

BURIEN, WASHINGTON

# CITY MANAGER



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## BURIEN, WASHINGTON CITY MANAGER

**Burien, WA (pop. 52,066)** is searching for a city manager with excellent administrative, communication, and leadership skills. Burien needs a city manager excited to lead an ethnically and culturally rich city and welcomes the challenge of leading a dynamic and transforming city that will celebrate its 30th Anniversary in 2023.

Burien is located in King County, 10 miles south of downtown Seattle, five minutes from SeaTac International Airport, 5 miles from a major retail hub. The city is conveniently located Burien is the 23rd largest city in the state, covering 13 square miles. The City manages more than 360 acres of parks, including a unique beachfront park that serves as a regional destination and marine sanctuary. The parks system also includes 18 miles of trails and two community centers. The transportation system consists of 59 miles of sidewalks and 170 miles of roadways. In fact, Walk Score ranks Burien as the third most walkable city in Washington state. The city is serviced by King County Metro's bus transit center in Downtown and a new rapid ride bus that will run north-south through the city. Buses quickly connect to the Sound Transit light rail system.

The city manager will need to be committed to values of equity and social justice. The city manager is expected to work with the City Council and staff to provide opportunities for all people in Burien to benefit equally from city services,

processes, and investments, regardless of identity, community, or socioeconomic circumstances. The City Council recently adopted the Comprehensive Plan and it will be the city manager's responsibility to implement the plan. More than half of Burien residents are from communities of color. Individuals who identify as Latino or Hispanic make up Burien's largest ethnic group at nearly a quarter of the total population. More than 50 different languages are spoken and approximately 35 percent of residents speak a language other than English at home.

Many residents are new to the city, while others have historic ties. The community is one of the fastest growing in the Seattle area and many young families choose to make Burien their home. Burien is a popular place to move given lower housing costs. NerdWallet lists Burien as one the top places to raise a family.

Residents enjoy a multitude of outdoor adventures including hiking, boating, fishing, kayaking, water skiing, and golf, a variety of cultural and arts experiences nearby, as well as vistas of Mt. Rainier and six miles of Puget Sound shoreline. Burien's downtown is noted for its small-town charm, featuring many small businesses such as boutique retail and restaurants. Diners enjoy food from every continent (except Antarctica!). The [New York Times](#) praised Burien's diverse restaurants, and local news outlets regularly highlight Burien's growing restaurant scene.



Burien has a growing creative economy, with many artists and arts businesses now calling the community home. Residents visit the Farmers Market and monthly art walks. Seasonal festivals generate year-round activity and excitement. Downtown has an infectious sense of vitality and diversity, including numerous outdoor dining choices.

The City actively collaborates with local jurisdictions, King County, the Port of Seattle, and state and federal agencies and officials to address complex issues affecting Burien. The City also has strong relationships with a network of local nonprofits supporting social services and other community-based organizations.

While most businesses in Burien are small, the key large employers are related to healthcare and public education. The city is home to two significant medical centers and several smaller healthcare providers. Highline Public Schools enjoys strong public support and offers unique educational opportunities designed to educate a 21st century workforce with several choice schools and has rebuilt several new schools over the past decade, including the historic Highline High School located in the heart of Burien.

The ideal city manager will welcome the challenge of leading a dynamic and transforming city as a policy convener, governance resource, and staff mentor. Community stakeholders and employees are looking for a collaborative, trustworthy, approachable, and communicative leader. [www.burienwa.gov/CityManagerSearch](http://www.burienwa.gov/CityManagerSearch)



## QUALITY OF LIFE IN BURIED

Burien is a 100-year-old community that was just incorporated in 1993. Burien's residents feel immense pride in their community. Burien is where people want to be because of its proximity to Seattle, downtown, rich diversity, affordability, walkability, access to SeaTac International Airport, the Puget Sound shoreline, and reputation as a "foodie paradise." Burien is fondly described by its staff and residents as being "fun" and "vibrant" and "one of the coolest cities."

Burien residents are welcoming, know their neighbors, and work together, enjoying robust civic and cultural participation. Burien promotes community vitality with health and wellness services for all ages. Burien encourages active living to support physical and mental health. Burien ensures public safety through both crime prevention and law enforcement. Burien embraces diversity and welcomes all residents. Burien celebrates the many cultures and backgrounds of its residents. Burien cultivates a thriving array of businesses and community centers. Burien promotes and supports arts, culture, and heritage. Burien fosters partnerships with other civic groups and nonprofits.

