



## Port of Seattle Commission, Position 1

### Ryan Calkins

**As a Port Commissioner, what will you do in your next term to address the health and environmental impacts of airport growth and plans for expansion on the lives of near-airport residents, many of whom are long-term and/or BIPOC, immigrant, elder, low-income residents?**

The health and environmental well-being of our near-airport neighbors—especially long-term, BIPOC, immigrant, elder, and low-income residents—are a key equity focus of my next term. Here are a few of my priorities:

**Noise mitigation:** I will work to accelerate the pace of the Sound Insulation Program to ensure every impacted home receives noise insulation as quickly as possible, prioritizing vulnerable populations.

**Strengthen Community Co-Design:** Plans for future projects will be put through an equity lens. Mechanisms like START and the Highline Forum are crucial to the Port understanding community concerns and working with the community to advocate on shared interests to the state and federal governments.

**Tie Growth to Community Benefit:** Growth must be responsible and equitable. We must leverage the economic power of the Port to invest in green infrastructure and community resilience.

**As Defenders of Highline Forest, we have advocated for the preservation of North SeaTac Park. While the Port has agreed in theory to preservation of the park and allow for local control of the park, we have yet to see results. In your next term, what will you do to deliver on this promise?**

First, let me offer a friendly amendment to the question. In fact, the work of Defenders of Highline Forest has brought significant results. Most important, your advocacy has resulted in federal law that allows for non-aviation related uses of the park in perpetuity—something that was legally uncertain prior to your advocacy. Over the course of the next few years, the Port will continue to work with the City and with community and nonprofit partners to fulfill the vision of a permanent park and greenspace for the community.

**What ideas are you most excited about pursuing that will have a positive impact on the lives of people living next to SeaTac Airport property?**

Without a doubt, the single most important thing we can do for a positive impact on the lives of people living near SEA is to reduce our reliance on fossil fuels in aviation and ground operations. The impacts of air pollution from the range of sources at and serving an airport—airplanes, passenger vehicles, ground equipment, delivery trucks, buses, physical plant—can be mitigated but will require investments in new infrastructure like charging ports for ground handling equipment, new all-electric buses, and updated HVACs and also the development of the complete supply chain for sustainable aviation fuel. When I first started this job in 2018, it seemed fantastical to think SAF would be viable by 2030. While I think our commitment to 10% SAF blend by 2028 may be a little optimistic, I'm more convinced than ever that our long term goal of 50% blend by mid-century is entirely achievable—in part due to the efforts of Port staff and leadership on the regional and national level.



## Port of Seattle Commission, Position 4

### Toshio Hasegawa

**As a Port Commissioner, what will you do in your next term to address the health and environmental impacts of airport growth and plans for expansion on the lives of near-airport residents, many of whom are long-term and/or BIPOC, immigrant, elder, low-income residents?**

- Continued efforts to find a permanent solution that will protect NSTP in perpetuity - for me this requires taking political seasons out of the equation and entrusting the land to a third party trust devoted to environmental conservation. Hoping to come to an agreement with the city of SeaTac for a path forward, per the work of our Joint Advisory Committee.

- I believe any growth at SEA must be tied to guaranteed community benefits. I'm exploring using the states HEAL Act as a template to set meaningful standards for analysis, engagement, and funding of port projects.

- Let's work together with the state to get window replacement program funded - the Feds needs to chip in as well. And we must keep demonstrating the urgent need for a second airport elsewhere to accommodate travel demand. The state has been dragging its feet, and they must act with urgency.

- Direct investments in community initiatives via grant programs. Expand our spend in equity and work force develeikenbt programs. And continue to work on the policy level to improve workforce conditions .

- Supporting the production of SAFs and develop infrastructure necessary for airlines to actually use it! Woekntooth and nail despite federal challenges to meet our 10% SAF blend/ decarbonization goals

**As Defenders of Highline Forest, we have advocated for the preservation of North SeaTac Park. While the Port has agreed in theory to preservation of the park and allow for local control of the park, we have yet to see results. In your next term, what will you do to deliver on this promise?**

Thanks to the work of the Defenders, we've made meaningful progress via the FAA Reauthorization Package to achieve the policy changes necessary to eventually protect the park. This was a joint effort involving cities, communities, and members of Congress. Give your selves the credit you deserve and celebrate the wins. It was an important step, progressing on our shared goal. Please see the above answer for what comes next.

**What ideas are you most excited about pursuing that will have a positive impact on the lives of people living next to SeaTac Airport property?**

- A specific project I am most excited about is building a brick & mortar child care facility! This will not only address needs of SEA workers (who are SoKC residents) but will avail additional options for neighbors and community members at-large.

- Looking forward to answering the public demand for greater transparency and input on the SAMP process.

- Decarbonization of port and industry operations through exploring SAFs, hydrogen and nuclear, and reduce our use of fossil fuels

***No other candidates for the Port of Seattle Commission responded.***



## 33rd District, House of Representatives

### Edwin Obras

#### **What specific legislation would you work to pass in the next legislative session regarding environmental protections or mitigations for our airport-adjacent communities?**

##### **Airport-Adjacent Community Health & Mitigation Act (AACHMA)—a package with these pillars:**

- Fix the failed noise packages—on a deadline.
- Mandate the Port of Seattle audit, replace, or repair all defective sound-insulation packages in airport-adjacent homes and schools within 24 months.
- Set minimum specs (e.g., STC ratings, triple-pane where needed, balanced ventilation with MERV-13/HEPA filtration) and require a transferable warranty.
- Create an Independent Mitigation Ombud with enforcement authority, public reporting, and a homeowner appeal process.
- Tie Port tax capacity and state grants to verified progress. Ultrafine particle & toxics monitoring + clean indoor air standard. Fund a continuous community monitor network at schools, childcare centers, and along flight paths and haul routes; publish data in real time.
- Establish an Airport Impact Indoor Air Standard for schools and homes within defined impact zones; fund filtration retrofits (MERV-13+ or HEPA) and HVAC upgrades.

