

# Summary of community input on public safety in Burien

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# INTRODUCTION

Across the country, communities are examining public safety in terms of funding, resources, staffing, policies and procedures, and how public safety is provided to their respective communities. There is growing conversation in the region and country about public safety, policing, systemic racism.

In 2018, the City of Burien reached out to residents to ask what our community was looking for in a police force, and the qualities you wanted in a police chief. Your feedback led us to select Ted Boe as your police chief.

Burien has been a regional leader in employing creative and innovative approaches to providing services that result in better public safety. The LEAD program, Burien Community Court, and partnerships with LINC and Choose 180 are examples of ways that your municipal government and the police department have worked to address the root causes of criminal behaviors.

Despite limited resources, the City of Burien and Burien Police Department have been able to accomplish a great deal through the partnership and hard work of our public employees. COVID-19 has exacerbated existing financial stresses on local government, businesses, and our community members. The City faces tough budget decisions as we seek to keep providing essential services and programs.

In advance of budget conversations and in response to this national movement, Burien City Council asked City staff during their August 3, 2020 regular business meeting to explore a community engagement process to learn the following:

- What does public safety mean to you?
- Are there gaps in public safety, and if so, in what way?
- What are your priorities in terms of budget, policing, and human services?
- How do we improve public safety?

Staff came back to Council with a [proposed community engagement plan](#), which Council approved, on August 17, 2020 at their regular business meeting. This plan included multiple steps to gather information.

1. Hold a special meeting on the topic of public safety. This meeting was held on September 14, 2020.
2. Deploy a survey, allowing community members who could not attend the meeting to have a way to make their voices heard. This survey opened on September 14, 2020 and closed October 5, 2020.
3. Report back the results of the survey and meeting to Council on November 23, 2020.
4. Use digital tools to gather more feedback from the community.
5. Work with community partners and leaders to host small group discussions on the topic.
6. Produce a second report that summarizes the second and third rounds of community engagement.

See the [“Recommended Next Steps” section of this document](#) for more detail on steps 4-6.

# PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT PROCESS

Burien City Council hosted a special council meeting on September 14, 2020 on the topic of public safety. More than 75 people attended the meeting, and four accessed the Spanish-language interpretation service.

Community members were invited to speak in small group roundtable discussions at the meeting. They were asked the following questions:

1. What is public safety?
2. What are the essential elements of public safety?

3. What can be improved with our current public safety system?
4. Are there things that can be done for you to feel safer in the community?
5. How would you prioritize spending when there is limited public funding?

The meeting was hosted using Zoom and was broadcast on Channel 21 (Comcast) and Channel 8027 (CenturyLink). The meeting was also recorded and published on this web page: [burienwa.gov/PublicSafetyConversation](http://burienwa.gov/PublicSafetyConversation). Spanish and Vietnamese interpretation was provided.

Community members were also asked to fill out a survey that asked the same questions. They were able to submit their responses anonymously. No demographic information was collected.

Burien City Council also directed staff to develop an enhanced community engagement process that involved working with community partners and leaders as well as enhanced use of technology to reach community members isolated because of physical distancing requirements.

This report reflects community feedback from the survey and September 14 meeting.

## ABOUT THE DATA

The sources of information for this report were responses to an online survey and summaries of small group discussions during the September 14 special meeting. Staff read the notes from the meeting and the survey responses and assigned a set of categories. Many responses had more than one category assigned to it. Once this process was complete, the categories were grouped into themes. This report details overall themes, as well as the top categories for each question. Feedback gathered from the September 14 public meeting is in a separate section.

## SUMMARY OF SPECIAL COUNCIL MEETING (SEPTEMBER 14, 2020)

There were not many differences between the responses of community members who attended the public meeting versus those who filled out the survey.

Most of the groups felt that public safety was multidimensional, and that it was important that people's basic needs were met, including access to housing and shelter, access to health care, and access to healthy foods.

*"We need substantive, practical, and holistic solutions about what public safety means."*

There was also support for continuing to fund or increase funding for the police, with the top concern being that police response time needs to be improved. However, several groups and individuals expressed an opposing view, calling for a reduction to police funding and diverting that money back into the community in the form of investments to human services, youth and family support programs, public toilets, and other services and programs. There was some support for an alternative first responder model that included mental health or social workers as part of an emergency response team.

*"We should analyze how we are spending city money. Provide more opportunities for counselors and social workers to help people who are in crisis."*

*"We need to support the youth in our community so they have activities and are occupied, support families, and engage the community in that effort."*

*“Prioritize human services funding, but not defund police. More training for officers to help with mental health issues.”*

Most of the groups also expressed that community members had an important role to play in public safety and that strong neighbor-to-neighbor connections were important. Some even suggested volunteer or community-led solutions, such as a community-led program to escort children home from school to keep them safe.

*“If there were some funds available to the community so we can be a helping hand, so we can both be safe, and we have the same information, the same education about public safety.”*

*“Burien residents are ready for this transformational movement. Strength in services. Not just look at law enforcement – look at faith based and other services.”*

Concern was expressed by some of the groups that there should be more focus on issues such as visible homelessness, drug activity, and vandalism, and that enforcement and prosecution of criminal activity should be increased.

*“Prioritize community services to folks who are homeless, have mental health issues so we don’t have people becoming criminals.”*

*“There should be enforcement of laws from arrest to prosecution.”*

Some groups mentioned the need to address issues through an equity lens, evaluating the impact on Black Indigenous and People of Color (BIPOC) communities.

*“People first. Equity is the lens for the approach we want.”*

Finally, public trust was a big concern. Some groups called for more transparency from their local government and police, as well as increased efforts to improve police accountability.

*“Trust is essential. Trust that they show up and they react appropriately. Not knowing if they will show up and shoot somebody. Proper triage and de-escalation.”*

## SURVEY KEY FINDINGS

Most respondents expressed a desire for a multidimensional approach to public safety that included first responders, human services, investments in the community, and strong neighborhoods. Accountability and building public trust were also common themes.

Overall, many people made a connection to mental health, homelessness, substance abuse, and crime. The City of Burien recognizes that these things are not necessarily related.

While police response time, in addition to how well they respond to reports of crime, was considered a high priority, only a few people said that they wanted response time to be faster. What is indicated, however, is that the respondents wanted police response time to remain at least as good as it currently is.

### Overall Themes

Staff assigned categories to the different responses, then grouped those categories into broader themes, as listed below.

**Address visible issues:** Many respondents wanted the police or city government to address issues they found undesirable and visible in the community. Responses included addressing visible drug use, removing homeless “encampments”, addressing gang activity, and addressing safety issues at the Burien Library.