Burien's institutions actively promote early childhood education and life-long learning. Burien supports its youth with programs to augment its schools. Programs for special needs are well respected. Burien believes that quality schools are essential to its long-term success.

The Highline School District offers a comprehensive public-school education from preschool to high school. Students graduate prepared for college, career, and citizenship. Highline Schools are perceived by nearby school systems as being progressive in supporting young people of color. The school district has made a promise to "know every student by name, strength, and need." Two dual language schools are provided: Spanish/English and Vietnamese/English. A variety of nearby high schools provide occupational preparatory services and include an Aviation and a Maritime High School as well as Evergreen High School for health and human services track students. All high schools are internship oriented. <https://www.highlineschools.org/about/district-information>

Both public and parochial school systems provide high quality instruction with a 20:1 or better teacher ratio. School choices include Three Tree Montessori School with a regionally respected Montessori program pre-k-6th. and Tiny Trees Preschool which is an innovative outdoor preschool that offers classes at Seahurst and Dottie Harper Parks. Additional school choices are St. Bernadette, St. Francis of Assisi School, and John F. Kennedy Catholic High School.

Burien conserves its natural environment and public waterfronts. Burien treasures parks and open spaces and welcomes opportunities for more. The City of Burien makes sustainable land, energy, water, and transportation choices. Burien has 23 parks on 363 acres of land, and 18 miles of pathways and trails.

The Highline Heritage Museum in downtown Burien and the nearby Museum of Flight aviation museum are best-in-class cultural experiences.

## ECONOMY

Burien is one of the fastest growing communities in King County, which is in itself one of the fastest growing metro areas in the country. It is increasingly eclectic and diverse. There are thousands of employment opportunities across hundreds of different sectors. With an unemployment rate of 4.5%, multiple job opportunities exist for the new city manager's family members. All forecasts show Seattle will continue to be a high demand area for the foreseeable future.

Although Burien is an inner suburb, it does not lack growth. Downtown Burien continues to add new forms of housing and capital investments. Small, eclectic businesses epitomize the Pacific Northwest's creative economy, featuring new award-winning culinary choices. Burien has diverse grocery options, including a Trader Joe's and PCC (a local cooperative grocery outlet similar to Whole Foods) and has a wide range of shopping options. Market-rate and affordable housing continues to be built in downtown Burien, creating a vibrant, multi-generational neighborhood right outside Burien's City Hall.

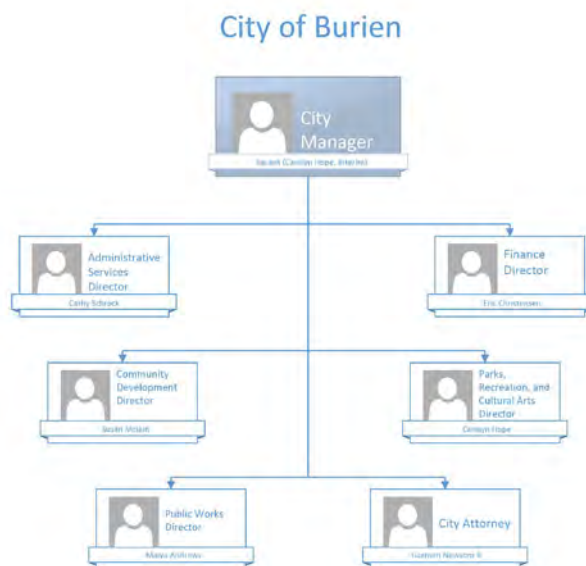
The city manager's office and the Seattle Southside Chamber of Commerce are active in promoting economic development and business attraction programs whose goals include increasing the property tax base as well as sales tax revenue, and diversifying the economy. Another goal is to capitalize on the international airport's proximity with future hotels, conferences, offices, and tourism. A second plan is to synergize the large healthcare economy with existing businesses and the downtown. Land assembly is a primary task. [Discover Burien.](#)



