

RICHARD CONLIN, SEATTLE CITY COUNCILMEMBER, POSITION 2

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In your opinion, what are the top 3 issues facing the City Council, and why those 3?

1. Economic recovery. In our current situation, this has to be task number one. I am working to use City resources to stimulate the economy, maintain human services, work with small businesses on a Buy Local campaign, and prepare the ground for Seattle's leadership in the next economy – the green economy.
2. Transportation. Connecting our communities through multiple modes of transportation is essential to keeping Seattle working well, and to supporting good jobs. I want to keep light rail projects moving by building University Link, starting work on light rail to the Eastside, and beginning to plan for the extension to Northgate and beyond; implement Seattle's Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plans, and make sure that road projects like SR 520 emphasize transit connectivity and environmental responsibility.
3. Hunger, human services, and housing. Too many people are left behind in the best of times, and the problem has only gotten worse in these times. I have created a Local Food Action Initiative, to tackle the challenges of hunger and malnutrition in our City, and have partnered with United Way to bring together public and private efforts into a coordinated strategy to end hunger in Seattle. I am committed to maintaining our human services programs and to continuing our work to ensure that there is a roof over every head in Seattle.

What involvement do you think the City should have in Seattle Schools decision making, and why?

While the Council has no direct role in governing Seattle Schools, we already partner with them in many issues, and I am working to strengthen this partnership. I persuaded the Council to make full funding for public schools the lead issue on our Legislative Agenda for the Washington State Legislature, even though we have no control or authority over the School District and no budget responsibility for it. I secured \$8 million in City funds that are supporting the School District's budget by being used to assist community organizations to purchase the University Heights, Allen, Fauntleroy, and Crown Hill buildings. The City already supports the School District through the Families and Education levy, and I would like to see us expand our support for schools through other such cooperative efforts, including taking on maintenance of school grounds and providing public safety assistance in schools. In the long run, I believe that a true community schools program would integrate schools in to the community and ensure their success. My three children are all graduates of Garfield High School, and I believe that schools are at the heart of our communities.

What is your opinion of the Youth Violence Initiative? Would you continue with the Initiative, why or why not? What solutions do you have for violent crime amongst young people across the city?

I believe that the way to approach violent crime among youth is to create true networks that support youth in the community – to focus on 'youth at strength' rather than 'youth at risk'. While there are a few people who are drawn to violence and must be swiftly dealt with by public safety, the answer to youth violence must involve the careful and methodical construction of webs of community support, where parents, family members, law enforcement, youth workers, schools, and everyone else who has a stake come together and ensure that youth are also given a stake in their future. We can only break the cycle of youth violence by these kinds of approaches.

The Council only approved the mayor's initiative after carefully reworking it to bring it closer to these principles. It is still not there yet, but it is a very good start in the right direction. Mentoring, community-

school involvement, and coordinated services are necessary, but not yet sufficient to fully deal with the situation. We will have to learn by doing and make modifications as we go along in order to achieve success.

What is your plan to make city government more accessible and inclusive for those who are often left out of the political process but are impacted by the decisions city electeds hand down?

I am deeply committed to true community engagement, and have created a Special Committee on Open Government. We are working to improve access to information and ensure transparency and openness in decision making, and my goal is to also create new strategies for community involvement, especially for those who are left out under current practice. We will begin our new efforts this fall, and they will range from expanding the traditional methods, such as Town Halls, to creating a web-based citizen engagement tool, to a focused and consistent program for reaching out to community groups on their own terms by attending meetings and directly contacting communities who are not participating in the traditional public hearing/Town Hall format. Many, though not all, of the neighborhood planning organizations pioneered similar techniques and were successful in engaging a wide spectrum of the population. In my role as Council President, I am trying to move the Council into this broader outreach and communication strategy.

Do you support the new jail, why or why not?

Seattle should not construct a new jail. I have been working with County Councilmembers to secure a long-term agreement with the County to continue to be the provider of necessary jail services, and that is the most appropriate strategy for maintaining jail services. We should not be assuming that we must incarcerate more and more people – instead, we should not only rely on alternatives to jails whenever possible, but focus our efforts on the reduction of crime through community efforts to prevent young people from entering the criminal justice system. This means jobs, human services, community based support networks, a stronger school system, and a focus on the dignity and worth of all members of our community. This must be combined with strategies that help people who are having problems with drugs and alcohol or who have been released from prison reintegrate into the community and have the needed support services and systems that will help them do so.

Do you think that City Councilmembers should be elected by “district”, tasked to represent the interests of certain parts of the city, much like school board members or King County Councilmembers are? Why or Why not?

I am not in favor of moving to a district system. I find that having to represent all of the people of Seattle makes me a more effective Councilmember, and requires that I understand and respond to every neighborhood and organization in the City. Communities around the City have nine people they can turn to for help, instead of being reliant on a single person, who may or may not be sympathetic to the concern of a particular group or neighborhood, and every member of the Council knows that s/he has to respond to every neighborhood, because they will have to ask for that community's votes. District representatives tend to get entrenched and their elections are non-competitive (in the last 20 years, only one incumbent County Councilmember or legislator from Seattle has ever been ousted, while no less than eight City Councilmembers have lost).

To the point: “Why should I vote for you and not the other candidate(s)?”

Seattle works best when we work together. I have the experience, the commitment, and the knowledge to work with all of Seattle's communities to create and implement a positive vision for our future – and a track record of accomplishment that demonstrates that I can get the work done. I want to continue to use my skills to strengthen our democracy and meet the needs of the diverse communities of Seattle.

My goal is to keep Seattle stable and moving forward in these challenging times. As Council President, I led my colleagues in creating and carrying out an action plan for Seattle, based on our principles of economic opportunity, environmental stewardship, social justice, and community. I want to continue this work – and keep the Council connected and accountable to the public. I am convinced that we can work together to strengthen neighborhoods, foster economic recovery from the current crisis, and make Seattle a leader in becoming a more sustainable city in our fragile world.

I've demonstrated my ability to be innovative and responsive, to make decisions that affect many lives – about public safety, transportation, health care, and education, to make tough choices, to take votes based on what I believe in -- and to stand up for the people of Seattle.

Anything you wish to add that hasn't been asked?

In the next four years, my goal is to:

- Bring Seattle back to economic health, ensure that those who are left out and left behind have the human services they need, support local business and our regional economy, and protect Seattle's environment through holistic and creative solutions to environmental issues. That is the blueprint for a sustainable future for Seattle.
- Continue to implement our neighborhood plans, growth management strategies, and transportation choices that make Seattle a safe place to walk and bicycle.
- Keep our communities safe and healthy, by supporting our parks and libraries, working for better public health, housing, education, and human services, and ensuring that our police and firefighters have the support they need.
- Continue my regional leadership work, on the Sound Transit Board to get light rail to Northgate and across Lake Washington to the Eastside, to keep moving on the Viaduct and bridge replacements, and for salmon recovery and the health of Puget Sound.
- Restore faith in government by listening and responding to citizens, valuing and supporting our diverse communities, and preserving open, accountable government and a City Council that develops superb public policy to keep Seattle vibrant, functioning, and resilient.