*“Drugs and Homelessness. Easy to say. But not allowing these people to hang around the library/city hall. That is a place where kids are supposed to be during summer or non-school times. But now I would not want my kid to be anywhere near the library.”*

*“Immediate removal of homeless encampments and arrest of anyone who is obviously high on drugs or vagrant.”*

*“Stop letting the drug addicts create unsafe places.”*

*“I think Burien is much better off than cities like Seattle. With more families moving from West Seattle to get into bigger homes we need to show them Burien is a safe place to live. I still hear “Burien, that is not safe” I may have been one of those people once upon a time. Burien is not perfect, and still has room to grow as far as public safety. The best thing I could say is reduce the amount of homeless in the downtown corridor and more outreach. Look at downtown compared to Olde Town. Just blocks from each other but they look so different.”*

**Equity:** Respondents stated that they would like to ensure that people are treated fairly and don’t experience discrimination, especially from their police force. This theme also included responses that expressed concern about over-policing in BIPOC communities and fairness in prosecution.

*“Public safety is a wide variety of things, but above all it concerns the safety of all people, whatever their socio-economic status, color, age, religion, immigration status, mental health, etc. Public safety has been construed too narrowly - it has focused on keeping safe those with a higher socio-economic status, those who are white, those who are housed, established, and can afford to pay for their own mental and physical welfare. Public safety has been handled by armed men who are often over-policing the poor, POC community members, and the unhoused. The balance of public safety in our current criminal justice system has meant to keep the “haves” safe from the “have nots,” and to assume that we can maintain public safety best by “putting people away,” rather than investing in a just society that provides a level playing field for all which will prevent a lot of crime taking place.”*

*“Mental health services, social safety net (access to affordable healthcare, nutrition, housing, etc), emergency services, police/fire, education and childcare services—and a system to dispatch and provide access to the appropriate (and highest quality) services to the all people regardless of race, class, gender, sexual orientation, etc.”*

*“I would like to see us revisit current rules and laws to reassess how they fit into a society that understands systemic and institutional racism.”*

**Support first responders:** This theme includes respondents who believed a public safety system is only comprised of police, fire, and emergency medical services, and the criminal justice system. It also included responses that stated a desire to adequately fund fire, emergency medical services, and disaster response. Some respondents also stated that they wanted to ensure that these agencies can deliver adequate response times, and that the service meets community demand.

*“Rapid response to crime, fires, health crises, natural disasters - we need appropriate, trained personnel to respond in times of personal and community crisis.”*

**Improve community conditions:** This theme includes respondents who believe a public safety system is *not* only comprised of police, fire, emergency medical services, and the criminal justice system, but also a society that ensures people’s basic needs are met. Some respondents mentioned basic needs in general, but many called out health care and behavioral health services, housing and shelter, and food security as specific needs that must be met. Also included in this theme are responses that called for more investment in education as well as youth and family support programs, jobs and economic opportunity, and investments into the community and local organizations that serve Burien residents. A small number of respondents also asked for support for substance abuse harm reduction programs, such as needle exchanges or safe injection sites.

*“Every citizen having the means to live and exist with healthcare, shelter, and enough food, as well as community support if they're struggling with mental health, addiction, poverty, or other issues.”*

**Stricter criminal justice system:** There were some responses that called for stricter application of the law (“law and order”), as well as for prosecution that holds people accountable and protects victims.

*“Enforce laws that are on books or else change them of [sic] you don’t mean to enforce them: fireworks laws, loitering laws, etc.”*

**Invest in infrastructure and public spaces:** This theme included responses that called for investments in infrastructure that supported traffic, walking, and biking safety, including crosswalks, speed bumps, and sidewalks. Some respondents called for more investments into CPTED features, like better street lighting. Others called for more investment and maintenance of Burien’s public spaces, including parks. Concerns were expressed about garbage, discarded drug paraphernalia, graffiti, and other issues that made the public spaces less welcoming for residents to enjoy.

*“Some things about improving the environmental design of public places such as maintaining landscaping, increasing lighting and removing trash and graffiti do a lot to improve the perception of public safety.”*

**Support police:** There were many responses that called for sustained or increased funding for police. Also, many people called for better response times from the police, asking police to take reports of crime seriously, and asking for more visible police patrols and presence in the community.

*“Adequate police staff. Increase police staff. Three policeman [sic] on the evening shift, and three on graveyard shift, is not enough. Increase policemen and women on all shifts in a manner that proportionately appropriately corresponds to the population of our residents.”*

**Alternative criminal justice and first responder models:** Responses included asking for a different emergency response system that would replace an armed response to situations that could potentially be addressed by a mental health or social worker. Some respondents also called for more investments in collaborative, proactive crime and violence prevention programs. Burien’s Law Enforcement Assisted Diversion (LEAD) program, Burien Community Court, and others were also mentioned.

*“Create unarmed alternatives to police response in nonviolent situations that can connect residents with assistance programs.”*

*“Burien should fund de-escalatory response and community building with greater priority than King County Sheriff's Office.”*

*“Please continue the LEAD program. I don't know if you have been able to continue this during the pandemic. Please continue Community Court. I know Community Court has not been able to operate during the pandemic. Gangs seem to be a continuing problem in Burien. I know King County is working on this countywide as it is a countywide problem. Please work hard on this. We have had gang-related graffiti sprayed on our building.”*

**Invest in training and accountability for police services:** Responses called for police to go through anti-racism and de-escalation training. Respondents also called for police to not “harass” people experiencing homelessness and to be trained in how to respond to people experiencing a mental health crisis. There were also calls for better police accountability, from the hiring process to addressing what happens if an officer is involved in an incident that harms a community member.

*“Move toward a community-based public service program. We ask too much of our police, as they only treat the symptoms of crime, they are not the cure. We need more opportunity for the city to engage with people who are less often heard in our society. More social workers, less police officers. More programs like LEAD that don't involve police. Leave the police to deal with violent crime, less on traffic stops. Hold police departments, especially the King County Sheriff's Office accountable. Require all police to wear body cameras and record their public interactions. Improve equality and racial equity by hiring more BIPOC people in leadership positions.”*

**Focus on property and non-violent crime:** Addressing property crime was considered very important by some of the respondents. This included vandalism, theft, graffiti, and other property damage. Others felt that addressing less violent crimes would deter more criminal activity from occurring.

*“Public safety protects people and property from harm.”*

*“Stop gang tagging of public/private property. Set up film devices to stop them.”*

*“Curb drug use and property crime by holding those accountable to longer sentences which may involve medical evaluation and treatment for addiction and mental illness. Stop the catch and release cycle [sic] which allows for continuous reoffending which further victimizes the general public as well as the person who needs correction.”*

**Public trust:** Many felt that building connections between neighbors as well as mutual aid networks was an important component of public safety. There were many responses that called for government and elected officials to be responsive to the needs of the community, with a specific ask for them to listen to all voices, including BIPOC and youth. Some responses called for elected officials to tailor any policy changes to Burien’s unique needs and not copy policies from other jurisdictions like Seattle or Portland. There were some calls for increased transparency, communications, and community outreach. Others called for the government to operate more efficiently, spending less money. Some responses noted that there are issues that spread beyond jurisdictional boundaries and asked for more advocacy for Burien at the county, state, and federal level.