#### **Quiet & Healthy Schools/Childcare Zone.**

- Require the Port to fully fund noise + air mitigation for every public school and licensed childcare within the zone (windows, doors, insulation, HVAC, playground buffers).
- Create a School Disruption Grant to cover learning-loss mitigation where measured noise/air exceed thresholds.
- Zero-emission ground operations and drayage.
- Set statutory deadlines for: 100% electric ground support equipment; shore power use (no APU) at gates; and a zero-emission drayage fleet serving airport cargo by a date certain, with grants for small owner-operators.
- Expand anti-idling enforcement and require designated zero-emission truck routes.
- Green Buffer & Stormwater Justice Fund.
- Require the Port to finance off-site green

# November 2025 Election

South King County Candidate Responses on Environmental Issues



## 33rd District, House of Representatives

### Kevin Schilling

**What specific legislation would you work to pass in the next legislative session regarding environmental protections or mitigations for our airport-adjacent communities?**

We need to start by acknowledging the obvious fact that SeaTac is built out to capacity. Additionally, the communities of Burien, SeaTac, Tukwila, and Kent have grown to where what little remaining greenspace we have is being squeezed from all sides and there are few opportunities to offset the impact of the airport. Therefore we must ensure that air quality, runoff, and other environmental and health impacts are being closely monitored and that any additional strengthening or regulations need to be placed based solely on the health and safety of the community. That's why I'm proud to be endorsed by Congressman Adam Smith, Commissioner of Public Lands Dave Upthegrove, the Mayors of Kent, Des Moines, Normandy Park, Tukwila, and Renton, as well as 18 blue collar unions.

**As Defenders of Highline Forest, we are particularly interested in what opportunities you, as our legislator, could create for our District, not only to maintain current mature tree canopy but also to increase the district's tree canopy based on the latest science and on the input of neighboring communities? Forterra has recommended 40% tree canopy coverage for a healthy community. Please share your specific ideas.**

This is probably the area where we have the most control and viable path forward to improve the health, environment, and livability of our cities. By dramatically increasing the urban canopy we can build a greater buffer within our cities to the impact of the airport. When doing so, we must also ensure that the trees being planted and cultivated are intended to last so that over the years we will have more mature trees. I would like to see the Port and State play a role by providing grants for local jurisdictions to use toward this end. As the financial benefits of the airport are earned by the whole county and state, this is one small way to pool the resources to help the communities bearing the health, noise, and environmental costs of commerce.

*Tina Orwall, Candidate for the Senate 33rd District, did not respond.*

*Brianna Thomas, Candidate for the 34th District House, did not respond.*

*Emily Alvarado, Candidate for the 34th District Senate, did not respond.*



## King County Executive

### Girmay Zahilay

**What do you believe are the Port of Seattle's environmental impacts on airport-adjacent communities? As King County Executive, what specific priorities would you take up with the Port of Seattle to protect airport-adjacent communities from the negative environmental impacts of SeaTac airport?**

Communities living near Sea-Tac Airport experience disproportionate environmental and health impacts from airport operations. Aircraft noise, particulate pollution, and emissions from ground transportation contribute to higher rates of asthma, cardiovascular disease, and learning disruptions for children.

These impacts fall most heavily on low-income, immigrant, and refugee families who have been historically excluded from environmental decision-making.

As a Councilmember, I co-created the Joint Aircraft Emissions Task Force, ensuring airport emissions were included in King County's Strategic Climate Action Plan. I'm proud to be endorsed by all Port of Seattle Commissioners, and I'll partner with them to implement enforceable pollution standards, invest in noise and air quality monitoring, and fund home insulation, tree canopy restoration, and public health interventions. We must also invest in multimodal transportation, improve airport access, and reduce vehicle dependency region-wide.

Communities near Sea-Tac deserve a role in shaping a future that is equitable, climate-smart, and community-led. As Executive, I'll lead with transparency, accountability, and a commitment to environmental justice that puts people first.

**The Defenders of Highline Forest seek to maintain mature stands of forest within Highline and increase tree canopy in accordance with science-based and community-driven desires. What specific steps would you take as County Executive to assist in advancing the goal of maintaining and increasing tree canopy in airport-adjacent communities?**

Expanding and protecting tree canopy in communities like Highline is not only an environmental priority, it's a matter of health, equity, and resilience. As Executive, I will seek to balance protecting our tree canopy with our other climate and broader regional priorities.

We need to establish clear canopy goals and public reporting as part of the County's Strategic Climate Action Plan. Additionally, as we seek to build more housing, we need to preserve existing trees by building with trees in mind and doing everything possible to build around mature trees. I will also work closely with the Port of Seattle to support their environmental stewardship programs, including native plantings and tree canopy enhancements near the airport.

By centering equity and community input, we can ensure that tree canopy restoration delivers real health, climate, and quality-of-life benefits for all residents.

**The County Council currently is working on the 2025 King County Strategic Action Plan. What do you see as the strengths and the gaps in this plan? What would you prioritize for county funding given all the different environmental needs laid out in this plan?**

The 2025 King County Strategic Climate Action Plan provides a strong framework for reducing emissions, protecting natural resources, and advancing environmental justice across the region. Its strengths include clear countywide greenhouse gas reduction targets, attention to equity in planning, and recognition of the need for collaboration with cities, Tribes, and community organizations.

The biggest challenges we face are urgency and likely less federal support and funding. Climate change is happening now and the County must continue to act swiftly to protect communities and upgrade our infrastructure.

As Executive, I would prioritize funding for projects that deliver tangible climate and health benefits while addressing equity. Given the different needs in the community we need to take an approach that puts frontline communities at the forefront. King County can lead nationally on climate action, but only if our investments are measurable, equitable, and focused on protecting both people and the environment.

