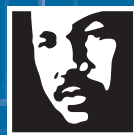
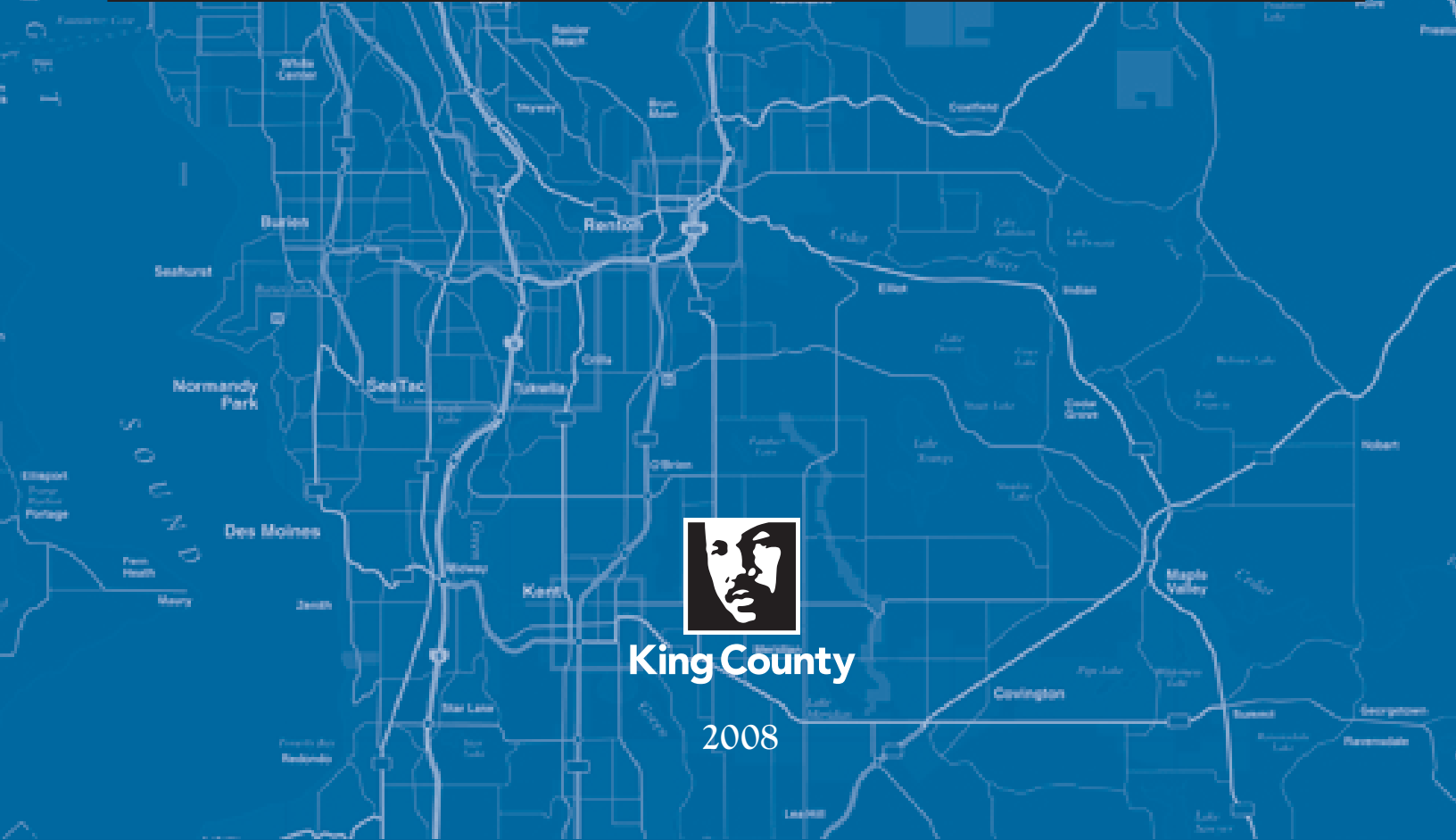


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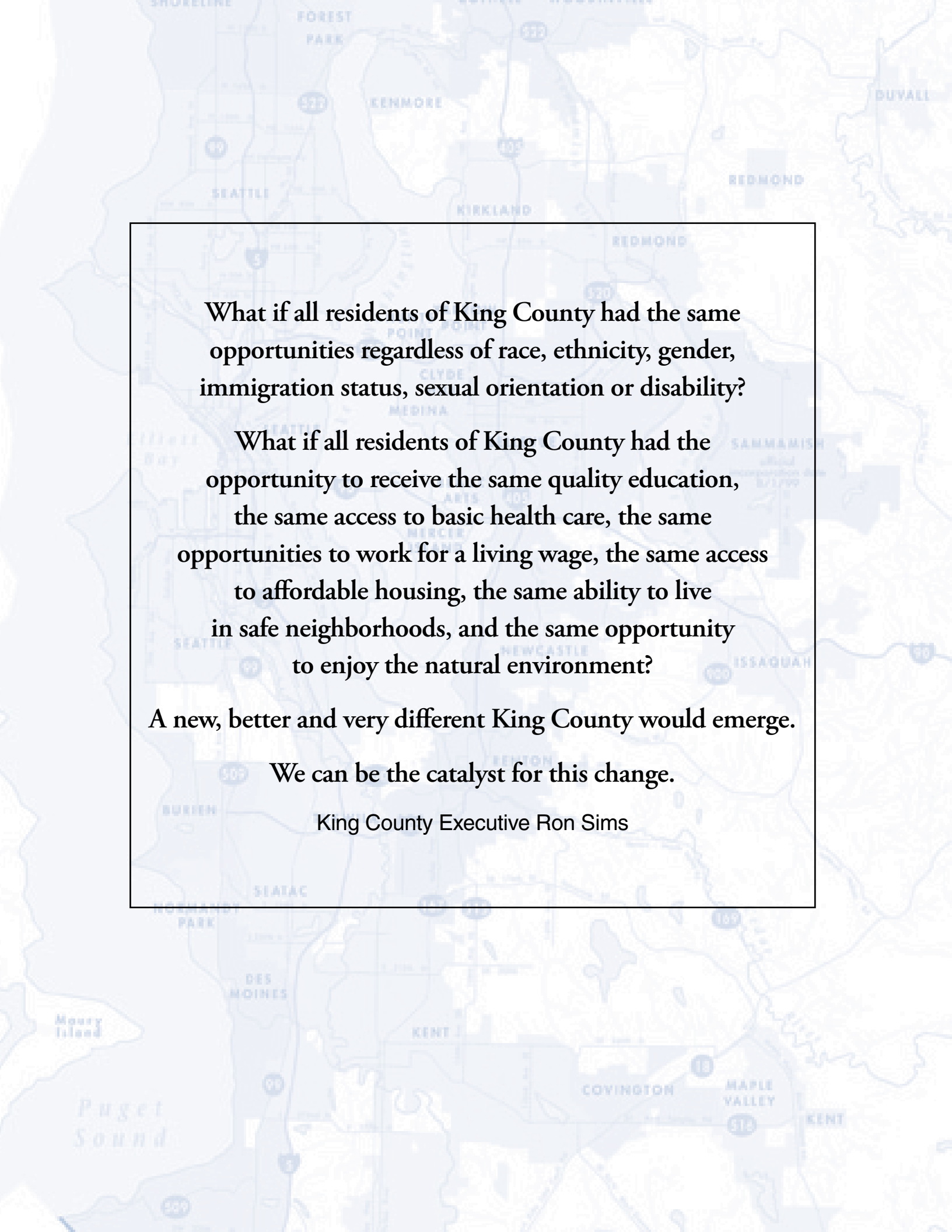
BELLEVUE