*“Knowing my neighbor's [sic] makes me feel safe.”*

*“The City of Burien has hired, as far as I can tell, good police officers, and has trained them well and set high standards for them as far as I know. But the City of Burien needs to acknowledge and perhaps educate people also that their public safety depends very little on a system that is set up and controlled here in Burien, but rather is set up and controlled*



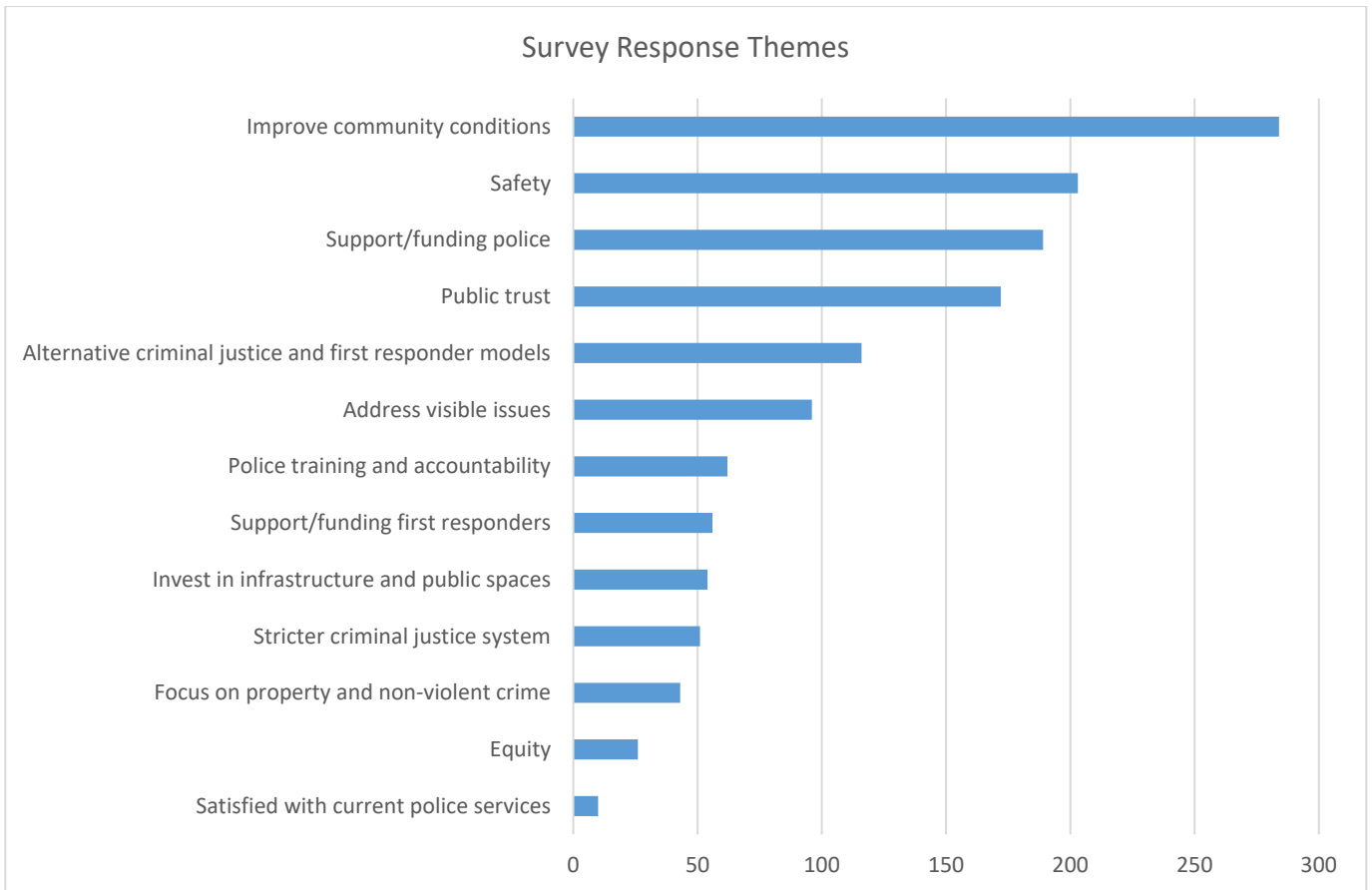
*mainly at the county and state level, and so real public safety means educating people about how to voice concerns and make contributions, especially at the County level. How many Burien residents have written to Joe McDermott or Dave Upthegrove, to voice their concerns about public safety, since those two people have far more sway over our public safety than Chief Boe, Mayor Matta, or the Burien City Council Members? The City should help educate people on where power for change lies in public safety.”*

**Safety:** Questions one and two solicited several responses that showed that people wanted the City of Burien and its elected officials to prioritize safety. People wanted to not only be safe from physical harm, but to also feel safe. Several respondents expressed a desire for a safer downtown Burien shopping experience.

*“A community where no one is afraid to venture out.”*

*“Keeping community members safe in their surroundings so they can feel comfortable walking in all neighborhoods, shopping at local stores, accessing public parks and areas. Everyone should be able to do all of these things without the fear of being shot, hit by a car, robbed, being asked for money by homeless, fear of their children picking up drug paraphernalia, etc.”*

*“Keeping our neighborhood safe - residents, businesses, schools. Not only from criminal activities but we also need more sidewalks and speed bumps and roundabouts in residential 4 ways stops.”*



## Key Findings by Question

### Question 1: What is public safety?

Most of the respondents stated that safety from harm was how they defined public safety, though there was a wide range of definitions of what safety meant.

*“Making sure that people are safe be it out shopping, eating at a restaurant or even within their own neighborhood/dwelling.”*

*“The right to live without fear of being killed by police.”*

The next largest number of responses said that public safety also included feeling safe.

*“Public safety means being able to be a part of the community and having the safety (physical, emotional, social) to do so. It means that everyone feels safe, regardless of race. Currently BIPOC community members report not feeling that safety. Public safety means learning to stop prioritizing and privileging the perceived safety of white folks at the expense of overly policed and brutalized BOPIC [sic] community.”*

*“Keeping community members safe in their surroundings so they can feel comfortable walking in all neighborhoods, shopping at local stores, accessing public parks and areas. Everyone should be able to do all of these things without the fear of being shot, hit by a car, robbed, being asked for money by homeless, fear of their children picking up drug paraphernalia, etc.”*

A significant number of responses stated support for a police department that responds quickly to calls, takes crime reports seriously, and meets the needs of the community was important to their definition of public safety.