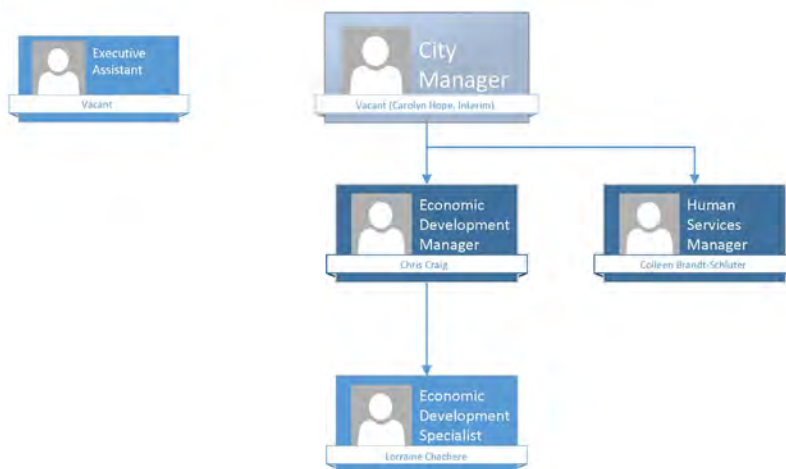
## ORGANIZATION AND BUDGET

The City of Burien has a Council-Manager form of government. The seven members of the City Council are elected to serve four-year terms. The Mayor is elected by the Council for a two-year term, the Deputy Mayor is elected annually by the Council. Three new Council members took office in January. The new City Council is ambitious and wants progressive programmatic and policy changes.

The city manager serves as the Chief Executive Officer of the municipal government and is responsible for managing Burien's administrative operations and ensures the delivery of quality services consistent with the City Council's policy direction. The city manager is appointed by and serves at the will of the City Council.



### City Managers Office





The City Council is looking for a city manager that is not concerned about seeking a majority vote but rather someone who is able to balance objective and nuanced information in a timely way that cuts through political opinion. The City Council also needs a culturally competent professional manager to lead training and teambuilding on governance systems for the purpose of maximizing each participant's role, expectation, and results. As a progressive board, the City Council knows it needs a city manager to help with what is possible collectively, rather than what is individually wanted. Their intent is to find ways to maximize communication and shared learning.

The City provides a range of services to its residents through its departments including Community Development, Finance, Administrative Services, Public Works, Legal, Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services, and the city manager's Office that includes Economic Development and Human Services. The City contracts with King County Sheriff's Office for police services. Fire services are provided by King County Fire District 2. Water, sewer, and power are provided by outside public and private entities.

The City's operations budget totals \$54 million, including \$35 million for the General Fund and a capital plan of \$5 million. The City has 100 employees and one bargaining unit. The largest expenditure is for police services (40%). The General Fund's fund balance meets the 20 percent required reserve as well as \$9 million extra reserved for funding for a future Public Works/ParCS Maintenance Facility. The City has earned the Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting for multiple years (GFOA) and recently achieved a Aa1 credit rating upgrade. Both the City Council and City staff will be working during the next biennial budget process to secure more resources to support services or risk a budget imbalance in 2025 or 2026.



## KEY 2022 PROJECTS & PROGRAMS

Burien is interested in specifically addressing social justice needs and fostering housing and community improvements while enhancing existing services and increasing the tax base. The following plans are currently being accomplished:

- Implementation of ARPA Funding Allocation (\$10.8 million)
- Council Strategic Plan
- Parks, Recreation and Open Space Plan
- Comprehensive Plan
- Transportation Master Plan
- Stormwater Management Action Plan
- Ambaum and Boulevard Park Subarea Plans
- Emergency Management Plan
- Equitable Community Engagement Program
- Advancing Racial Equity Chartering
- Contract policing updates with King County
- Affordable Housing Demonstration Program
- Enhanced Safety Program Implementation (EMS, Mental, Police)
- Prepare and Adopt 2023-24 Biennial Budget



## BURIEN BY THE NUMBERS

Number of City Employees: **100**

Housing Units: **19,874**

Homeownership Rate: **55%**

Household Income, Median: **\$71,233**

Home Sale Values, Median: **\$645,000** (Redfin)

Rent, Median: **\$1,365**

### RACE AND ETHNICITY:

**47.5%** White      **24.5%** Hispanic or Latino;  
**14%** Asian      **7.6%** Black or African American

Foreign Born: **25.1%**

High School Graduation Rate: **84%**

Bachelor's Degree: **19.6%**

Poverty: **12.2%** (Statewide is 10.2%)





## BURIEN TEAM STRENGTH AND DYNAMICS

The city manager is the head of the administration, serves as the principal advisor to the City Council, and acts as the liaison between the Council and the staff. The phrase "policy convener" is being used to express that Burien City government is looking for a City Manager who has the ability to hear information from both sides and exercise objectivity. Although remaining neutral and objective is essential, being able to flexibly grasp the needs, weigh options, and chart the implementation steps necessary will be essential.