**KING COUNTY EQUITY & SOCIAL JUSTICE INITIATIVE**  
*Working toward fairness and opportunity for all*



**King County**

2008



**What if all residents of King County had the same opportunities regardless of race, ethnicity, gender, immigration status, sexual orientation or disability?**

**What if all residents of King County had the opportunity to receive the same quality education, the same access to basic health care, the same opportunities to work for a living wage, the same access to affordable housing, the same ability to live in safe neighborhoods, and the same opportunity to enjoy the natural environment?**

**A new, better and very different King County would emerge.**

**We can be the catalyst for this change.**

**King County Executive Ron Sims**

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### **Inequities: The persistent problem**

In 1964, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. proclaimed, “I have the audacity to believe that peoples everywhere can have three meals a day for their bodies, education and culture for their minds, and dignity, equality and freedom for their spirits.”

While more than four decades have passed, this nation is still burdened by vast disparities in wealth, health and opportunities. This county, named for Dr. King, is not exempt from this grim picture. Just look at the facts:

- A child in south King County is more than twice as likely to drop out of high school as one in east King County.
- A worker making between \$15,000 and \$25,000 a year is 10 times less likely to have health insurance than one making \$50,000 or more per year.
- A youth of color is six times more likely than a white youth to spend time in a state or county correctional facility.
- A southeast Seattle resident is four times more likely to die from diabetes than a resident of Mercer Island.
- A Native American baby is four times more likely to die before his or her first birthday than a white baby.

Inequities that exist at all levels of society have persistent, profound and long-lasting effects. And people with lower incomes, people of color and those in disenfranchised communities are losing ground. They are more likely to begin their lives with inadequate infant care, to be not ready to learn when they get to school, to play in unsafe neighborhoods, to receive a lower-quality education, to be less likely to find a good job that pays a livable wage, to be less healthy, to be prone to disease

and to die earlier.

The stressors of racism and discrimination may also be contributing to poor health. A highly-educated, professional African-American woman is more than twice as likely to have a child with very low birth weight, compared to a white woman with a high school diploma or less.

The gulf between the rich and the poor is widening, a fact that can be seen in the great disparities in our neighborhoods around the county. While many of our communities are thriving, some neighborhoods increasingly must confront the conditions that lead to poor health, underemployment, poor education, incarceration, loss of opportunity and an unsafe living environment.

### **The search for solutions**

Although some have worked hard to address these issues, decades of misguided policies have also contributed to the problem - policies that have isolated the poorest neighborhoods from economic opportunities, provided inadequate schools and services, and disenfranchised communities trying to do better.

Traditionally, many institutions have focused solely on treating the results of the problems by creating more prisons and providing more services for individuals in crisis. However, there is increasing evidence that the way to address these challenges is to focus on the root, underlying conditions of inequity and to ensure opportunities for all communities. By increasing the focus on affordable housing, quality education, safe neighborhoods, access to health care, and other underlying conditions, the individuals and families within disadvantaged communities will lead healthier and more prosperous lives.

As part of King County's effort to correct a history of inequalities, the goal must be to expand the programs and activities that have achieved the desired effect, modify existing programs to incorporate pro-equity elements, and create new programs and policies that will explicitly address local inequities.

If all people had access to the same opportunities for quality education, basic health care, good jobs and safe and affordable housing, all residents of King County would reap the benefits -- through greater economic vitality, a better educated populace, a less expensive health care system, a lower cost criminal justice system, and better government through a more engaged and representative citizenry.

### **Now is the time to act**

The King County Equity and Social Justice Initiative takes aim at these inequities and injustices. Government is better prepared than ever before to address this problem. And correcting inequities and promoting equal opportunity for all residents are the essence of what government should do.

This is not business as usual. King County will look at new approaches and use the following principles to guide its work:

- Move "upstream" to address the root causes of inequities
- Actively seek out and promote decisions and policies aimed at equity
- Empower communities
- Work across agencies and departments
- Recognize and honor cultural differences
- Aim for long-term, permanent change

### **Next steps and actions**

King County will make equity and social justice central to its work. The county outlines three levels of action.

- **Policy development and decision-making:** King County will ensure that promoting equity is intentionally considered in the development and implementation of key policies and programs and in making funding decisions.
- **Delivery of county services:** By working with partners and the community, King County and its departments will identify and mitigate social inequities. All executive departments will begin new activities to promote equity in 2008.
- **Community partnerships:** King County will be a catalyst for mobilizing the community and supporting effective partnerships and actions. Community engagement and education constitute the initial set of opportunities addressed in this report.

Collectively, great strides toward achieving equity can be made. Many efforts are already in place. But this is a complex undertaking that will require new approaches as well as consistency and dedication over the long run.

This is just the beginning. It will be a struggle, a long and hard one. But King County and its communities and residents are in it together, and there is no more important task.