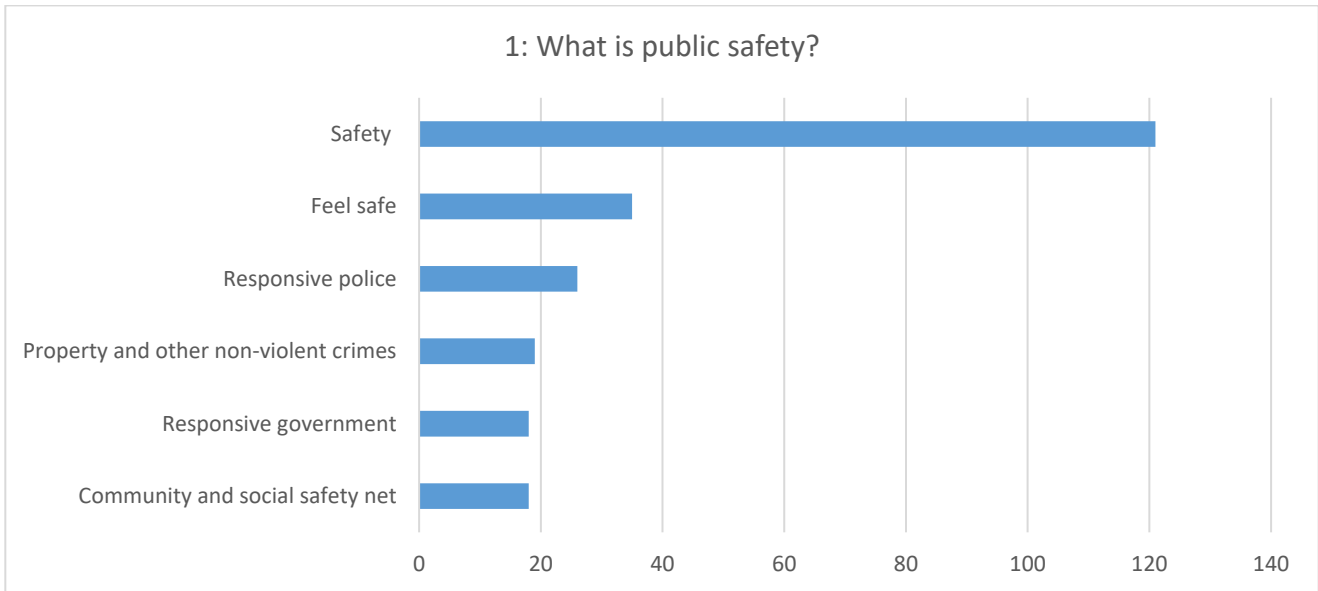
The next largest number of responses called out the need to protect property as important to public safety.

*“Feeling safe when leaving your home, not worrying about the aggressiveness of the homeless approaching you everywhere you go, not wondering if you will be the next victim of gangs/other criminals, feeling safe in your own home, not worrying about homeless/criminals walking into your yard while you are gone & stealing items from us.”*

Equal numbers of responses called for government transparency and accountability and that meeting people’s basic needs was an important component of public safety.

*“A community where no one is afraid to venture out. It is a community that takes care of its disadvantaged people and prides itself in providing safe and clean streets, parks, and so on.”*

*“Public safety looks like all community members having access to healthcare, housing, education, healthy food, creative outlets like art and music, clean air, water, and accessible nature, and good jobs with living wages. These resources and services must be available for all people so we can all truly thrive, engage, and be safe.”*



**Question 2: What are the essential elements of public safety?**

Most of the respondents answered that the essential elements of public safety were multi-dimensional and involved not just police, fire, emergency medical services, and the criminal justice system.

*“Essential elements [of public safety]: 1. Preventative measures involving investment: a plethora of investments in people which reduce incentive and temptation toward crime: programs for children and youth, treatment of drug addiction as a health crisis rather than something to be punished, investment in mental and physical health care as a right. Involvement of the Community - Public safety on some level should be the responsibility and privilege of all to play their part: examples can include volunteer programs to provide opportunities, recreation and learning for children and youth, volunteerism with people experiencing homelessness, drug addiction, mental health issues, the isolated elderly, speakers of other languages, working parents needing care to keep their children safe and engaged, etc. It take a village to keep our children, youth, elderly and vulnerable safe. 3. Rapid response to crime, fires, health crises, natural disasters - we need appropriate, trained personnel to respond in times of personal and community crisis. 4. Response to homelessness and vagrancy -when a person is in mental, physical distress or unsafe on the streets, or making others unsafe, usually because of any combination of homelessness, mental health issues and substance abuse, we need an appropriate response which can lead to long-term solutions for that person. We much more rarely need armed personnel who will jail people, costing the tax payers huge amounts only to release the person to the same streets and same behavior. We need appropriate response of mental health workers, social workers, emergency medical workers, and these first responders must be able to assist a carry over to those handling permanent solutions re: detoxification, housing, mental help, etc.”*

Most respondents also defined ensuring that people’s basic needs are being met, including access to behavioral health care, youth and family support programs, and housing and shelter, as essential to public safety.

*“Ample public services available to those in need that are not means-tested. Enough healthy food (keyword, healthy - donated food or affordable food is often the worst for you), a safe shelter, support from neighbors or professionally trained community members, needle exchanges and wellness support, bill payment assistance, etc.”*

*“Housing and food security, jobs with dignity and living wages, mental health support, community involvement.”*

A smaller, yet still significant, number of responses called for more focus on prosecution and accountability, as well as more funding for police and other emergency services, and called for the support needed to ensure adequate response from police and other emergency services.

*“#1) Law Enforcement - we need more of them. #2) Holding offenders of any crime accountable; keep them in jail. #3) Responsive 911 #4) Medical Services #5) Fire Departments and EMT's.”*

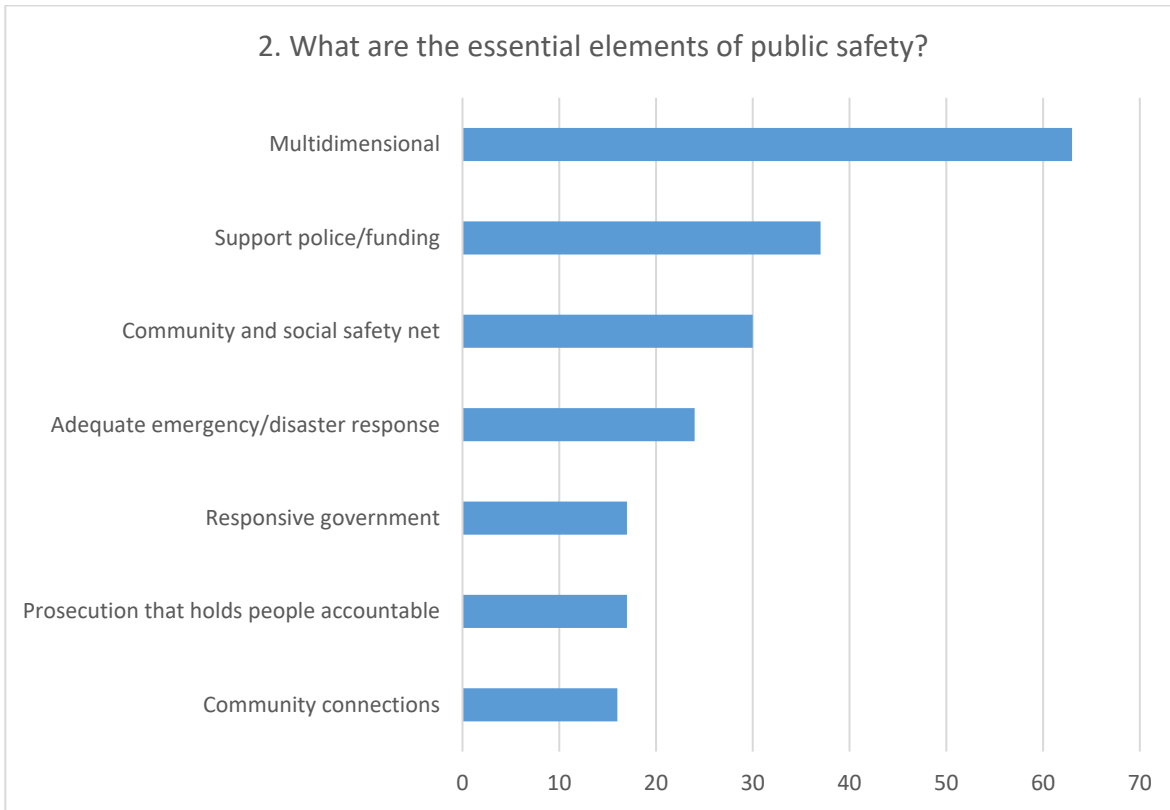
Another significant number of responses called out the need for the public to trust the decisions of government officials, and stated that transparency, accountability, and outreach to the community were important elements of public safety.