***Claudia Balducci, Candidate for King County Executive, did not respond.***



## County Council District 5

### Peter Kwon

#### Port of Seattle impacts & County Council priorities

I've been advocating for airport communities during my entire decade as a SeaTac City Councilmember, with my official action to have the City of SeaTac successfully challenge the airport when they wanted to cut down 3000 trees. My action inspired community member Noemie to start the "Defenders of North SeaTac Park" which expanded and evolved to the current "Defenders of Highline Forest."

Sea-Tac Airport is a major economic engine, but their operations have concentrated environmental burdens on airport-adjacent communities: chronic noise, elevated air pollution and fuel particulate exposure, loss of tree canopy and open space to development, stormwater and soil contamination risks, and increased truck traffic that degrades local streets and health outcomes. These impacts are borne disproportionately by low-income and BIPOC neighborhoods, so equity must be central to any response.

#### As your King County Councilmember, I will urge the Council to take these specific actions with the Port of Seattle:

- Demand enforceable mitigation commitments. Require the Port to fund and implement specific, measurable noise, air, and traffic mitigation projects (sound insulation, advanced filtration in schools/homes, truck route improvements) with transparent timelines and audits.
- Strengthen community oversight. Expand independent community advisory boards with real budgetary and review authority and regular public reporting on Port mitigation progress.
- Tie approvals to environmental performance. Insist on strict environmental review for Port and airport-related projects, with mitigation binding on developers and operators.
- Protect and expand green buffers. Require investment in tree canopy, parkland, and vegetative buffers between industrial uses and neighborhoods to reduce noise and air impacts.
- Fund health and monitoring. Push the Port to underwrite continuous air/noise monitoring and fund community health studies and remediation where impacts are found.
- Regional coordination. Work with the Port, state agencies, and neighboring jurisdictions to align land-use, freight, and environmental policies so economic development doesn't come at the cost of public health.

I've successfully pushed back against big institutions before, saving mature trees and expanding parkland in SeaTac, and I will bring that same accountability-first approach to the County.

#### Steps to maintain and increase tree canopy in Highline

Maintaining mature forest and increasing canopy requires protection, funding, and long-term stewardship. As a County Councilmember I would:

- Protect existing stands by prioritizing permanent public ownership (park acquisition or conservation easements) for mature forest parcels and opposing rezonings that would convert critical stands to industrial/warehouse use.
- Secure funding for acquisition and maintenance: use county conservation funds, leverage state and federal grants, and create matching programs to buy and protect vulnerable parcels.
- Implement large-scale urban forestry programs that go beyond planting: prioritize native species, ensure long-term irrigation and maintenance, and fund workforce programs for tree care (creating green jobs locally).
- Require canopy mitigation and enhancement in land-use approvals: where development removes trees, require on-site replacement plus off-site contributions to a canopy fund that finances large mature tree plantings and stewardship.
- Create a community stewardship model: support neighborhood tree stewards, volunteer planting days, and partnerships with schools, community groups, and the Defenders of Highline Forest to monitor and care for plantings.
- Integrate nature-based solutions into stormwater and heat-island mitigation projects: use trees and green space as part of infrastructure planning.
- Measure and report: set clear canopy targets, track progress publicly, and prioritize actions in the areas with highest need and lowest canopy cover.

I've already worked locally to preserve North SeaTac Park and expand park acreage—those are the kinds of actions I will scale up countywide.



## County Council District 5

### Peter Kwon (continued)

#### Strengths, gaps, and funding priorities in the 2025 King County Strategic Action Plan

**Strengths:** The plan's comprehensive frame—addressing climate resilience, equity, land use, and public health—is a real asset. It recognizes multi-sector solutions and the need for regional coordination, and it centers climate and community equity in many of its goals.

**Gaps:** Implementation and accountability are the biggest weaknesses. Good goals need clear, funded timelines, measurable targets, and enforcement mechanisms. Specific gaps I see: insufficient emphasis on protecting mature urban forests and tree canopy as a climate and health strategy; limited binding requirements for major regional actors (like the Port); and a need for stronger investments in community-based environmental health monitoring in the most impacted neighborhoods.

#### Funding priorities I would push for:

Land acquisition and permanent protection of mature forest and parkland—buying at-risk parcels and securing conservation easements in Highline and other vulnerable areas.

Urban forestry and stewardship: funding large-scale, long-term tree planting plus maintenance and green job training tied to those programs.

Environmental health monitoring and remediation: continuous air/noise monitoring, community health studies, and funds for home/school mitigation (filtration, insulation) in impacted neighborhoods.

Green buffers and nature-based infrastructure: prioritize funding that uses canopy and green spaces to reduce pollution, noise, and heat impacts.

Port mitigation enforcement and community oversight resources: support the County's capacity to negotiate, monitor, and enforce mitigation agreements with the Port.

#### Closing:

Protecting Highline Forest and mitigating airport impacts are not a choice between environment and economy—they are compatible goals that require leadership, money, and enforcement. I've delivered wins locally by preserving trees, expanding parks, and holding partners accountable. On the County Council I will prioritize protecting mature forests, expanding canopy, and forcing transparent, enforceable Port mitigation so our communities can breathe easier and thrive.

*Steffanie Fain, candidate for County Council District 5, did not respond.*



## Tukwila City Council, Position #3

### Tosh Sharp

**What do you believe SeaTac Airport's environmental impacts are on your city? As a city councilmember, what specific priorities would you urge your Council to take up with the Port Commission to protect city residents from the negative environmental impacts of the airport?**

SeaTac Airport has significant environmental impacts on our city, including air pollution, noise, and traffic congestion. Aircraft emissions affect the health of residents, particularly children and seniors, while constant takeoffs and landings disrupt neighborhoods and reduce quality of life. Airport-related traffic also strains roads, increasing emissions and safety concerns.