To this end, the new city manager will want to become enmeshed in the community, exercise compassionate leadership, and attend a variety of events and programs recommended by City Council and staff. This will build relationships and help the city manager better understand the operational impacts of new policies on financial, staffing, and regulatory matters. Building on existing community partnerships will be key.

Although the City Council is interested in moving multiple new policies forward at once, the city manager will need to rely on their experience to create a shared learning environment on governance. Recognizing that the city manager and the administrative teams are responsible for policy implementation, the community will be asked to understand the advance steps necessary for effective implementation. Time, coordination, sequencing, and proper staffing is needed.

The staff is enthusiastic and willing to implement new and better ideas. The staff is known for their sense of humor and flexibility. The City staff are not stuck in silos and work well with multiple local, state, and federal agencies and nonprofits in seeking additional funding opportunities and partnerships.

City managers who want an eclectic environment to apply their skills of servant leadership and public service will be energized, yet the new city manager may wish to reorganize/add staff support within budgetary means to ensure long-term effectiveness. The organization is flat with many administrative leaders handling implementation details. The new city manager will need to conscientiously support the staff, recognize their accomplishments, and occasionally push back on the prioritization of changes. The new city manager can be most impactful by addressing governance knowledge needs and mutual team building.

The new city manager will need to be strategic, decisive, and stick to their word while being willing to try unconventional and innovative strategies, including a reliable communications system between Burien's policy advocates and staff implementation teams.

In summary, the City is looking for a city manager who will be:

- Effective and transparent in establishing mutually beneficial working relationships with elected officials, staff, and the general public.
- Able to work with City Council and staff to speed up, or slow down as the case may be, to assist in creating a more harmonious and effective whole. One Council member described this as "finding the rhythm to Burien's song."
- Able to make Council aware of financial policies, limitations, and procedures and is open to questions and in educating, as well as being educated, on policy options.
- A consensus builder and statesperson who is calm, level-headed, and an effective project manager and who can have uncomfortable conversations and communicate well about things that may cause discomfort.
- Empathetic and compassionate and have a demonstrated solid foundation, training, knowledge, and/or lived experience with racial equity and undoing structural racism.
- Invested in the community, building relationships, asking good questions, and understanding that people without privilege need the means to achieve equal access. Embody transparency, integrity, trust, and promote equitable outcomes and leads by example with face-to-face availability.
- Available in times of crisis and invested in staff development and retention.

## UPCOMING ACTIONS

The Burien community and Council will need assistance with coordinating and completing the following additional priorities and opportunities. Although some feel that Burien is changing too fast, Burien City Council believes it must innovate to promote equity, address social issues, and remain vibrant. The staff and Council believe that leading with services and restorative practices to address mental health and other behaviors before they become criminal is the best public safety strategy, for example.

The City is also implementing new zoning and other policies to enhance livability and housing for all residents across the socio-economic spectrum in all neighborhoods. Business entrepreneurship will continue to be embraced since small businesses in Burien are some of largest sales taxpayers and job creators:

- Address Diversity/Equity/Inclusion goals in policy implementation, staff recruitment, and citywide systems.
- Facilitate and direct long-term, strategic planning to improve parks, human services, police, and economic development services.
- Construct a Public Works and Parks Maintenance facility and increase active uses of parks by adding park active plan facilities.
- Add additional programs to address youth violence, gang prevention, poverty, and the mental health crisis.
- Create a plan to resolve flooding and septic issues in the northeast area of the city.
- Address organizational development, staff team building, strategic conversations, and mentoring needs. Assist staff with work/life balance.
- Maximize bringing businesses into Burien.

## IDEAL CANDIDATE ATTRIBUTES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The ideal candidate will be an enthusiastic and hardworking public official who is willing to make difficult and potentially controversial decisions on multiple fronts to move Burien forward.