*“Knowing and communicating with your neighbors. Reliable public communication systems. Knowledge of which city departments handle particular situations (for instance, flooding.) Police officers that are thoroughly vetted as far as club/organization affiliations. Officers that are trained in deescalation [sic], non-lethal enforcement methods. More police community presence. Bring back the neighborhood storefront office like used to be in Boulevard Park. Officers need to listen to the public when it comes to repeat offenders. Low barrier, low income housing.”*

Many responses also stated the need for strong community connections.

*“Citizens looking out for one another and if we see something we must call 911 to protect each other's properties and keeping each other safe.”*

*“... An informed and engaged population that look out for each other, especially children, the elderly, and the vulnerable.”*



**Question 3: What can be improved with our current public safety system?**

Most respondents also defined ensuring that people’s basic needs are being met, including access to behavioral health care, youth and family support programs, and housing and shelter, as essential to public safety.

*“Portable sanitary service so homeless have somewhere to take care of their physical needs after public facilities are closed. More cleaning of public gathering places so litter left by homeless is cleared, sanitation maintained. If things are kept clean, people respond better and have a tendency to litter less themselves.”*

*“Housing, mental health, more low cost/free programs for young people, bigger investments in human services.”*

There was also a significant number of responses seeking better handling of drug enforcement in the community.

*“Lock criminals up. Reduce illegal drugs. More drug treatment availability. Offer treatment or jail.”*

*“STOP the drug dealing, harassing of the residents on the streets by addicts/homeless vagrants/mentally ill people/gang members. CLEAN up and remove ALL encampments and trash from the streets and [sic] from public lands.”*

*“Funding community solutions like violence prevention programs, alternatives to incarceration, and harm reduction programs. Decriminalizing sex work, drug use, homelessness, and economic survival and instead, providing resources to address the root*

*issues. Demilitarizing police and increasing mental health service providers for our communities. Addressing the lack of affordable housing by creating rent stabilization, strengthening the rights of tenants, and building more accessible housing for more people.”*

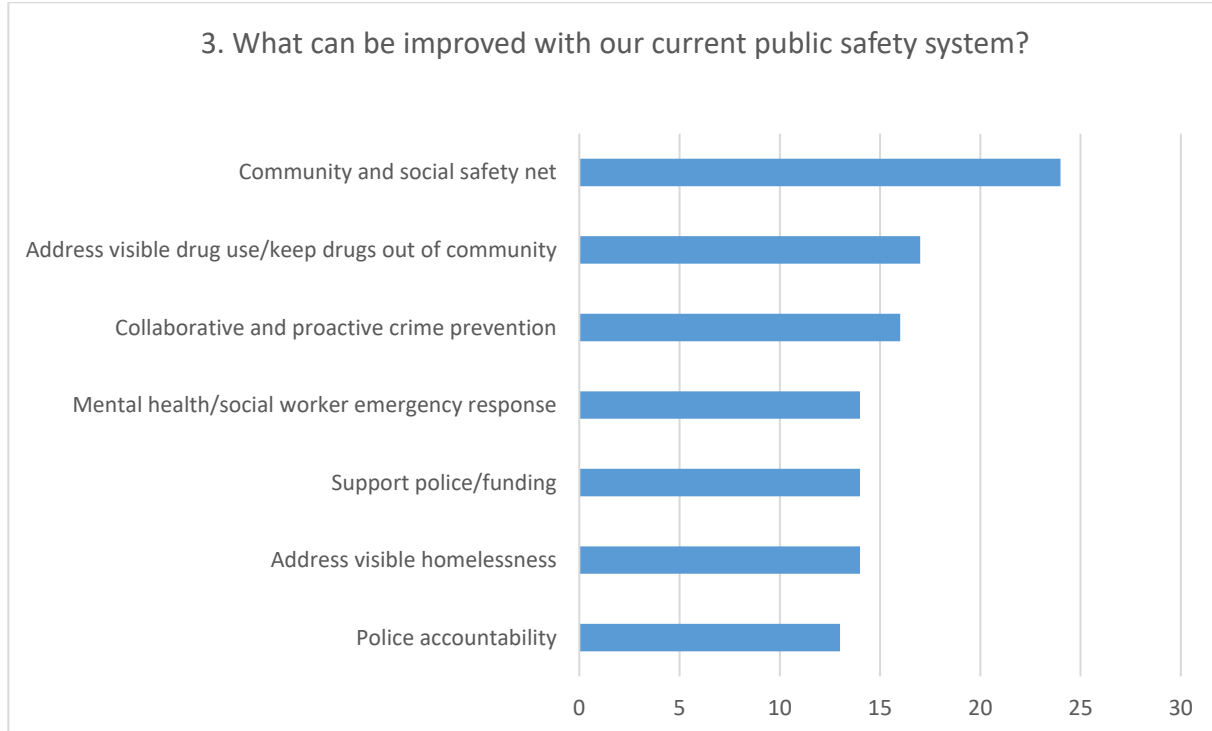
There was support for keeping or expanding support for police services.

*“More police and funding FOR their needs.”*

There were also a significant number of responses that called for more investments in collaborative and proactive crime prevention programs, such as the Law Enforcement Assisted Diversion Program (LEAD) as well as the creation of an alternative first responder model that would deploy mental health or social workers instead of armed police officers. An almost equal number of responses also called for improvements to police accountability.

*“More funding/emphasis on mental health and social work in emergencies. Bigger focus (or more transparency) on proactive/preventative public safety work. (Move from reactive to proactive).”*

*“It is important to look into how we hold police accountable - in the inherent nature of racism in policing, qualified immunity, excessive force, implicit bias. I truly think harm reduction for drug dependent people would increase public safety, and I think it would help more people stay alive to receive help. I think adding resources to give more people the ability to better meet their needs would increase the community's perspective on safety as a whole. I don't believe most people are "criminals" because they want to be bad; it is more likely due to desperation.”*



**Question 4: Are there things that can be done for you to feel safer in the community?**

The largest number of responses called for more investments in programs and services that helped people meet their basic needs.