As a city councilmember, I would urge the Council to work with the Port Commission to mitigate these impacts. Priorities should include stricter noise abatement programs with better flight path management, enhanced air quality monitoring, and initiatives to reduce emissions, such as cleaner airport ground vehicles and sustainable aviation technologies. Improving transportation infrastructure to reduce congestion and minimize the airport's environmental footprint is also critical. Finally, the Port should actively involve city residents in planning discussions, ensuring their concerns are addressed in any expansion or operational changes. These steps can balance the airport's economic benefits with the health and well-being of our community.

**Please share your understanding of your city's tree-related policies and tree canopy goals and tell us what gaps still need to be addressed?**

Tukwila has made meaningful progress in promoting urban forestry through its Comprehensive Plan and Urban Forestry program, which aims for 29% tree canopy coverage by 2034. The city prioritizes shade trees and sustainable landscaping, and a 2017 Tree Canopy Assessment found that Tukwila's canopy was 23%, with potential for more plantings, particularly in single-family residential areas.

The Urban Forestry program conducts tree assessments, manages public trees, and engages the community through education and partnerships with local organizations. However, gaps remain. Canopy coverage is uneven, leaving some neighborhoods with fewer environmental and social benefits. Many trees exist on private property, making stronger protections against removal essential. Regular monitoring and reporting would help evaluate policy effectiveness, and expanded public education can empower residents to participate in stewardship. By addressing these gaps, Tukwila can strengthen its urban forest, improve environmental equity, and ensure a sustainable, resilient canopy for all residents.

**Forterra has said that urban areas in the Puget Sound region have the capacity to sustain a healthy 40% tree canopy. The King County Strategic Action Plan, when adopted, will incentivize cities to adopt strong science- and community-driven tree canopy goals. In your opinion, how important is prioritizing tree canopy preservation and augmentation in relation to other city priorities? What actions does your city council need to take to achieve tree canopy justice?**

Protecting and expanding Tukwila's tree canopy is vital for clean air, cooler neighborhoods, stormwater management, and overall quality of life. The City Council should set science-based canopy goals, protect existing trees on public and private property, and focus planting in low-canopy areas. Supporting community education, monitoring progress, and partnering with organizations like Forterra will ensure all residents benefit equitably from a healthy, sustainable urban forest.

**For addressing tree-related issues in your city, what partnerships are already in place that you know of and what additional partnerships do you envision creating?**

Tukwila already benefits from partnerships with organizations like Forterra, which supports tree planting, urban forest education, and community engagement initiatives. The city also collaborates with King County on tree canopy assessments and environmental planning, ensuring data-driven approaches guide local decisions. Moving forward, additional partnerships could include local schools and community groups to expand education and volunteer planting programs, regional environmental nonprofits to access expertise and funding, and private developers to encourage tree preservation and sustainable landscaping on private properties. By strengthening and expanding these partnerships, Tukwila can advance equitable tree canopy growth and ensure long-term stewardship of its urban forest.

***Tosh Sharp was the only candidate for Tukwila City Council to respond.***



## Burien City Council, Position 3

Sam Mendez

**What do you believe SeaTac Airport's environmental impacts are on your city? As a city councilmember, what specific priorities would you urge your Council to take up with the Port Commission to protect city residents from the negative environmental impacts of the airport?**

SeaTac Airport has a huge negative environmental impact on Burien, and too often this isn't sufficiently recognized by regional elected officials, who instead focus on the City of SeaTac as the population affected by the airport. Studies have shown the heavy pollution from airplane exhaust, which affects our air, our soil, and our health. A huge quantity of Burien residents live directly under the flight path, and the noise pollution is so significant that it causes its own unique health issues, which affects local wildlife as well.

I have a lot to learn on what policies specifically the City of Burien should pursue concerning the airport. I'm committed to working with our Airport Committee and local advocates to learn from them what those policies should be. Being a local government, Burien is limited in how it can regulate or require action from the airport. But to start with, we should be pursuing greater compensation from the Port and from the Legislature to mitigate these environmental impacts on our community. I welcomed recent state funding for air filtration systems for local residents, and we need more solutions like that. I'm highly concerned by the Port's Sustainable Action Management Plan, which seeks to expand flights by 20-30%. So these issues stand to get worse, not better. City council members need to advocate more for residents, including using our voices to speak up and raise attention to the issue.

**Please share your understanding of your city's tree-related policies and tree canopy goals and tell us what gaps still need to be addressed?**

Burien passed a good tree ordinance in 2022, which sought to increase tree retention and canopy cover by protecting large trees, and requiring a permit to remove these trees on private property. I fully support this law. I do want to ensure that we still foster building more sorely-needed housing here in Burien, but that need not and should not come at the cost of our tree canopy, especially the large trees that our ordinance has the strongest protections for.

While it is good law that I'm committed to protecting, it also seeks to preserve existing trees, and doesn't alleviate the areas of our city that lack sufficient tree canopy and park spaces. I want to reverse that, and am committed to exploring ways that we can dedicate new lands for parks or preserves, and to seeing how we can plant more trees in Burien, especially the neighborhoods that

lack sufficient tree canopy, which are also our most diverse and most working class neighborhoods. We should partner more with King County to bring tree planting programs and events to Burien, utilizing county resources.

**Forterra has said that urban areas in the Puget Sound region have the capacity to sustain a healthy 40% tree canopy. The King County Strategic Action Plan, when adopted, will incentivize cities to adopt strong science- and community-driven tree canopy goals. In your opinion, how important is prioritizing tree canopy preservation and augmentation in relation to other city priorities? What actions does your city council need to take to achieve tree canopy justice?**

It is extremely important to both preserve existing tree canopy and build on it. I've discussed some of this issue above already. More trees serves multiple issues—it fights climate change, the largest issue currently threatening human civilization as we know it. It also improves the health of our neighborhoods and our city, in multiple ways. More trees lowers the temperature of surrounding areas, critical to vulnerable people when heat waves hit (which are increasing as climate change continues). More trees provides more oxygen and improves our air. And finally, more trees and parks makes people both happier in general, and encourages people to get outdoors more and exercise.