The ideal candidate will need to be a dynamic leader who will have the soft skills necessary to listen, care, and appropriately act within a governance system to prioritize actions associated with diverse values, voices, and beliefs. Although the Council is in charge of policymaking decisions, a strong yet empathetic city manager is needed to both recognize what needs to be researched to enable policy change while not falling victim to advocating personal opinions.

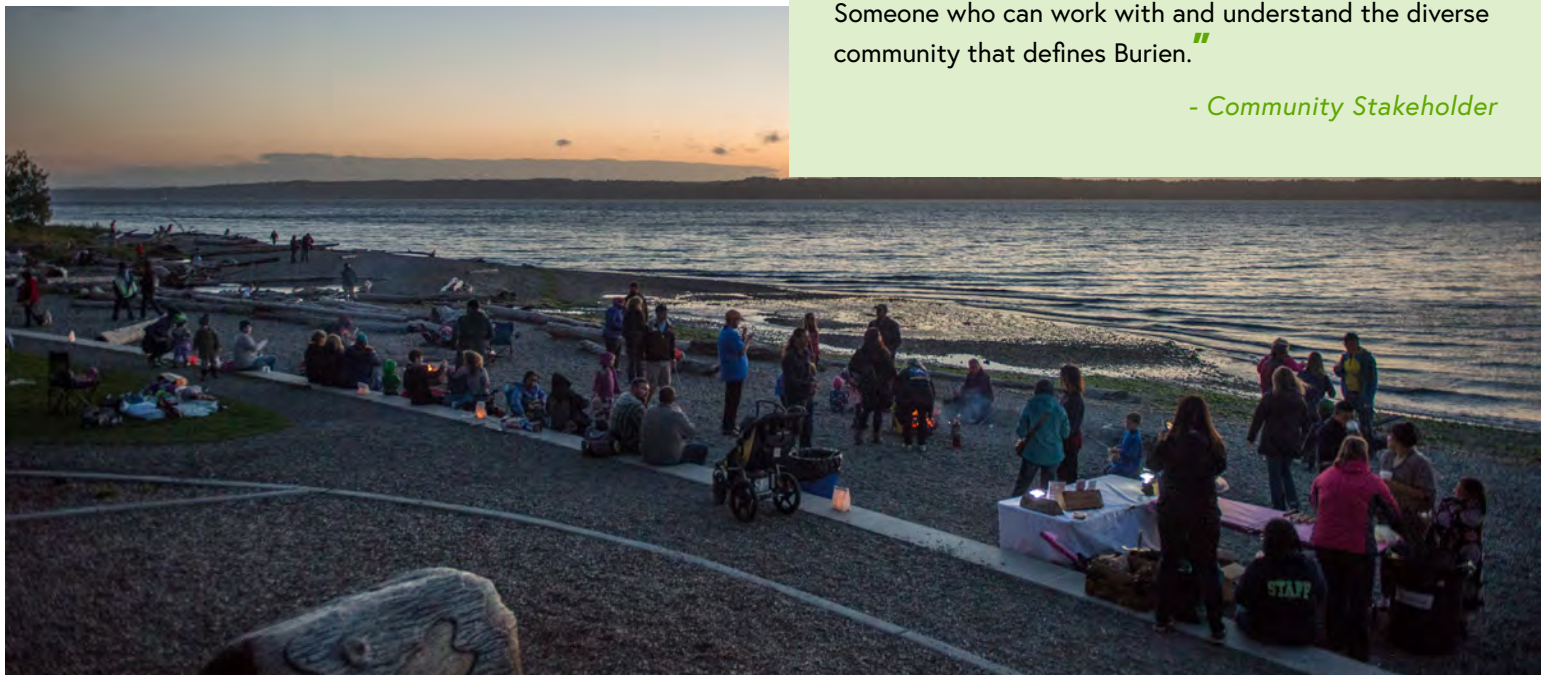
The ideal candidate will need to provide appropriate buffering between the City Council and the staff, as well as to be a patient and effective coordinator of viable policy ideas. The new city manager can be assured that the professional staff is energetic and ready to get behind a strong leader. It will be essential to maintain this respect by managing staff workloads and priorities, yet also being responsive to new policy ideas in a way that achieves realistic consensus.

The ideal candidate will demonstrate proven effectiveness in negotiating beneficial outcomes with County, State, and Federal Governments, special districts, and authorities.