*“If the Burien Police department was defunded by at least 50% I would feel much safer. I also believe that helping the houseless community makes me feel safe because we have stigmatized being houseless and seeing folks on the street makes us feel unsafe, but really those that do not have houses are the most unsafe.”*

The next highest category sought more visible police patrols and presence in neighborhoods.

*“Police officers are not visible as I never see them. They should be assigned to neighborhoods and do block visits where neighbors could visit them and interact with the public.”*

There were also calls for an increase in transparency, communications, and community outreach.

*“More outreach to Burien neighborhoods about criminal activity in their vicinity.”*

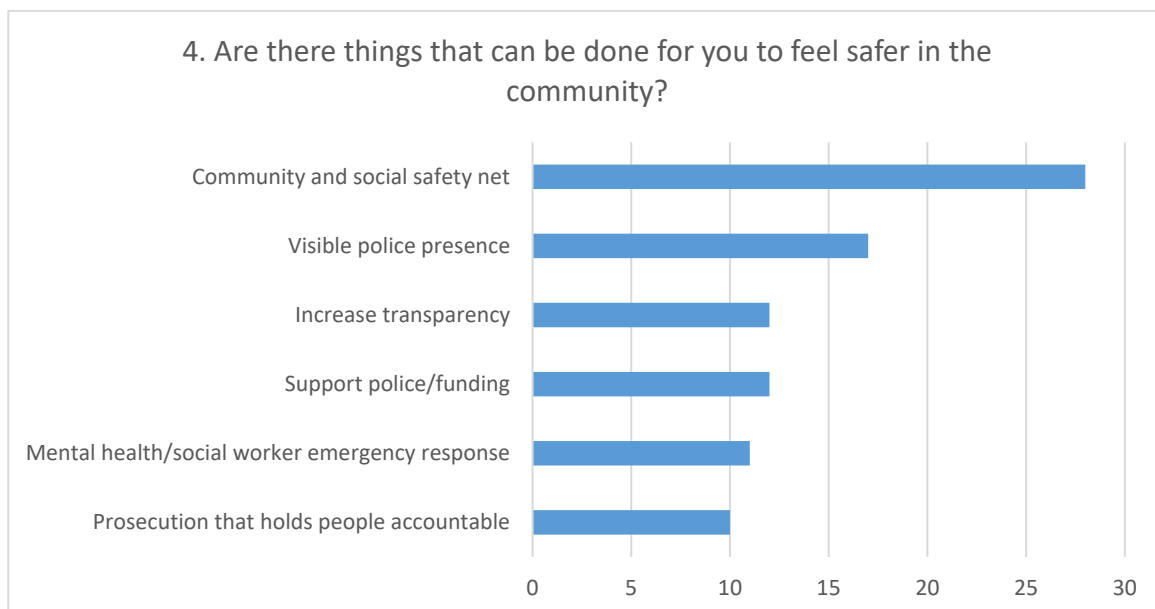
There was also support for a first responder model that would deploy mental health or social workers instead of armed police officers to crises.

*“We need a first line of response that we can trust to not escalate emergency situations. Calling for an armed police response is usually not an option and therefor makes all of us less safe.”*

Almost the same of number of responses called for prosecution that would hold people accountable and protects crime victims.

*“For the most part I feel safe. I would like to see more effort / resources to address chronic, repeat offenders. I would first like repeat offenders to be offered services to address underlying conditions that may lead to their behavior. I hope that would address a lot of the bad behavior and/or crime and help people toward a better life. However, after that is exhausted there must be consequences for criminal actions.”*

*“Clean up the sidewalks. Get tough on crime so the message gets out Burien no longer tolerates unlawful behaviour.”*



### **Question 5: How would you prioritize spending when there is limited public funding?**

The largest number of responses called for improving community conditions by ensuring people's basic needs were met.

*"Spend money on the people living in our communities and their DAILY welfare. When people have their basic needs met, desperation decreases."*

The next largest number called for continued or increased support and funding for police services.

*"I would ensure that the police and fire departments remain fully funded since they are most important to public safety."*

A smaller number of responses called for defunding or reducing the funding to police services.

*"I would cut the bloated police budget (45% of our city's budget) and reinvest this spending on community and city lead organizations working on solutions to address the basic needs of the community (housing, health access to resources). I would prioritize spending on the development of appropriate responses to non-violent crimes, such as homelessness, vagrancy, drug use-hiring social workers for example. I would invest in community lead organizations wherein the BIPOC community takes the lead in addressing police reform and ideas around community safety."*

Several people stated that safety from physical harm was a top priority for them and that it should be a top priority for local government.

*"Public safety is local government's primary responsibility. If you don't do it no other level of government will. Without civil order everything else is undermined."*

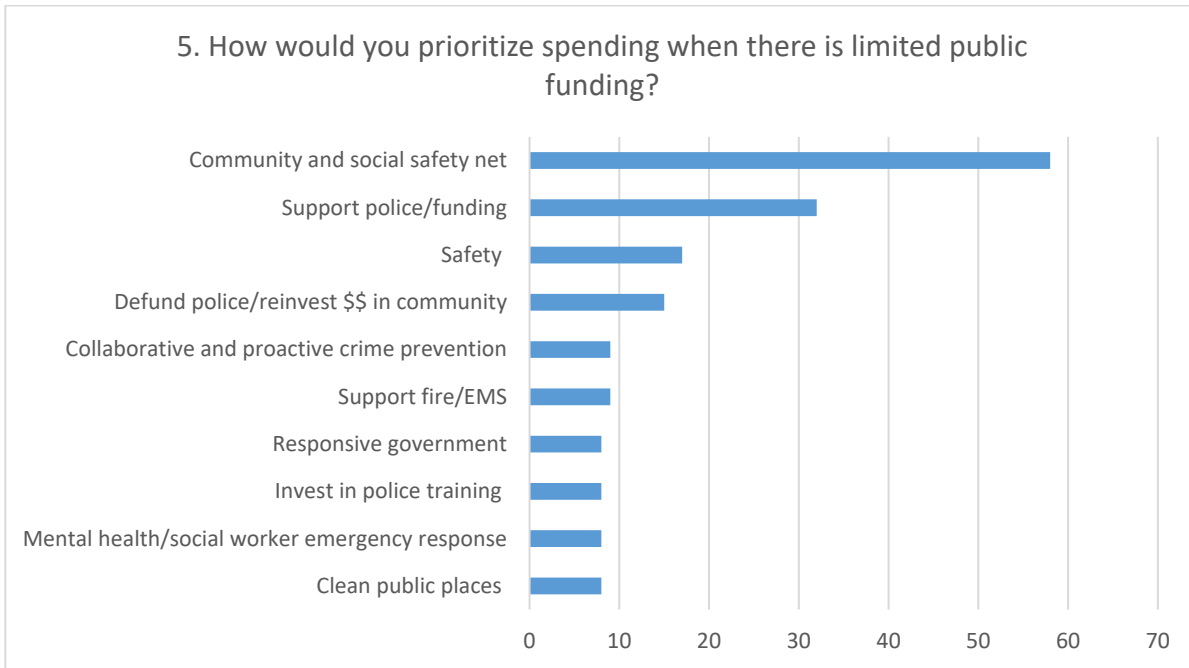
There was some support for collaborative and proactive crime prevention programs like LEAD and Community Court as well as for a mental health or social worker first response model.