In 2018, the City of Burien established an ambitious goal of having 40% tree coverage across the city by 2038, and passed its Urban Forest Stewardship Plan in 2020. This is a good plan and ambitious goals are important, but neither of these have been discussed in detail by the current council for years. It is long overdue to revisit our Stewardship Plan, see what can be improved upon, and examine whether we are on track to meet our 40% coverage goal.

**For addressing tree-related issues in your city, what partnerships are already in place that you know of and what additional partnerships do you envision creating?**

The City of Burien partnered with the Port of Seattle's ACE Fund and Forterra to create the Green Burien Partnership. I don't know of other formal partnerships with the City regarding tree-related issues, but I know that I've got a lot to learn and am excited to do so. Our current city council has too often harmed relationships with other governments like King County, and it is difficult to quantify all that we could have achieved if we fostered better relationships and partnerships. I look forward to doing that if I am elected, particularly if we can achieve a progressive majority this year, which has been the aim of our coordinated progressive slate for this entire campaign season.



## Burien City Council, Position 5

**Sarah Moore**

**What do you believe SeaTac Airport's environmental impacts are on your city? As a city councilmember, what specific priorities would you urge your Council to take up with the Port Commission to protect city residents from the negative environmental impacts of the airport?**

I am chair of Burien's Airport Committee - which means I get to benefit from the incredible knowledge and experience of the other committee members, each of whom brings a wealth of knowledge and perspective on this subject! SeaTac Airport impacts - I'll start with the obvious, noise and pollution. Homes in the flight paths experience the sound of airplanes every 90 seconds, and the ultrafine particles and other pollutants all the time. They experience health inequities from both the noise and the pollution, including respiratory and heart conditions and the many issues related to lost sleep. Residents outside those paths experience unpredictable impacts from noise, and often, have fewer protections to their homes than those in insulated houses on the path. As a city, Burien has lost tree canopy to the airport, as neighborhoods must comply with FAA safety regulations requiring tree removal within certain zones. We have lost entire neighborhoods, and these areas cannot be re-wilded. In many cases wildlife biologists even take steps to reduce bird or prey and other wildlife populations that might enter flight paths. Burien also experiences economic disparities related to loss of property value due to the airport. And we experience fragmentation -both of habitats and of neighborhoods - due to 509 and 518.

**Please share your understanding of your city's tree-related policies and tree canopy goals and tell us what gaps still need to be addressed?**

Burien has had a tree stewardship plan since at least 2018, which includes a goal of 40% canopy coverage and regulations for maintaining the city's street trees and the tree canopy in parks. We have a city arborist who has surveyed the health of city trees and made a care plan including bringing more species diversity to street trees, and a combination of maintenance and replacement for trees in our parks.

Burien introduced a Tree Ordinance in 2022, and began implementing fines and other penalties for violating it in 2023. The ordinance protects trees on private property and particularly protects larger and older trees. It requires permitting for removal of most trees in most situations, and in some cases requires permission for drastic types of pruning. It also regulates how developers can build when a lot already has trees growing on it. My biggest concern has to do with the options allowing tree removal in exchange for planting smaller trees, the fee in lieu, and the fines, which are onerous for individuals but could be folded into the cost of doing business for developers. I would like to explore a two tiered fine structure.

**Forterra has said that urban areas in the Puget Sound region have the capacity to sustain a healthy 40% tree canopy. The King County Strategic Action Plan, when adopted, will incentivize cities to adopt strong science- and community-driven tree canopy goals. In your opinion, how important is prioritizing tree canopy preservation and augmentation in relation to other city priorities? What actions does your city council need to take to achieve tree canopy justice?**

I don't prioritize tree canopy above or below other city goals. It needs to coexist with density and development. Tree canopy is an urban equity issue, and one of the areas we lack is mature trees in less affluent neighborhoods. This correlates to health disparities and is directly related to heat island effects. It takes decades to reverse this inequity, and the time to start is now - and for the three to five years it takes to care for new tree plantings until they are established.

**For addressing tree-related issues in your city, what partnerships are already in place that you know of and what additional partnerships do you envision creating?**

The Green Burien Partnership is nothing short of amazing. It uses grant funding, donated plant material when available, paid youth internships, partner organizations - it squeezes every possible resource to increase and maintain our urban forest, prioritizing new trees and ivy removal and other maintenance of our existing ones. It teaches environmental job skills to youth and builds their sense of pride in their communities. I consider it top of list for sure. A multi-city joint advisory committee reviews planting plans and maintains the trees on Des Moines Memorial Drive, which are designated as a living memorial to soldiers killed in WW1. Burien is a designated Tree City by the Arbor Day foundation and as such receives support for its urban canopy. It is also a member of K4C the King County Cities Climate Commitment, which includes tree canopy among its issues. I would like to see more partnership with other South King County cities which are prone to heat island effect, to help retree our neighborhoods.

***All other candidates for Burien City Council did not respond.***



## Des Moines City Council, Position 1

### Harry Steinmetz

**What do you believe SeaTac Airport's environmental impacts are on your city? As a city council member, what specific priorities would you urge your Council to take up with the Port Commission to protect city residents from the negative environmental impacts of the airport?**

The airport's environmental impacts on the city are huge, as starkly demonstrated by the Washington Environmental Health Disparities Map. The correlation with the airport and the overflight of airplanes is impossible to ignore. As a council member, I have consistently pushed to the council and the City to push for mitigation measures and have advocated for testing of air and noise. Additionally, I have actively helped hand out hundreds of air filters and worked to get advanced filtration for our local schools. I believe the city should be at the table where these measures are being discussed and needs to constantly advocate for limits on the number of flights, the hours of louder jets and increasing mitigation measures.

