



EVERETT CITY COUNCIL CANDIDATE QUESTIONNAIRE

Candidate Information

Name: **Paula Rhyne**

Candidate for: Everett City Council, District 2

Campaign website: <https://www.paula4everett.com>

Background

As part of our mission to support a vibrant downtown core, the Downtown Everett Association provides leadership and awareness to the issues impacting our downtown community. We've created this candidate questionnaire – which aligns with our [mission](#) – to help voters understand the 2025 Everett City Council candidates' vision and priorities for Downtown Everett. The Downtown Everett Association does not endorse candidates; we encourage the community to read the candidates' responses below to learn how they would support a thriving downtown.

All candidates were invited to respond. Candidate responses are posted in their entirety. Typos and grammatical errors are their own.

Questions

Public Safety

Do you believe current policies, such as the service provider buffer zone ordinance, help accomplish the City's goals of promoting public safety in the downtown core? What other policies do you believe would help meet this goal, and how?

Public safety and vibrancy in our downtown is a priority for me. While I did not support the service provider buffer zone ordinance—because I believe it doesn't solve homelessness, only shifts it around—I do support policies that make our core safer and more welcoming. While enforcement has a part of the solution, safety also comes from creating a downtown that is vibrant and active.

That's why I've worked on addressing vacancies and supporting small businesses, so more people are living, shopping, and gathering downtown. Positive foot traffic and community activity are proven ways to deter crime while also strengthening our local economy. I believe Everett is safest when we pair smart enforcement with opportunities for people to thrive.

How do you believe the City can create a safe space for all members of the downtown community? How would you prioritize these measures?

Creating a safe space for everyone in our downtown means pairing public safety efforts with community investment. Safety is not only about responding to challenges, it is also about making downtown a place people want to be. That is why I prioritize activating our public spaces



with events, arts, and cultural opportunities that bring people together and foster a sense of community pride.

As chair of the City's Lodging Tax Advisory Committee, I have helped direct funding and grants to events that achieve this goal. These events draw residents and visitors downtown, boost our local businesses, and create the positive activity that naturally deters crime. Our small business owners play a key role in keeping downtown vibrant, and they deserve to feel safe and supported as they invest in our community. By investing in vibrancy alongside enforcement, we create a downtown that feels safe, welcoming, and inclusive for everyone.

Economic Vitality

How do you believe the City can help make Downtown a more attractive location for new businesses?

To make Downtown a more attractive location for new businesses, the City must focus both on recruitment and on retention because a healthy downtown ecosystem attracts new investment.

While serving on Council, I helped re-establish the Everett Chamber of Commerce and served on its formation committee. The Chamber is now positioned to play a key role in supporting entrepreneurs, advocating for our business community, and connecting new opportunities to Everett. That work is already helping to build a stronger foundation for economic growth downtown.

We should also continue to make it easier for entrepreneurs to activate vacant spaces through adaptive reuse and streamlined permitting. Reducing barriers for small business owners, while also supporting our current and fantastic placemaking efforts that draw residents and visitors downtown, creates the environment where new businesses want to open and succeed.

How can the City support existing businesses – from small to large?

Supporting businesses requires both long-term strategies and practical support. On Council, I have focused on addressing storefront vacancies by allocating \$25,000 to the DEA to support their Storefront Enhancement Grants. These grants gave small business owners the ability to make improvements they may not have been able to afford otherwise, helping our downtown recover from the economic challenges of COVID.

I also hear consistently from business owners that parking is a challenge. As chair of our Parks and Quality of Life Committee, I have directed our committee to work on solutions for downtown parking, and that work will continue in my second term. Along with tackling vacancies, supporting existing placemaking efforts, and investing in small business, addressing parking is another way I am working to make Everett a place where businesses and customers feel welcome and supported.



Public Spaces

What steps can the City take to improve Downtown Everett's public spaces, such as streets, sidewalks, parks, and places where people spend time and gather?

The Downtown Everett Association's work through the BIA makes a real difference in keeping our public spaces clean and welcoming, and I am grateful for their ongoing efforts to address graffiti and litter. Their work provides a strong foundation for how we can continue improving our streets, sidewalks, parks, and gathering places.