*“Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere.”* —Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

## 1. Inequities: A Persistent Problem

Despite broad economic and social gains in this country in recent history, major differences exist and continue to persist for significant segments of our population -- particularly for communities of color and people living in poverty -- across the continuum of measures of health, well being and quality of life.

Nationally, white residents, on average, are more likely to attend schools with small class sizes, have access to computers, go to college, earn higher salaries, keep their jobs in an economic downturn, have health insurance and access to health care, and own their own homes. Similarly, low-income residents experience a wide range of inequities when compared to other residents. *(See Appendix I for more information on national inequities)*

King County is not immune to the national trends despite its location in the relatively prosperous Puget Sound area. Inequities exist in King County in a wide spectrum of areas – criminal and juvenile justice, workforce and economic development, family support and child welfare, education, housing and homelessness, and health.

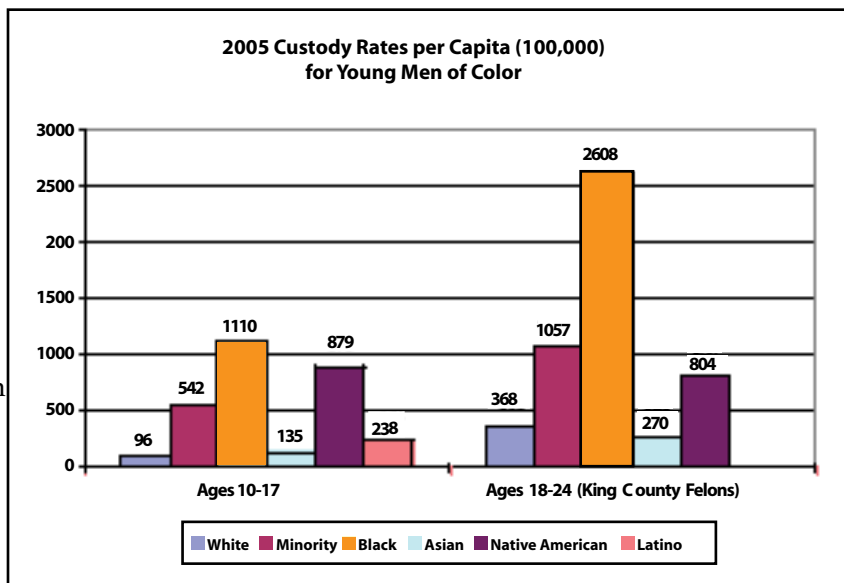
### Workforce and economic development

- There is a growing gap between the richest and poorest in King County, as measured by income, according to the 2005 Communities Count report. More than one in five people in King County is living in a household without a living wage income (for a family of four in 2004, this was \$38,600).

- The unemployment rate for white males ages 16 – 24 is 13 percent. It is 26 percent among African-American males and 27 percent among American Indian/Alaskan Native males.
- Children and adults of color are more likely to be living in poverty than whites. The median income of white households is almost twice that of African-American households.

### Criminal justice

- African-American young adult men are disproportionately represented in King County’s criminal justice system. For example, they are about seven times as likely as their white counterparts to be held in King County jails on felony charges.



- Similar trends can be seen for youth (under age 18) in King County's juvenile justice system. Youth of color are almost six times as likely as white youth to be held in a state or county juvenile detention facility.

### Family support and child welfare

- People with incomes of \$50,000 or more have higher levels of support – emotionally and practical resources – than people with lower incomes, according to the 2005 Communities Count report. People who are white report more social support than people of other groups.

- Children of color are more likely to live in a single-parent household: white 18 percent, African American 47 percent, American Indian/Native Alaskan 47 percent, and Latino 25 percent.
- Children of color are disproportionately represented in the child welfare system. Native American children are nine times more likely than whites to be placed in foster care in King County.

### Education

- Educational attainment varies by region of the county. Adults in south King County are more than twice as likely to have dropped out of high school compared to east King County adults.

- Rates of college education among people of color are much lower than their white counterparts. Twenty-three percent of African American males have a bachelor's degree, compared with 50 percent of white males in King County. Youth of color are 77 percent more likely to drop out of high school than white youth.

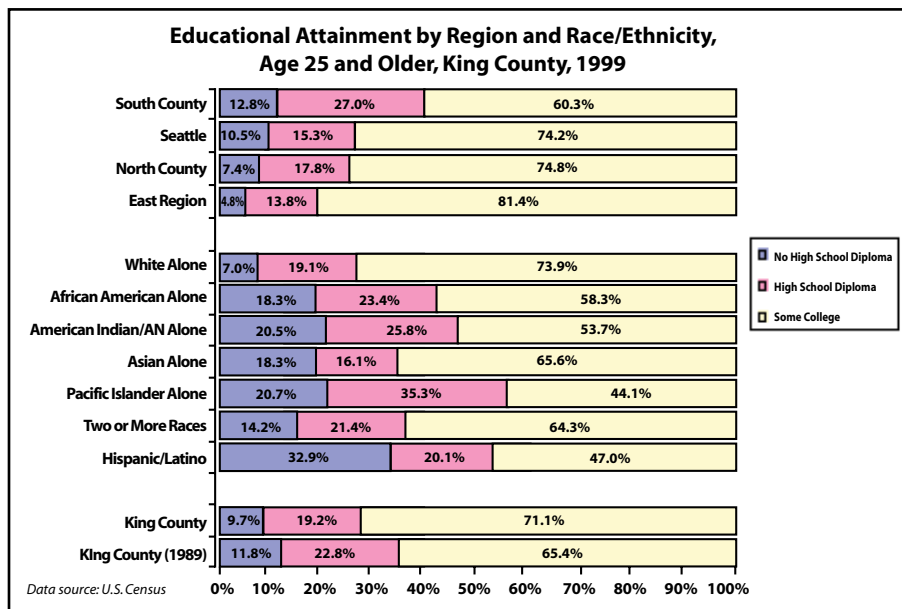
### Housing and homelessness

- According to the 2007 One Night Count, persons of color make up 62 percent of the shelter and transitional housing population, although they represent less than a quarter of King County residents.