**Please share your understanding of your city's tree-related policies and tree canopy goals and tell us what gaps still need to be addressed?**

The City currently has a three to one replacement policy for trees. I have been advocating for increasing that to four to one. The City's tree canopy consists of both private and public lands, of which the City only controls part. During my tenure on the Council, we have increased the amount of public land and have preserved a large percentage of it by using designations such as park lands. Most of the development has occur in areas where non-native species have taken over the landscape. We still need to increase our tree canopy to provide for shade, habitatmand as a barrier against pollution.

**Forterra has said that urban areas in the Puget Sound region have the capacity to sustain a healthy 40% tree canopy. The King County Strategic Action Plan, when adopted, will incentivize cities to adopt strong science- and community-driven tree canopy goals. In your opinion, how important is prioritizing tree canopy preservation and augmentation in relation to other city priorities? What actions does your city council need to take to achieve tree canopy justice?**

The City is currently below the 40% goal as defined by Forterra. It will be interesting to see how the King County Strategic Action Plan incentives will work with the the current growth and density requirements of the GMA and the Comprehensive Plans. I am concerned that there will be conflicts. I want to see how the Citizen's input in the strategic plan prioritizes tree canopy preservation and augmentation. As indicated above, I believe the adoption of a higher tree replacement policy will augment our canopy, however it will take time for those trees to mature. I would like to see the City acquire more land, when it can, to preserve the canopy like the track on the hill behind the Redondo neighborhood. Certainly, the more we can preserve the better it will be for everyone.

**For addressing tree-related issues in your city, what partnerships are already in place that you know of and what additional partnerships do you envision creating?**

The City has a relationship with Forterra and has worked with other entities that are involved in tree planting and replacement. Even the Port of Seattle has had tree program involving the port properties that are being developed into warehouses. King County Parks and WADOT have been involved in improving and expanding the public spaces available to the citizens of Des Moines. I think we can do more to work with the citizens of Des Moines and the local environmental groups to improve the city's trees canopy.



## Des Moines City Council, Position 5

### Lloyd Elliott Lytle

**What do you believe SeaTac Airport's environmental impacts are on your city? As a city council member, what specific priorities would you urge your Council to take up with the Port Commission to protect city residents from the negative environmental impacts of the airport?**

As far as the Sea-Tac airport, there is lots of air and noise pollution from taking-off and landing directly over Des Moines. As a Council Member, I would start negotiating with the Port to restore tree canopy under the flight path, so the trees can absorb the air pollutants and noise. I think the city should buy back any green space it can from the Port and/or form collaborations with them to invest in community health.

**Please share your understanding of your city's tree-related policies and tree canopy goals and tell us what gaps still need to be addressed?**

There are some guidelines around preserving single trees if they are a certain age or size. I credit the city for that. However, as a whole, I don't think the city has a tree canopy goal as far as I know. I know that current city policy favors warehouse development over green space and tree canopy. They took out whole healthy and vibrant forest ecosystems along 216th Ave., taking away public green space and furthering erosion into Des Moines Creek, a salmon bearing stream, which will reduce the ability of salmon to spawn, which affects other wildlife like orcas and seals. With the current policy direction, Des Moines could easily lose all of its dense tree canopy forested areas. Currently, from what I've seen and experienced on this issue, the city and council see the forested areas as a liability, rather than an asset. I see them as a city defining asset. They're immensely valuable, and growing rarer by the day. We need to protect them and invest in them.

**Forterra has said that urban areas in the Puget Sound region have the capacity to sustain a healthy 40% tree canopy. The King County Strategic Action Plan, when adopted, will incentivize cities to adopt strong science- and community-driven tree canopy goals. In your opinion, how important is prioritizing tree canopy preservation and augmentation in relation to other city priorities? What actions does your city council need to take to achieve tree canopy justice?**

Tree canopy is a top priority and one I am campaigning on. I think the goal should be 50%. We're biological beings. We're not made of plastic and manufactured. To be healthy as a community, we need to take care of our natural, biological environment and dense tree canopy is a key component of that. Trees and forest bathing is scientifically documented to reduce stress levels. It's also good for kids to grow up around areas with a natural environment and wildlife. Those are some of my best childhood experiences. It's good for the soul and connecting to life around you. I would support city council policies working toward a 50% tree canopy, more naturally covered green roofs, and protection and investment in forested areas.

**For addressing tree-related issues in your city, what partnerships are already in place that you know of and what additional partnerships do you envision creating?**

I would like to see the city work with citizen grassroots organizations like Defenders of Highline Forest, Forterra, and any residents who'd just like to chip in and give back to their community. I also see a lot of opportunities to collaborate with surrounding cities, King County and Washington State to increase tree canopy and also connectivity; sort of like the Mountains to Sound project, where you have connected forested areas, ecosystems and green space across cities. This is a win for citizens and wildlife.

Tree canopy keeps residents and homes cool in the summer too and saves a ton on energy costs. Trees are natural air conditioning systems. If we continue on the current path of destroying all our forested areas and tree canopy, during heat domes, you're going to have serious community health problems. Heat domes are known to cause heat stroke related deaths in the most vulnerable populations. This can be greatly reduced by simply leaving the trees and forested areas as they are, growing your city in harmony with them, investing in green space, and letting them do their thing.

Trees are the lungs of the earth, and a key component supporting life on earth. We protect them and they'll protect us.