As a former council liaison to the Cultural Arts Commission, I have seen firsthand how public art, the arts, and artists can play a powerful role in activating and improving public spaces. Murals, sculptures, and cultural programming not only make our streets more beautiful but also draw people downtown, support local artists, and foster a sense of community pride. I also believe we should explore opportunities to infill surface parking lots with uses that bring more activity, housing, or jobs to the core, including considering pocket parks or urban tree canopy enhancements that make downtown more welcoming and livable. By working together with the DEA, small business owners, artists, and the broader community, we can ensure downtown Everett's public spaces are vibrant, safe, and inviting for everyone.

Transportation

How can the City increase accessibility to Downtown and help people feel more connected to our neighboring communities? What are your priorities in regards to bicycle infrastructure, public transportation, pedestrian experience, parking, etc.?

I believe accessibility to downtown depends on a strong commitment to multi-modal transportation. People should feel safe and comfortable getting downtown whether they drive, ride the bus, bike, or walk. That is why I have consistently participated in "A Week Without Driving" and supported investments that make it easier for people to move around Everett without depending only on cars.

Our own Everett Transit system does good work serving riders in our community, and I support continued investment in transit as well as safer bicycle infrastructure and an improved pedestrian experience. Parking is part of the picture too, and I have directed our Parks and Quality of Life Committee to explore downtown parking challenges. It is also important that we keep in mind people with limited mobility and ensure our improvements make it easier, not harder, for them to access downtown.

I also see opportunities to activate alleys and explore pedestrian-only streets in select areas. When done thoughtfully, these projects can create safer and more vibrant spaces that attract customers, bring more families downtown, and support our small businesses. By creating a transportation system and public spaces that work for everyone, we make downtown more accessible, welcoming, and connected to our neighboring communities.



Historic Preservation

In your view, how important are Downtown Everett's historic buildings to its social vibrancy and economic vitality, and why? What would be your approach be to incentivizing the preservation of these buildings?

Historic preservation is essential to downtown Everett's social vibrancy and economic vitality. Our stretches of old brick buildings give Everett its unique character and are part of what makes people want to live, visit, and invest here. As the Council liaison to the Historic Commission, I have seen how preservation strengthens community pride and creates opportunities for growth, including tourism that draws visitors downtown and supports our local businesses.

I believe building owners, the City, and the community all share responsibility for keeping these treasures well cared for. I see an opportunity for the City to play a stronger role in establishing incentives or enforcements that make preservation easier and more attractive. By working together and holding one another accountable, we can ensure Everett's historic buildings remain a source of pride and vitality for generations to come.

Additional

With the Everett 2044 Comprehensive Plan and Development Regulations going into effect, describe your related approach to zoning, density, allocation of city resources, and the priority for growth in the downtown core.

With the Everett 2044 Comprehensive Plan guiding our growth, my approach was to ensure zoning and development decisions create vibrant, livable neighborhoods across the city while recognizing that downtown will continue to be the hub for our most dense growth. That balance allows us to support housing choices citywide while focusing key resources on strengthening the center of Everett.

Housing, jobs, and transportation are all central to this vision. The new apartment buildings going up downtown will bring more residents, more energy, and more positive foot traffic that supports small businesses and helps make the core feel safer. At the same time, continued investment in job growth, mixed-use development, and multimodal transportation ensures downtown is not just a place to live, but also a place to work and gather. By pairing density with improvements in public spaces, infrastructure, and environmental protections, we can grow in a way that improves quality of life and keeps downtown Everett a strong anchor for economic vitality and community pride.

Is there any additional information you would like to share about your candidacy that would be helpful for downtown residents, workers, and visitors to know?

Downtown is the heart of Everett, and as the daughter of a small business owner, a mom of two young kids who love our downtown events, and someone who shops and eats here often, I know firsthand how important it is that our core is safe, welcoming, and full of opportunity. During my time on council, I have worked to make that vision real by leading efforts such as directing funding through the Lodging Tax Advisory Committee to support events and activation, helping re-establish the Everett Chamber of Commerce to strengthen business support, and



championing storefront improvement grants that give small businesses tools to thrive. My service as liaison to both the Historic Commission and the Cultural Arts Commission, along with my role as chair of the Parks and Quality of Life Committee, has deepened my commitment to preserving what makes Everett unique while investing in what makes it vibrant.

Public safety is essential to this vision, which is why I have supported strategies that combine smart enforcement with long-term solutions to create a truly safe and thriving downtown. I am proud of the progress we've made together, and I am excited to keep building a downtown that reflects the creativity, grittiness, and pride of our community.