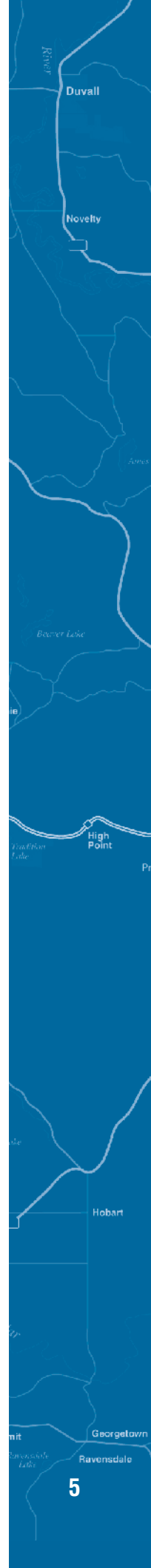
- In general, the lower the income, the more likely the household will spend 30% or more of its income on rent. Low income households that pay a high percentage of income on housing are at greater risk for becoming homeless.
- African Americans represent 35 percent of the homeless population, but only 6 percent of the general population.

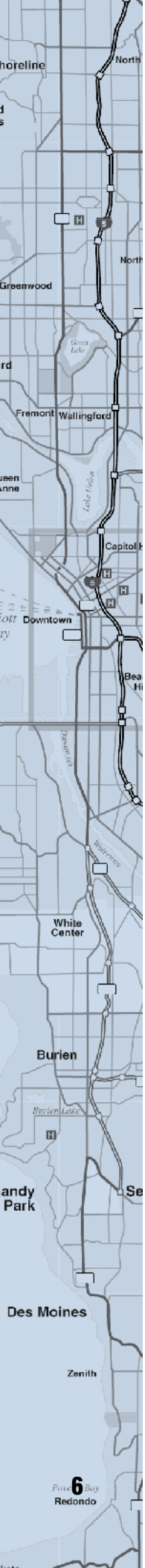
### Health

- Those living in poverty are at higher risk of poor health, including shorter life expectancy, mortality from violence, HIV/AIDS, chronic diseases such as diabetes, a lack of health insurance, obesity, and tobacco and drug use.



- An adult in south King County is almost twice as likely to smoke as an adult in east King County (21 percent vs. 11 percent).
- African American babies are twice as likely and American Indian/Native Alaskan babies four times as likely to die before their first birthdays as are white, Latino and Asian babies.





- A lower income King County resident is 10 times more likely to be without health insurance compared to a wealthier individual. In other words, 42% of adults (18-64 years) in households earning between \$15,000-\$24,999 are uninsured, compared to 4% of adults in households earning over \$50,000.

Racism and discrimination may also be contributing to poor health. A highly-educated, professional African-American woman is more than twice as likely to have a child with very low birth weight, compared to a white woman with a high school diploma or less education.

In addition to documenting the broad differences in quality of life between wealthier Americans and that of the low-income and people of color, studies show that in many areas there has been a widening of the gap in recent decades.

From 1970 to 2000, the gap between the median incomes for African American families and the total population widened in King County. The rate of home ownership during this period declined for African American families while it remained steady for white families.

The economy bears the burden when the full potential of the workforce is not realized. And everybody pays for the excessive demand for criminal justice and other crises services. For health, everybody absorbs the cost of inequities brought about by higher disease and lack of insurance.

Clearly, not everybody feels the direct, daily pain of inequities. But everybody suffers the consequences.



*“Human progress is neither automatic nor inevitable... Every step toward the goal of justice requires sacrifice, suffering, and struggle; the tireless exertions and passionate concern of dedicated individuals.”* — Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

## 2. Searching For and Creating Solutions

Despite the long list of devastating statistics and inequities, there are significant local and national efforts to search for and create solutions. Improving a community’s well-being requires the recognition that a person’s condition is not just the product of individual characteristics -- genetics, behavior and lifestyle choices -- but more importantly of underlying, root causes. These root causes, generally referred to as the social determinants of health, are powerful independent predictors of social outcomes.

Key social determinants include, but are not limited to: income and other forms of wealth; affordable, quality housing; quality education; employment; safe neighborhoods and community recreation sites; social support; and transportation. Social determinants, collectively, form the fabric of social and economic opportunity and a healthy environment.

Rates of illness and death increase as socioeconomic status decreases. Research shows that individual health is substantially influenced by the social and environmental context. In fact, health and life expectancy increase with every step up the social hierarchy. This means that wealthier people live longer, healthier lives. Even the middle class, as it contends with job stress, accessing health care, lower quality schools, and less healthy living environments, lives shorter and less healthy lives than the wealthy.

Racism has played a substantial historical role in the distribution of these social determinants in the United States. A consequence of this legacy of racial discrimination is that people of color are disproportionately represented among the poor. As a result, people of color are more likely to have lower incomes, a lower quality education and fewer job opportunities than whites. The long-standing pattern of racial discrimination in the distribution of

key social determinants has itself become an important determinant of health.

Historical policies and practices that separate communities on the basis of income and race have resulted in the poor and people of color becoming concentrated in racially segregated neighborhoods. While neighborhood poverty, housing and school segregation in King County do not reach the extreme levels experienced in many other U.S. metropolitan areas, the patterns in how they help create and sustain inequities are similar.