*"LEAD program. Community Court. Police patrols on street. There should be countywide efforts on the homeless, mentally ill, gangs, and drug addicted as these are countywide problems."*

And there was some who called for investing resources into ensuring public spaces were safe and clean.

*"Keep the parks and community spaces clean and welcoming for people to gather and make friends with each other and neighbors."*





**Question 6: What else would you like the Burien City Council to know about public safety?**

Responses to this question in many cases included the repetition of themes mentioned earlier in the survey. The most popular themes were centered around addressing visible issues, such as homelessness and visible drug use, improving community conditions by supporting the social safety net, and emphasizing the importance of safety to the individuals responding to the survey.

*“I think Burien is much better off than cities like Seattle. With more families moving from West Seattle to get into bigger homes we need to show them Burien is a safe place to live. I still hear “Burien, that is not safe” I may have been one of those people once upon a time. Burien is not perfect, and still has room to grow as far as public safety. The best thing I could say is reduce the amount of homeless in the downtown corridor and more outreach. Look at downtown compared to Olde Town. Just blocks from each other but they look so different.”*

*“We need to keep open minds, not spend so much on police (\$250,000/year for each officer??) and try to solve the problems that cause distress for the community. The money would be better spent on housing, food, finding people employment, etc.”*

*“Public Safety is about the safety of the whole community, especially BIPOC communities which have bared the brunt of over policing, harassment and police killings. BIPOC people must be involved and represented in problem solving these public safety issues. Public safety means that BIPOC communities can feel safe that they will not be killed or harassed by police.”*

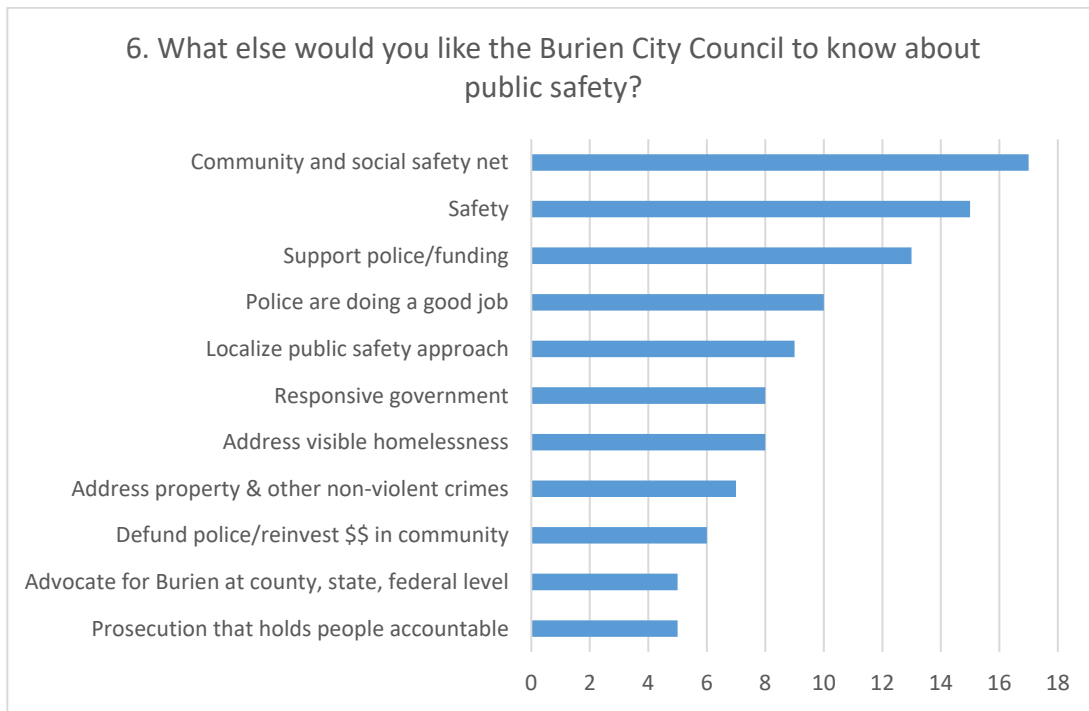
There were several responses that complimented the Burien Police Department and the leadership of Chief Ted Boe.

*“I believe we do not have racial tension within the police department of burien. I think these issues happen in Seattle but not the city of burien. I think certain members of the burien city Council are proselytizing their own personal agenda that doesn’t fit the community. I have worked as a social worker within the city of burien, I’ve seen countless of times when police*

*officers have responded to emergency situations with people of color in psychotic distress and they've handled it professionally. To defund the Burien Police Department at this time without a comprehensive plan in place would be ill fitting. If anything, there needs to be more resources and more education around gang activity, if there is a problem with that in the community."*

Concerns were raised about the death of Tommy Le and the Office of Law Enforcement and Oversight's (OLEO) report on use of excessive force in the King County Sheriff's Office. This is also where several respondents encouraged both the community and the city leaders to advocate for Burien at the county, state, and federal level.

*"Public safety relies heavily on active involvement of neighbors. Public funding is inadequate for needed services. This will require changes to local, regional, state, and federal revenue streams and how those funds are allocated. We need our Council to push other governmental representatives to enable these changes as our local funding is restricted."*



## RECOMMENDED NEXT STEPS

Staff recommends the following activities occur next. It is staff's recommendation that the forthcoming rounds of community engagement ask more specific questions or have the community react to specific policy proposals.

Staff is recommending that we proceed to the next steps of the community engagement plan, which involves working with community leaders and partners to convene more community conversations on this topic. In order to give both the community and staff appropriate time to develop this approach, staff recommends that these next steps begin in early 2021.

Staff recommends that after the next round of feedback is gathered, that Council host another town hall style meeting, with the format to be determined once we are closer to the date as public health restrictions may still be in place.

# APPENDIX A: PREVIOUS COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT EFFORTS

The City of Burien has sought community feedback on public safety and police services in the past. We've provided links to those reports for further reading.

Every two years since 2008, the City has deployed a community assessment survey, and each survey includes questions about public safety. [View reports from past community assessment surveys.](#)

In 2018, Burien Police Chief Scott Kimerer retired, and the City implemented a community engagement process to seek feedback on what the community wanted to see in their police services and police leadership. The City also hosted a town hall meeting on violence in the community. Results from those two community engagement efforts can be found in [COMMUNITY CONVERSATIONS: Report Summarizing Community Feedback on Police Services and Leadership in Burien.](#)

# APPENDIX B: PUBLIC SAFETY PROGRAMS

The City has worked with the Burien Police Department, King County, and other community partners to establish public safety programs that are designed to address the root causes of criminal activity. Brief summaries of those programs are listed below.