## Des Moines City Council, Position 5

### Pierre Blosserpierre

**What do you believe SeaTac Airport's environmental impacts are on your city? As a city councilmember, what specific priorities would you urge your Council to take up with the Port Commission to protect city residents from the negative environmental impacts of the airport?**

Sea-Tac Airport provides important regional economic benefits, but its environmental costs are undeniable - especially for Des Moines. Aircraft noise, air and water pollution, traffic congestion, and loss of tree canopy have all harmed our residents' health and quality of life. Airport expansion and the redevelopment of nearby port-owned land have cleared forests for warehouses and roads, worsening air quality and exposing residents and schools to continuous noise and pollution. As a councilmember, I would urge the City to push the Port of Seattle for stronger accountability and direct mitigation in our community. That includes replacing faulty noise insulation packages, expanding eligibility for noise and air mitigation programs, and funding filtration systems in schools and homes near flight paths. I would also advocate for comprehensive air, water and noise monitoring in Des Moines, with real-time public data. Lastly, I support a binding Community Benefits Agreement that ensures reinvestment in green buffers, tree planting, and public health projects for impacted residents.

**Please share your understanding of your city's tree-related policies and tree canopy goals and tell us what gaps still need to be addressed?**

Des Moines recently completed a GPS mapping analysis showing that approximately 29% of the city is covered by tree canopy, with 16% of that canopy on city-owned land. Since the city itself owns only about 5% of total land, protecting trees on both public and private property will be essential to maintaining and growing that canopy. The City Council has made progress by prioritizing the care of existing trees on public land and considering a new tree preservation program that formalizes long-term goals. A proposal to transfer forested land management to Surface Water Management would help centralize oversight, secure long-term protection, and open opportunities for grants.

While these are important steps, key gaps remain. Des Moines still lacks a comprehensive urban forestry plan with measurable canopy targets or a full inventory of its trees. We need to catalog the city's oldest and most significant trees - like the 120-year-old California Redwood near 223rd St and 10th Ave S - and create a plan to protect them from development or removal. Heritage trees like these are part of Des Moines' identity and natural heritage, deserving special protections and maintenance plans. Beyond that, we must strengthen tree preservation policies on private land, increase replacement ratios, and direct new planting efforts toward neighborhoods with the lowest canopy coverage. Protecting and expanding our urban forest isn't just about beauty. It's essential infrastructure that improves air quality, reduces flooding, cools our neighborhoods, and preserves the natural character of Des Moines for generations to come.

**Forterra has said that urban areas in the Puget Sound region have the capacity to sustain a healthy 40% tree canopy. The King County Strategic Action Plan, when adopted, will incentivize cities to adopt strong science- and community-driven tree canopy goals. In your opinion, how important is prioritizing tree canopy preservation and augmentation in relation to other city priorities? What actions does your city council need to take to achieve tree canopy justice?**

Maintaining and expanding our tree canopy should be one of Des Moines' top environmental priorities. A healthy canopy cools our neighborhoods, filters air, reduces stormwater runoff, and improves both mental and physical health. Yet our canopy coverage is uneven - neighborhoods closer to Sea-Tac Airport and industrial areas often have fewer trees and face more air and noise pollution. To address this, we must focus not just on planting trees, but on achieving true canopy justice, ensuring that every neighborhood benefits from green space and cleaner air.

I would support setting a long-term, science-driven goal of reaching 40% canopy coverage, in line with regional sustainability targets. This should include stronger protections for mature trees, mandatory replacement ratios for removals, and targeted planting in underserved areas.

In addition, I'd like to see Des Moines launch a Free Tree Program, modeled after the City of Burien's successful Green Burien Partnership. Their program offers residents up to two free trees each year to plant on private property, helping expand the urban forest beyond public land. A similar initiative in Des Moines would empower residents to be active partners in tree canopy restoration, beautify our neighborhoods, and improve long-term environmental resilience.

**For addressing tree-related issues in your city, what partnerships are already in place that you know of and what additional partnerships do you envision creating?**

Des Moines is already making great strides through its partnership with Forterra's Green City Partnership, launched in 2018 with support from the Port of Seattle's Airport Community Ecology (ACE) Fund. The Green Des Moines Partnership brings together the City, the Port, nonprofits, schools, businesses, and volunteers to restore and maintain forested parks and open spaces. This partnership is a powerful model for how government, nonprofits, and residents can work together to achieve shared environmental goals. As a councilmember, I would work to strengthen this collaboration and seek new funding opportunities through grants and regional partnerships, including the Department of Ecology, King County, and the Puget Sound Clean Air Agency. I'd also like to expand community engagement by connecting this work to schools and youth programs - giving students hands-on opportunities to plant trees, remove invasives, and learn about local ecology.

*All other candidates for Des Moines City Council did not respond.*

# November 2025 Election

South King County Candidate Responses on Environmental Issues



## Normandy Park City City Council

*No candidates for Normandy Park City Council responded.*



## SeaTac City Council, Position 2

Caitlin Konya

**What do you believe SeaTac Airport's environmental impacts are on your city? As a city councilmember, what specific priorities would you urge your Council to take up with the Port Commission to protect city residents from the negative environmental impacts of the airport?**

SeaTac Airport's proximity creates an uneven balance between economic benefit and environmental harm. Communities near flight paths face constant aircraft noise, poor air quality, contaminated runoff, and loss of tree canopy due to airport and freeway expansion. As a social worker, I see these not only as environmental issues but as determinants of health and social equity manifesting as higher asthma rates, chronic stress, and barriers to wellbeing.

As a councilmember, I would urge stronger accountability from the Port through enforceable community benefit agreements, transparent environmental reporting, and dedicated mitigation funding. The Port should partner with the city to retrofit failing noise insulation, expand green buffers, and restore lost canopy in high-impact zones. A city with a lot of parking lots, to me, is a city with the opportunity to turn that into shared and usable space for our community. I know that at the state level this continues to be a conversation each year and I would take a proactive approach to be a representative voice of SeaTac with our local electeds in the state legislature to push for enforceable community benefit agreements requiring the Port to fund retrofits and upgrades, not just one-time insulation work.