In summary, the ideal candidate will demonstrate effectiveness at supervising administrative affairs, hiring and managing staff, enforcing codes and updating them per Council's direction, and delivering a budget to Council. See the [job description](#) and State of Washington Code. [RCW 35A.13.080: City Manager—Powers and duties.](#)

“Burien is the 23rd largest city in Washington state. It is important to find a communicative, collaborative, trustworthy, and strong manager and voice for the city. Someone who can work with and understand the diverse community that defines Burien.”

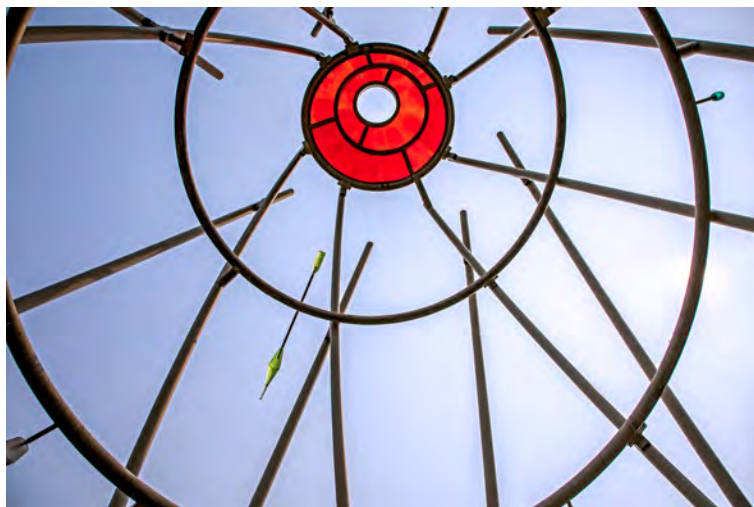
- Community Stakeholder



## SUCCESSFUL CANDIDATE REQUIREMENTS

- Bachelor's degree in Public Administration or related field
- Five (5) years of leadership experience in municipal government or related public institutions involving responsibility for the planning, organization and execution of a varied work program, or a combination of education, experience and training that provides the candidate with the knowledge and skills to perform the job
- Knows the principles and techniques of policy development and collaboration and capable of providing unbiased information to the City Council
- Ability to plan strategically and implement complex and creative programs
- Experience with being a policy convener and demonstrated capability with evaluating alternative policy approaches objectively
- Skilled in recruiting and developing talent
- Exercises sound and ethical judgment
- Knowledge of systems and implementation tools for enhancement of diversity and inclusion
- Skilled in local and regional governmental collaboration
- Knowledge of institutional systems and inequities as they relate to diversity and inclusion
- Demonstrated ability to listen to, and work with, elected and appointed teams on meaningful solutions with a sense of calm and stability
- Work with and coordinate personnel while encouraging their professional development
- Honesty, integrity, and compassion
- Knowledge of principles and techniques of project management
- Demonstrated accountability for services provided to the community
- Demonstrated public speaking proficiency





## PREFERRED CANDIDATE CREDENTIALS

- A master's degree in a related field
- Experience as a city manager in a comparable city
- Experience with contracted governmental services
- Residency is preferred yet not required

## COMPENSATION & BENEFITS

Burien offers an excellent opportunity for an experienced professional looking to make a difference in a beautiful community in a dynamic and growing region. The annual salary range for this position is \$215,000 - \$235,000, DOQ/E. Burien has a strong collaborative work environment culture. Some telework is allowed.

Burien offers a generous compensation and benefits package which includes a vehicle allowance, medical, dental, vision, two retirement plans (a Public Employee Retirement System defined benefit plan and a 401A Social Security Replacement plan), a 457 deferred compensation option, long term disability and life insurance, 13 paid holidays plus one additional floating holiday, management leave, vacation, sick leave, and a Flexible Spending Account for daycare and other health expenses, plus a qualified tax-free commuter expense reimbursement program.

## TO APPLY AND INTERVIEW DATES

Submit cover letter, resume, and five professional references by May 13, 2022. Click on [www.GovHRjobs.com](http://www.GovHRjobs.com) to apply. For questions, email: [rcotton@govhrusa.com](mailto:rcotton@govhrusa.com). Interviews will be June 9, 10 & 13. Applicants will be screened continuously. Applications are confidential until permission given. Expected start date is late July 2022. Equal Opportunity/ADA Employer. Position open until filled. <https://www.burienwa.gov>.



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