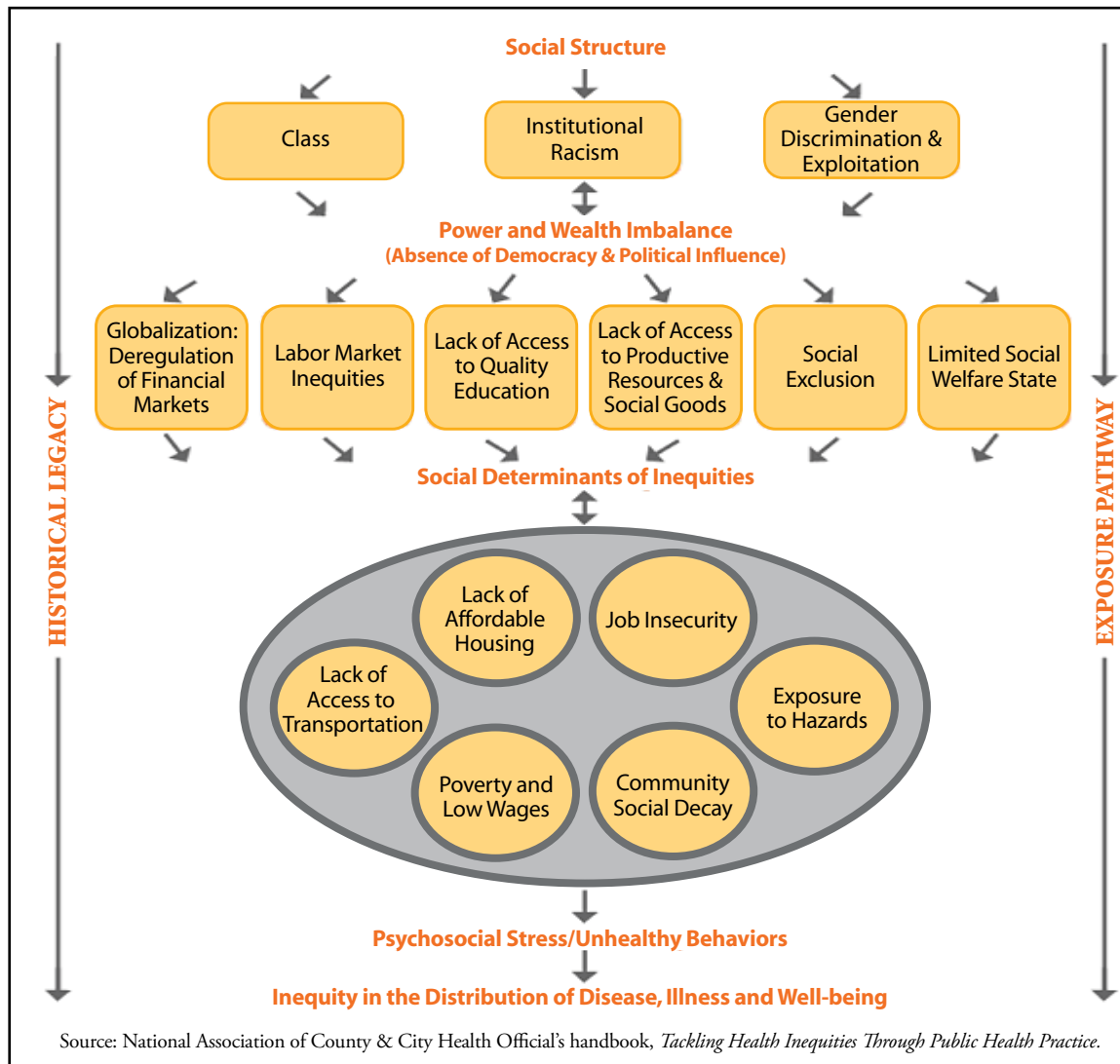
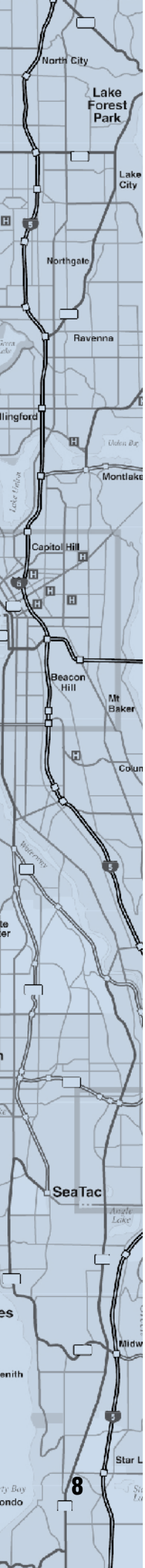
In addition to limiting socioeconomic opportunities, living in poor neighborhoods can have a direct negative impact on people’s well-being. Poor neighborhoods are often close to freeways and other sources of environmental pollutants. Streets may be unsafe and housing run down. The unhealthy neighborhood environment can become the social context that promotes unhealthy behaviors ranging from crime to poor nutrition. Poor neighborhoods have a low property tax base and less political power to implement the upkeep or restoration of parks and other recreational areas. The graphic on the next page illustrates how social structures, power and income, and social determinants combine to affect the quality of people’s lives.

### Correcting a history of inequality

How can persistent inequities be overcome? Evidence is mounting that focusing on the determinants of health and well-being – such as affordable housing, access to transportation, safe environments, quality education, and living wage jobs – can improve the health and well-being of disadvantaged communities. Not surprisingly, these conditions are already present in thriving communities.

“Inequities,” by its very definition, means that the benefits of progress are reaching some sectors of society, but not others. Hence, there are solutions that are working for some





populations, but not others. Addressing inequities must include expanding for all people what are known to be the contributors to well-being and a better quality of life that currently are only enjoyed by some.

Though it is true that less is known about how to foster these conditions in struggling neighborhoods and communities, every community has its strengths and assets, which need to be the foundation of improvements. There are examples, locally, nationally and internationally, where successes have been achieved, especially when comprehensive approaches are taken that combine policies with appropriate programs and services.

Over the past several decades, women across the globe have made extraordinary advances in achieving a more equitable standing in society

and creating more fair systems. Globally not all societies have achieved the same level of progress, but in many societies women have made significant advances by gaining a voice, political representation, real economic power and more. In countries where women have achieved more equal standing, the consequences have been astounding, ranging from higher literacy rates to reduced infant mortality, reduced population growth and more rapid economic development.

Asthma and housing quality is one of the best studied examples of how physical and social characteristics of the built environment are associated with health status. Public health efforts locally and nationally have focused on improving indoor environmental quality and have grown into a broader effort to improve

the built environment to promote health. Growing evidence supports the effectiveness of a multi-level strategy. This strategy includes addressing exposure to indoor asthma triggers and the underlying structural conditions which increase trigger exposure. Partnerships with public housing agencies and community-based organizations can incorporate healthy homes guidelines and principles of healthy community design into the physical redevelopment of public housing. A final difference-maker are resident-led community building activities to promote social cohesion and interaction.

In King County, recent rates for childhood hospitalizations due to asthma have declined as local asthma control efforts, such as those described previously, have intensified. Along these lines, the Seattle-King County Healthy Homes study, which included low income children with poorly controlled asthma and targeted English, Spanish and Vietnamese speaking families, showed that a home visiting program was able to reduce asthma symptoms and produce improvements in the quality of life of the child’s caregiver.

