homes. Renton's new Comprehensive Plan reflects this direction, planning for over 17,000 new housing units and expanding options like duplexes, triplexes, townhomes, and ADUs in more neighborhoods, so people can afford to live near where they work.

Community engagement has to start early and be honest. With shelter, transitional housing, and supportive housing, it's not just about what's being built, it's about who



it's for, why it matters, and how it fits into a broader strategy for housing stability. As an educator, I'll continue to support outreach that's rooted in data and led with care.

I always listen to community concerns, but housing is a human right. I won't let fear or stigma block progress. My goal is to build trust, share facts, and bring people into the process because we all do better when everyone has a safe, stable place to call home.

**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 progressive revenue sources so we're not relying on regressive taxes that hit working families hardest. Washington has one of the most inequitable tax systems in the country, and local governments need better tools to fund essential services, especially with growing needs and potential federal rollbacks under Trump.

At the local level, I support exploring a high earners' excise tax, a vacancy tax on long-term unoccupied housing and commercial real estate, and impact fees that align with equitable development and green infrastructure goals. I also support maintaining the capital gains tax at the state level and defending it from attacks.

If cuts became unavoidable, I would prioritize protecting human services, housing, and workforce programs. That means reassessing non-essential capital projects, outdated contracts, or programs that no longer meet current needs.

Our budgets are moral documents. They should reflect our values of equity, care, and long-term resilience, not short-term political pressure. Everyone should contribute fairly, especially those who've benefited most from our region's growth.



**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?**

As a member of the South King Housing and Homelessness Partners (SKHHP), I believe one of the most important strategies Renton, and the region, can pursue to limit cost increases is to increase the supply and diversity of housing near jobs, transit, and essential services. That means more middle housing, affordable units, and real pathways to homeownership. We also need stronger renter protections to reduce displacement and housing insecurity.

Renton's new Comprehensive Plan lays the groundwork by expanding where duplexes, triplexes, townhomes, and ADUs are allowed. But zoning reform alone isn't enough, we must continue streamlining permitting, lowering barriers for nonprofit developers, and prioritizing surplus public land for housing.

At the same time, we need to expand programs that stabilize people now, like emergency rental assistance, workforce development, and behavioral health support through the Renton Resource Hub.

Implementation takes political will, transparent engagement, and strong partnerships, with the state, community-based developers, and trusted service providers. I've worked across those sectors and know how to bring people together to move policy from plan to action.

Housing affordability is about stability, equity, and opportunity and if we want people to live where they work, we need to make it possible.

**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?**



Traffic deaths are preventable. We need to treat street safety as a public health issue, not just a transportation one and prioritize people over speed. In May 2025, I led the Renton City Council in an unanimous decision to launch a citywide pedestrian safety study. This was a critical step toward identifying high-risk corridors and designing solutions that protect all users, especially in areas near schools, parks, and transit. I support implementing proven Vision Zero strategies: narrower lanes, protected bike lanes, raised or 3D style-crosswalks, pedestrian refuge islands, and leading pedestrian intervals. We also need to improve lighting and crossings in underserved areas, and reduce free rights on red. Renton has made progress through Safe Routes to School and investments via our Transportation Benefit District, but we must go further. I support adopting a Vision Zero action plan with clear benchmarks, equity goals, and public accountability. Education and enforcement must also be equity-informed. That means using street design to slow traffic, while investing in outreach focused on driver awareness and pedestrian rights. Safety shouldn't depend on your ZIP code or whether you drive. Everyone deserves to get home safely, whether they're walking, rolling, biking, or riding the bus.

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

As a criminal justice professor and the only councilmember with direct experience in juvenile rehabilitation and reentry, I know that real public safety means addressing root causes, not just symptoms. Over the next five years, I'll continue advancing a public safety strategy grounded in prevention, accountability, and care. That includes expanding co-responder models that pair behavioral health professionals with law enforcement. I led the Council in adopting a co-responder approach and will keep working to grow it into a fully resourced, 24/7 crisis response model that connects people to services and reduces unnecessary arrests. I support



community-based violence prevention, increased investment in youth and reentry programs, and stronger data transparency. We need to fund what truly keeps people safe, housing stability, mental health care, and accessible services through initiatives like the Renton Resource Hub. Actualizing this means building partnerships with law enforcement, public health professionals, and community organizations. We must ensure accountability through clear performance metrics and public reporting, like Renton PD's new use-of-force dashboard now available on the city's website. Safety isn't just the absence of crime, it's the presence of support, trust, and stability. I'll continue leading with that understanding at the center.

### ***South King***

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

Federal funding cuts and ongoing threats, especially under the Trump administration, have serious implications for cities like Renton. Key programs like the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG), HOME funds, and the National Electric Vehicle Infrastructure (NEVI) program have been targeted for rollback or suspension. These are critical tools we use to support affordable housing, community services, and climate resilience.