I would also advocate for joint planning with the city to preserve North SeaTac Park as critical green infrastructure both for public health and as a frontline defense against airport-related pollution. I plan to be an advocate for ensuring this acquisition is negotiated in good faith with our Port.

**Please share your understanding of your city's tree-related policies and tree canopy goals and tell us what gaps still need to be addressed?**

SeaTac's tree code includes protection for street trees and landscaping in new developments, but it lacks measurable canopy goals and consistent funding. According to Forterra's Green SeaTac plan, the city's tree canopy is estimated at ~21% citywide (and ~25% excluding airport property) (Green SeaTac Partnership). In contrast, healthy urban areas in Puget Sound aim for 40%. The city has recognized the need to preserve existing trees, but we lack a clear, measurable canopy goal and a long-term funding mechanism for restoration and maintenance. As a forest steward for the City of SeaTac, I've seen firsthand how fragile many of our urban green spaces are. We must strengthen our municipal code to protect mature trees, require replacement ratios above 1:1 for lost canopy, allocate stable maintenance funds, adopt a clear, equity-based tree canopy target, and integrate equity data to ensure replanting happens in neighborhoods most impacted by airport-related deforestation and pollution.

**Forterra has said that urban areas in the Puget Sound region have the capacity to sustain a healthy 40% tree canopy. The King County Strategic Action Plan, when adopted, will incentivize cities to adopt strong science- and community-driven tree canopy goals. In your opinion, how important is prioritizing tree canopy preservation and augmentation in relation to other city priorities? What actions does your city council need to take to achieve tree canopy justice?**

Tree canopy preservation is not secondary to other priorities, it's essential infrastructure that supports community health, public safety, and climate resilience. This is what I personally mean when I discuss sustainable and long-term development within our city. Increasing canopy coverage improves air quality, cools neighborhoods, and has proven psychosocial benefits, including reduced stress, lower rates of depression, and stronger community connection all of which are key public health goals that align with a social work approach to prevention and resilience. For SeaTac, tree canopy justice also means addressing historical inequities. Our community being near the airport means we have the least tree cover and the highest pollution exposure. To achieve canopy justice, the city must adopt a science-based canopy goal, tie it to zoning and development incentives, expand the urban forestry budget, and embed tree equity metrics in all major planning decisions.

**For addressing tree-related issues in your city, what partnerships are already in place that you know of and what additional partnerships do you envision creating?**

SeaTac benefits from Green City Partnerships and local stewardship programs that mobilize volunteers and youth in restoration work. As a forest steward, I've seen how these efforts strengthen not only our tree canopy, but also community pride, public health, and intergenerational learning. To deepen this impact, we need to expand partnerships by bringing in schools to embed hands-on environmental education (I volunteered at StormFest and I would like to see more activities like this!), healthcare providers to link green space access to improved health outcomes, and the Port of Seattle to fund large-scale mitigation planting and maintenance in impacted neighborhoods.

We should also ensure the people doing this essential work are treated equitably. That means fair wages for restoration crews, ethical work-study and youth programs that avoid unpaid labor, and integrating green workforce training into city development initiatives. Upskilling workers in sustainable technologies and low-carbon infrastructure will ensure SeaTac's shift toward a greener economy does not displace our workforce. Finally, I'd love to see SeaTac adopt community-based programs like the 12,000 Rain Gardens initiative, which empowers residents to plant native greenery right in their own yards. These small-scale, neighborhood-driven projects help manage stormwater, improve air quality, and give residents a tangible role in climate resilience.



## SeaTac City Council, Position 4

### Mohamed Egal

**What do you believe SeaTac Airport's environmental impacts are on your city? As a city councilmember, what specific priorities would you urge your Council to take up with the Port Commission to protect city residents from the negative environmental impacts of the airport?**

As the Environmental Health Disparities map shows so clearly, SeaTac airport has significant effects on SeaTac's environment, probably more in our city than in any other. Emissions from airplanes and from the highways that feed the airport have numerous impacts on the health of our residents, and noise is a significant problem for many. Airport expansion has meant that we've lost some significant areas of tree coverage. My first priority at this time is to continue to work with the Port to get a long term solution in place for North SeaTac Park. While it's true that SeaTac has to absorb airport-related impacts, we are also lucky to have to still have some exceptional tree canopy, parkland, and open space. Preserving and restoring it is urgent and important. We've already made some good progress here around Des Moines Creek Park.

**Please share your understanding of your city's tree-related policies and tree canopy goals and tell us what gaps still need to be addressed?**

Our work as a city has focused on restoring parkland and empowering forest stewards, volunteers, and city staff to focus on restoration work. Our new comprehensive plan discusses tree canopy as an essential local carbon sink as well as an important component in handling drainage. We envision expanded tree canopy on streets and city-owned land. I am always open to feedback and collaboration because this issue is of particular importance to me.

**Forterra has said that urban areas in the Puget Sound region have the capacity to sustain a healthy 40% tree canopy. The King County Strategic Action Plan, when adopted, will incentivize cities to adopt strong science- and community-driven tree canopy goals. In your opinion, how important is prioritizing tree canopy preservation and augmentation in relation to other city priorities? What actions does your city council need to take to achieve tree canopy justice?**

Our urban forests took much longer to grow than it would take to destroy them, and they are vital to the future of our community, so tree canopy preservation is a crucial goal for us. Our parks and open spaces, and the canopy above them, provide relief and relaxation to our residents, habitat for wildlife, improved air quality, and innumerable other benefits. I will be a willing partner in efforts to preserve and augment SeaTac's tree canopy.

**For addressing tree-related issues in your city, what partnerships are already in place that you know of and what additional partnerships do you envision creating?**

The Green SeaTac Partnership helps us empower residents to restore our urban forests. It is a great program and I will continue to be supportive of this and similar efforts. As we continue to work towards that goal, I will be open to more ideas from across the community about preserving our invaluable tree canopy.

*No other candidates for SeaTac City Council responded.*