It is possible both to create new programs and to re-design existing programs to make a difference in addressing inequities. As part of King County’s effort to correct a history of inequalities, the goal must be to expand the

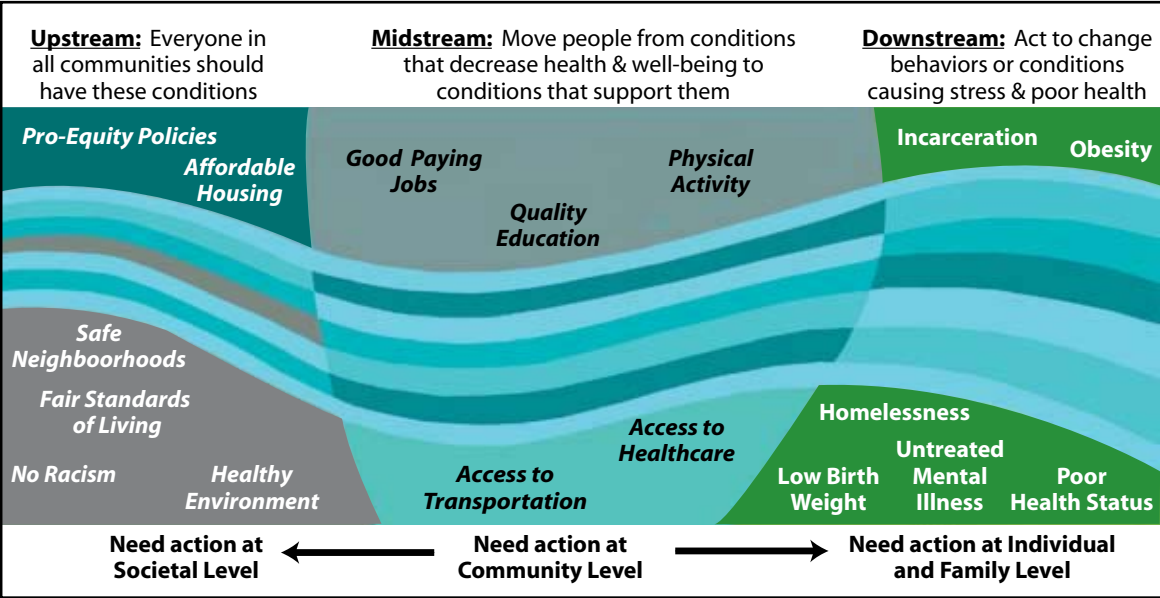
programs and activities that have achieved the desired effect, modify existing programs to incorporate pro-equity elements, and create new programs and policies that will explicitly address local inequities.

**A “stream” as a metaphor for the conditions of the community**

The metaphor of a stream provides several insights about the connection between the underlying conditions or social determinants in a community and the health and wellbeing of individuals and families. As shown in the diagram below, when the upstream conditions of a community – environmental, social, economic, and political – are neglected, the implications are a much greater set of downstream problems experienced by individuals and families and there are costs incurred by everyone.

Working upstream means finding solutions to problems before they develop, at a policy-level, and across sectors of society – communities, governments, and businesses. Within state and local governments, all agencies have a role in contributing to a healthy stream. Transportation, parks, education, health, justice, treatment, housing, and other service systems can break out of their traditional silos and work together to respond to the needs of communities.

In fact, the historical response by most





institutions has been to focus on the downstream crises of individuals and families. More prisons, social workers, homeless shelters, treatment beds, and emergency healthcare services are often the priority for funding. Yet, what is needed is a focus on all parts of the stream – upstream, midstream, and downstream. While it may take many years, upstream successes will result in a steady reduction in the demand for downstream crisis services and a commensurate increase in our ability to further support the conditions that promote thriving communities.

### **Community empowerment**

Equity and social justice are fundamentally about communities having an equal voice in shaping their future. A new park will have a much greater benefit to the surrounding community if its residents help design it. An underserved community is much more likely to have the bus service it needs if its members can influence the service delivery.

Yet, the historical disadvantages some communities face can be substantial barriers to having this voice. If residents move frequently to find affordable housing, cannot take time off work, do not know whom to call or where to go to voice their concerns, or simply lack faith that they will be heard, they will continue to be left out. A key ingredient to promoting equity and social justice is to engage communities and support them in developing their voice and influencing their future.

### **Clear and constant focus**

Information about the economy and the population's income, health or education is usually reported as an average for the country or a particular region, which disguises the severe poverty, crime, preventable illnesses, and homelessness that persists in some communities. As a result, the issue of disparities and their underlying inequities is out of focus, or even worse, out of mind for many institutions, businesses, and privileged communities.

A key ingredient of solutions is the need for intentional and systematic focus on inequities,

including spending resources on measuring inequities. As noted earlier in this report, the facts alone are disturbing and compelling. However, to prevent equity and social justice from returning to the back burner when the next crisis erupts, these issues and trends should be tracked and reported regularly so that this region can assess its progress.

Making progress will require King County and other local organizations to become more intentional and systematic about examining equity when developing policies, making funding decisions, and delivering services. Whether it is a zoning policy, a park improvement project, or a drug treatment program, the persons or organizations making decisions should start by answering two questions: How does this policy, funding decision, or service affect underserved communities? How can it be used as an opportunity to work upstream and positively impact community conditions that support all communities?

### **National momentum**

Both nationally and here in the Northwest, organizations are coming together to develop and share strategies for creating and promoting equity. The innovative strategies are important in order to maintain the focus on equity and to learn from each other.

At the national level, two initiatives, Place Matters and the Dellums Commission, are identifying root causes and proposing upstream approaches to creating and promoting equity. Both are initiatives of the Health Policy Institute of the Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies, whose mission is to ignite a "Fair Health" movement that gives people of color the inalienable right to equal opportunity for healthy lives. (For more information, see [www.jointcenter.org](http://www.jointcenter.org)).

King County is one of over twenty counties participating in the national learning community called Place Matters. To address social conditions that lead to poor health, King County's Place Matters team is focusing its efforts on developing a tool for creating

more equitable policies and on holding community dialogues to address inequities.

Another county team recently examined the situation in this region for young men of color within the six domains in the national Dellums Commission Report (health, education, family support and child welfare, workforce and economic development, juvenile and criminal justice and media), and highlighted possible next steps. The work of both teams has contributed to shaping this Equity and Social Justice Initiative.

In addition to Place Matters and the Dellums Commission Report, many other efforts are emerging nationally. Five examples are noted below and are particularly relevant for King County since they are partners in this movement. More information on these efforts is provided in Appendix II.