So far, Renton had been proactive. In recent years, we secured nearly \$5 million in federal funds to install over 240 public EV charging ports and leveraged HUD funding to support shelter and housing. We've also benefited from a temporary federal injunction protecting Washington from the NEVI freeze, but that protection isn't guaranteed long-term.

To prepare, I support building stronger local and regional revenue tools, including progressive options like a vacancy tax or excise tax on high earners. I also believe we must protect and prioritize core services, like housing, behavioral health, and the Renton Resource Hub, over less essential capital projects if cuts become unavoidable.



I will continue advocating at the federal level and working with our partners to safeguard funding, while building a more resilient and equitable local budget that puts people first.

**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 SeaTac Sustainable Airport Master Plan outlines major expansion over the next decade, including a new terminal, expanded cargo operations, and roadway changes. While this growth supports regional mobility and economic development, it also brings real impacts to communities like Renton, especially through increased traffic, noise, and air quality concerns for neighborhoods under flight paths. As a Councilmember, I believe airport expansion must be balanced with environmental justice and public health. Studies show that residents living near SeaTac experience higher rates of asthma, stress, and even shorter life expectancy. While Renton Municipal Airport is not a commercial airport, we remain committed to following environmental guidelines and being responsible stewards. Renton must stay actively engaged in the NEPA and SEPA review processes, advocating for a full cumulative impact analysis and strong mitigation measures. This includes noise insulation, air quality monitoring, and direct community benefits.

Locally, I'll keep pushing for investments in public transit, traffic management, and aligning our land use and stormwater plans with regional strategies. Renton residents deserve a seat at the table, and I will keep working to ensure we are not left out of critical regional decisions.

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?**



While Renton itself has limited designated rural or agricultural land within city limits, we border areas in unincorporated King County that include forests, farmlands, and sensitive natural spaces. What happens in those areas directly affects our ecosystems, waterways, and long-term sustainability. I believe in strong enforcement of land use and environmental protections. That includes working closely with King County to ensure violations like illegal clearing, dumping, or development outside permitted uses are promptly addressed. I support formal agreements that allow cities like Renton to report and track violations that may occur just beyond our borders but still impact our community. Locally, Renton must continue upholding our own environmental codes, such as critical areas protections and surface water management requirements. I also support increased transparency and public reporting mechanisms so that residents can flag concerns and help hold violators accountable. Protecting rural lands and natural areas requires strong intergovernmental coordination, consistent enforcement, and a commitment to long-term environmental stewardship. I will continue advocating for policies and practices that protect the shared resources we all depend on, regardless of jurisdictional boundaries.

### ***City Council***

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

I do not support sweeps or blanket camping bans that criminalize poverty and displace people without offering meaningful alternatives. These actions often cause more harm than help, disrupting outreach efforts, scattering individuals, and making it harder to connect people to shelter, treatment, or housing. That said, I also believe in caring for our public spaces and protecting environmental health, especially near waterways and ecologically sensitive areas. The answer is not



enforcement-first, but relationship-based outreach grounded in care and coordination.

That's why I support and continue to advocate for collaborative partnerships like the one between the City of Renton and Eastside Treatment Services (ETS), which includes REACH's trained outreach team. This model allows us to approach encampments with a trauma-informed, service-first response, focusing on building trust, voluntary engagement, and connection to shelter, behavioral health care, and case management.

If reelected, I will continue working to expand investments in housing navigation, treatment options, and low-barrier shelter while ensuring our public policies center dignity, compassion, and long-term solutions. We need to treat homelessness as a humanitarian issue, not a code enforcement problem.

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

Renton's Comprehensive Plan, adopted in 2024, takes important steps toward addressing housing, mobility, sustainability, and economic growth. It expands middle housing options in traditionally single-family zones, increases transit-oriented development, and plans for over 17,000 new housing units and nearly 32,000 jobs by 2044. These are strong foundations, but there's more work to do.

During my tenure, I will push for more explicit commitments to implementation timelines and performance benchmarks, particularly around affordable housing production, equitable transportation access, and climate resilience. Planning for growth is not enough, we need accountability to ensure those plans serve the people most impacted by displacement, rising costs, and environmental harm, while sticking to our

I also want to see stronger integration of public health and social services into land use planning. That includes locating services like the Renton Resource Hub near housing and transit, and expanding tree canopy and green infrastructure in historically underserved neighborhoods.



Finally, I support more meaningful community engagement during implementation phases, not just at the planning stage. Renton's future should be shaped by those who live here now, and I'll continue advocating for inclusive, transparent decision-making that reflects our city's diversity and values.