## Law Enforcement Assisted Diversion (LEAD) program

The Burien Law Enforcement Assisted Diversion (LEAD) program will divert people who have committed certain misdemeanors into community-based treatment and support services—including housing, health care, job training, treatment and mental health support—instead of processing them through the traditional criminal justice system. Burien LEAD's goal is to improve public safety and public order, and to reduce the criminal behavior of people who participate in the program. The misdemeanors eligible for the program include low-level drug possession (VUCSA), trespass, prostitution, misdemeanor theft, and unlawful bus conduct. Any individual victims would be consulted about the proposal to divert and their views would be taken into account. All referrals to LEAD will be screened and approved by law enforcement.

Individuals who have certain violent offenses in their criminal history will not be eligible to participate. The program will not work with traffic-related offenses including DUI, domestic violence, rape and sexual assault, murder and felony assault, and gang-related activity.

Launched in October 2011, the program is operational in most police precincts of the Seattle Police Department and Metro Transit Police. The national LEAD program operates in 30 communities across the country, from large cities to small rural communities. The Burien LEAD program launched in early June 2019.

An [evaluation by researchers at the University of Washington](#) in 2015 showed that LEAD significantly reduced recidivism. People in LEAD were 58 percent less likely than people in the control group to be arrested.

Outreach workers will be on-call 24-7. Case managers will be expected to handle up to 25 cases at one time. The program will have capacity to serve up to 100 people in Burien per year.

- [King County LEAD program](#)

## Community Court and Community Resource Center

Burien Community Court program aims to help people who repeatedly cycle through the criminal justice system and build stronger and safer neighborhoods. In partnership with King County, this alternative problem-solving court goes beyond punitive actions to address the underlying challenges court participants' face and help people help themselves.

This court works with individuals who have committed non-violent misdemeanors such a theft, shoplifting, trespassing, and other low-level offenses. Participants are presented alternatives to traditional punishments like fines, imprisonment, and probation and instead receive court directed community services they must pursue to have their case dismissed. Many of these services can be accessed through a community resource center that is open to the public and co-located with the community court.

Community court hearings and the [community resource center](#) occur every Monday at the Burien Community Center.

- [King County Community Court Page](#)
- [Burien Community Resource Center](#)

This program was put on a temporary hold because of the COVID-19 pandemic, but Burien leaders are advocating for its return.

## Navigation Team

The City operates a Navigation Team to bring resources to community members living outside and in encampments. The Navigation Team is comprised of specially trained members of the Burien Police Department, the City's human services manager, parks maintenance staff, and outreach workers trained in working with people experiencing homelessness from [Evergreen Treatment Services REACH program](#), [Sound](#), and [Catholic Community Services' CRew \(Counseling, Recovery and Wellness\) program](#).

The Navigation Team works together to first build trust with people living on the streets. The team also tries to reduce barriers to accessing services, which can include transportation and one-on-one follow up with individuals. The goal is to get people the assistance they need to be self-sufficient again. Building a relationship with people is fundamental to the Navigation Team's approach. The Navigation Team goes out twice per month, but members of the team work every day to connect vulnerable people living unsheltered to services and safer spaces as well as to remove encampments that pose serious public health and safety risks.

During the outreach sessions, the team contacts the most vulnerable people in the city and encourages them to accept services. This work helps to divert people from jails and emergency rooms to service providers that can help get them on a path toward long-term stability.

When people are living in a park or other public property, the team works together to follow a process designed to balance the rights of people living unsheltered with the City's responsibility to maintain public health and safety. This includes giving notice to the individual through multiple visits from outreach workers. People are encouraged to move to another location on their own. If people refuse to comply with the notice, the Navigation Team will remove an encampment after 72 hours. When people are camping on private property, the Navigation Team will work with the private property owner.

# APPENDIX C: HUMAN SERVICES

In recognition of the significant need for human services support in our community, the Burien City Council allocates a portion of the General Fund budget to grant funding to organizations delivering direct service in our community. In the spring of every even year (2020, 2022, etc.), Burien, along with 17 other King County cities, accepts requests for human services funding using one common application. \$6.50 per capita is allocated to the Burien Human Services Fund, equaling \$345,000 per year. The City will also receive close to \$46,000 per year in human services funding from the federal government's Community Development Block Grant funding. Funds will be dispersed to organizations quarterly over a two-year period.

The Human Services Fund is only one component of the larger social safety net that Burien residents can access. The local county, state, and federal government, as well as local utilities, philanthropic organizations, and schools, also provide significant resources to support Burien residents in need. However, despite this, Burien still has a high number of people living in poverty, who are housing insecure, and who are at risk of falling further behind.

[List of organizations that receive funding in last cycle.](#)

## Human Services Fund Priorities and Goals (Results and Strategies)

The City of Burien has adopted the following results and strategies as priorities for the 2021–2022 cycle. Funding priority will be given to programs that assist Burien community members to:

### **Have secure, affordable housing.**

*Strategies:*

1. Educate and connect residents to resources.
2. Decrease evictions.
3. Provide coordinated programs and services to reduce/prevent homelessness.

### **Be safe from violence within their families and communities.**

*Strategies:*

1. Provide high quality services that address domestic violence, sexual assault, and community safety.
2. Provide places to which residents at immediate risk can go.
3. Educate individuals and families about risk avoidance.

### **Be healthy, physically and mentally.**

*Strategies:*

1. Provide access to healthy, nutritious, culturally relevant food.
2. Provide access to high quality local services that address physical and mental health needs.
3. Support healthy lifestyle choices and reduction of risky behaviors.

### **Have living wage jobs.**

*Strategies:*

1. Provide education on financial literacy.
2. Provide job counseling, training, and job finding services.
3. Provide opportunities to improve employment situation.

**Have early childhood education and youth success.**

*Strategies:*

1. Provide accessible, culturally relevant, high quality early childhood and school age programs.
2. Reduce barriers to increase successful school achievement and graduation.
3. Provide afterschool or extracurricular activities to increase stability.

## APPENDIX E: CRIME REPORTS

Burien crime statistics and information can be found on the [King County Sheriff's Office \(KCSO\) website](#) or on the [City of Burien website](#).

## APPENDIX F: 2021–22 CITY OF BURIEN BUDGET

The City prepares a biennial budget during each even-numbered year for the following two-year fiscal period. Mid-biennium budget amendments are made each odd numbered year for the following fiscal year and are approved by Council. This provides an opportunity to make updates or adjustments if needed.

The budget document establishes the City's priorities and serves as a policy document, financial plan, operations guide, and communications device.

- [Preliminary 2021–2022 Budget](#) (as of October 2, 2020)

## APPENDIX G: ADVOCACY, PARTNERSHIPS, AND PROGRAMS

The departments of Human Services, Economic Development, Community Development, Public Works, and Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services work to establish effective relationships and partnerships with external partners in order to support vulnerable individuals and families, provide economic opportunity, steward our local environment, improve our local infrastructure, and provide enriching and safe experiences for people of all ages. City staff, and the City's contracted lobbyists, also advocate for [state](#) and [federal](#) legislative priorities set by Council each year.