- **Multnomah County (Oregon) Health Equity Initiative:** Addressing health inequities by directly engaging communities and building upon knowledge gained from successful initiatives and public dialogues launched by the Departments of Health, Community Justice and the Library.
- **Alameda County (California) Place Matters Initiative:** Promoting more equitable distribution of social goods by influencing policies in housing, education, economic development, incarceration, land use and transportation with a long-term view towards sustained effort over many years.
- **Louisville Metro, Kentucky Center for Health Equity:** Promoting policy change, evidence-based interventions and education, and building new coalitions that reshape the public health landscape to assist communities in addressing barriers to health equity.

- **Washington State, Governor’s Interagency Coordinating Council on Health**


**Disparities:** Creating an action plan and statewide policy to include health impact reviews that measure and address social determinants of health that lead to disparities as well as the contributing factors of health that can have broad impacts on improving status, health literacy, physical activity and nutrition.

- **City of Seattle’s Race and Social Justice Initiative:** Seeking to reduce disproportionality in economic opportunity, education, civic engagement, health, and criminal justice, fostering more inclusive civic engagement, ensuring equity in business and personnel practices, and delivering services that are relevant to Seattle’s diverse populations.

Examples across the country show paths to achieving equity through social justice by creating or refocusing policies and practices rooted in the social determinants. King County’s thinking and efforts are guided by the work underway locally and nationally.

Undoing decades of misguided policies, overt neglect, and the unintended consequences of past policies will take many years of persistent and steady effort. However, as highlighted in this report, many key ingredients are known and when these ingredients are placed in the hands of communities, governments, and businesses focused on promoting equity it can result in powerful and positive changes.





*“I have the audacity to believe that peoples everywhere can have three meals a day for their bodies, education and culture for their minds, and dignity, equality and freedom for their spirits.”*

—Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

### 3. Now Is the Time to Act

Dr. King’s vision can be a guide for this county and its residents. The goal must be to transform the privileges that some enjoy into basic rights for everyone to share. Embracing the principles of equity and social justice can lead to a future where all residents of King County have real opportunities for quality education, livable wages, affordable housing, health care, and safe and vibrant neighborhoods. In this vision of the future, in stark contrast to the distressing indicators cited earlier, a much healthier and more prosperous picture of King County would emerge.

- If all King County residents had access to jobs paying a living wage, then 390,000 fewer individuals would be living in or near poverty and instead could better enjoy the high quality of life that this region has the potential to offer.
- If every school in King County were as excellent as the schools in the most privileged communities, then nearly 1,000 more youth of color would graduate from high school each year and would be prepared to take on the challenges of economic diversification and global change.
- If all people in King County lived in healthy environments, had the knowledge to make healthy lifestyle choices, and could access high quality and affordable health care, then preventable illnesses and chronic diseases would become rare occurrences in this region while long, healthier, and fuller lives would be the norm for all residents.

Promoting equity and social justice will benefit everybody. All residents of King County would benefit from a better-educated workforce, more businesses that provide livable wage jobs, safer communities, fewer residents without health insurance, and a shrinking demand for criminal justice and crisis services.

#### A rich tradition

King County and its partners are not starting from scratch, and there are many activities and initiatives locally from which to build upon and learn from. King County government has a history of leadership in addressing a number of areas of disparity. A few recent activities include:

- The Children’s Health Initiative is an innovative approach to improve the health of low-income children. This initiative reaches out and enrolls children in insurance programs, uses multiple languages and trusted community messengers, and links families and children to regular medical and dental care.
- The Black on Black Crime Coalition, formed by King County Councilmember Larry Gossett, aims to address the rise in violent crime in the African-American community, by working across sectors, including cities, county, law enforcement, schools, faith-based communities and others.
- In criminal justice, the King County Work Training Program coordinates access to education, training and employment opportunities for persons involved in the criminal justice system. Education and employment are the keys to giving people the skills and competencies they need to be successful in careers that lead to self-sufficiency.
- HealthScape is King County’s effort to promote public health and reduce carbon emissions by improving how communities are built to reduce dependency on cars and increase opportunities to be physically active. An equity lens has been used to prioritize projects. For example, the King County Department of Transportation is reconnecting a mixed-income community called Greenbridge in White Center with the central business district by providing a pedestrian pathway.

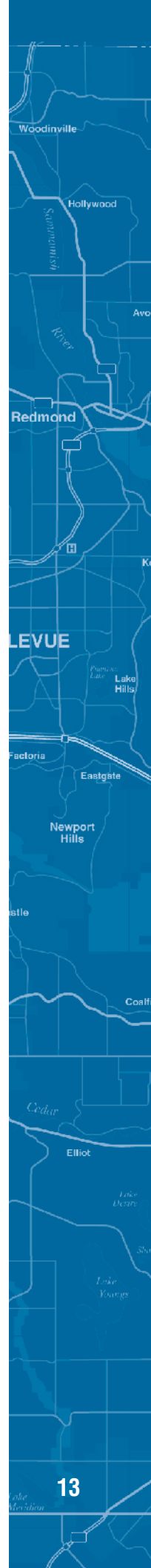
## King County and its communities and partners

King County government is well positioned to be a catalyst for change in partnership with local communities and organizations. It has regional responsibilities for transportation, criminal justice, health, natural resources, parks, human services and other critical services. It also is a municipal provider of services to hundreds of thousands of residents in unincorporated areas.

Moving forward with an initiative focused on promoting equity and social justice will present many practical challenges and barriers. The set of principles listed below can help guide groups around these barriers.

- **Move “upstream” to address the root causes of inequities.** The presence of inequities is a signal of inadequate economic, environmental and other conditions that have existed for years. King County should use its collective expertise to identify these conditions and the opportunities to improve them.
- **Actively seek out and promote decisions and policies aimed at equity.** Many, if not most, decisions made in the public sector directly or indirectly impact conditions that influence the health and well-being of communities. While these decisions should not worsen the disparities in disadvantaged communities, the bar must be set higher. The decisions of King County government and its partners should promote equity through improving conditions that lead to a thriving community.
- **Empower communities.** The residents of the community are the best source of information on what is happening in their neighborhoods and what will or will not work. Their involvement combined with the expertise and technical know-how of King County and other institutional partners is a powerful model for positive and equitable change that will lead to more effective policies, decisions, and services.

- **Work across agencies and departments.** Too often, agencies work in “silos” when the best solution can come from an unexpected source and by working across disciplines. For example, a park can encourage physical activity for adults and provide after-school alternatives for youth. If agencies join together to creatively support the needs of a community, then they become co-producers of a community’s health and well-being.
  - **Recognize and honor cultural differences.** There is a need to understand, value and work with the diversity and differences that exist in the community. Tennis courts may be used constantly in one community and largely vacant in another community whose preferred activity is soccer. Home-based family services may be an effective program unless the social worker through a misunderstanding of cultural norms offends the clients and is unable to establish trust and confidence. If the programs and services are not designed and delivered in a culturally appropriate manner, they stand little chance of being effective.
  - **Aim for long-term, permanent change.** While a new initiative can generate a burst of activity, real change will require long-term, sustainable strategies. Leveraging resources, regularly measuring progress, maintaining visibility, and embedding equity and social justice within an organizational culture are key components of a sustainable initiative. Policies and programs must be concrete and sustainable over time.
- These directions represent a starting point for a way of thinking and doing that promotes fairness, equal opportunity, and community vitality for all residents of King County. It is a start on the long, but ultimately most rewarding, journey toward equity and social justice.



*“All labor that uplifts humanity has dignity and importance and should be undertaken with painstaking excellence.”*—Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

#### 4. Next Steps and Actions

Starting this year, King County government will take initial yet concrete steps to build momentum toward Dr. King’s vision. The work of the county is divided into three areas of action: policy development and decision-making; delivery of county services, and engagement in community partnerships.

These initial steps alone do not represent the full breadth of potential opportunities. They serve as catalysts for action and create the milieu for the kind of discussions and innovations that will lead to clear and ambitious pathways to equitable opportunities for all King County residents.

##### County policy development and decision-making

Policy, budgetary and program decisions by King County government and departments have a direct impact on the well-being of county residents. King County can affect the root causes of inequity by consciously evaluating new and current programs and policies and their impact on people of color and people in poverty. This process can assure that government policies do not create unequal negative impacts.

Furthermore, King County can give communities a voice in the process and thereby address the historical lack of access to institutional decision-making for communities experiencing the most significant inequities.

King County will ensure that promoting equity is intentionally considered in the development and implementation of key policies and programs and in making funding decisions.

##### Actions

- King County will develop and test an equity impact assessment and review tool and the associated process for incorporating the tool in decision-making.
- Create equity and social justice curriculum for managers, as well as a short curriculum for new employees.

- Create an internal mechanism for support and oversight to ensure that promoting equity is an integral part of doing business.
- Collect and publish measures to highlight inequities and to mark progress on correcting them.
- Ensure that county decision-making processes incorporate meaningful input from potentially impacted communities, particularly those facing the greatest inequities by improving internal capacity to work with communities.

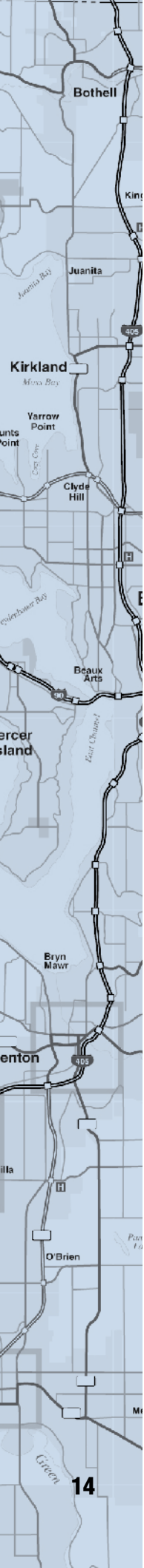
##### Delivery of county services

King County government plays a direct or influential role in providing services, developing policies, setting priorities, and making funding decisions in many critical areas, including criminal justice, health, transportation and the environment. By working with partners and the community, King County departments have a key opportunity to identify and mitigate social inequities. As part of the King County Equity and Social Justice Initiative, all departments will begin new activities in 2008 to promote equity.

##### Adult and juvenile detention

The statistics on the overrepresentation of people of color in the criminal justice system in King County are startling. Young men of color are coming into contact with the justice system at alarming rates. Also called Disproportionate Minority Contact (DMC), overrepresentation begins at arrest and worsens at subsequent stages of the justice system. Even beyond the justice system, former offenders may face collateral consequences related to housing, student loans, food stamps, employment, voting, Medicaid and other public benefits.

What contributes to racial disproportionality, according to the Dellums Commission and other national reports, is a “complex interaction” of socioeconomic disadvantages and the laws, policies and practices of governments and other institutions. This





complex interaction is perpetuated when communities – particularly, those most impacted by the criminal justice system – do not have opportunities to voice their concerns and be part of the solutions. The actions below focus on how the criminal justice and human service agencies can take steps to better understand and respond to DMC.

Experiences locally and nationally suggest the approach of examining key points in the justice system for their impact (if any) on racial disproportionality. The general fairness principle is that similarly situated persons, based on objective factors, should be treated the same. While most policies and practices will meet this test, it is possible that if left unexamined, unintended biases will continue without notice. Risk assessment tools and other practices may be available to support developing consistent, objective and reliable information for guiding decisions.

### **Actions**

- As part of the current Adult Justice Operational Master Plan effort to improve and expand the use of community corrections programs, the Department of Adult and Juvenile Detention will work with its criminal justice partners. It will examine whether overrepresented groups in secure detention are at least as likely to participate in alternative programs and to be as successful as other groups and, if indicated, it will develop appropriate recommendations.
- The Department of Adult and Juvenile Detention will also partner with other justice agencies to create an appropriate venue to oversee analyzing Disproportionate Minority Contact at other key stages in the process, developing recommendations (consistent with best or promising practices) and evaluating implemented measures.

### **Community and human services**

Most services from the Department of Community and Human Services (DCHS) are contracted to agencies specializing in direct service delivery throughout King County. In its different program areas, the department

is examining whether services are reaching different population groups in proportion to their need and whether these services are equally effective across population groups. For 2008, the department highlighted three areas.

*Mental health and substance abuse:* Beginning in 2008, King County will have an important new funding source for mental health and substance abuse that will help to address disproportionate minority contact. The Mental Illness and Drug Dependency Action Plan (MIDD), to be funded by a 0.1 percent sales tax beginning April 1, 2008, offers an extraordinary opportunity to bring new resources into both the mental health and chemical dependency systems. Addressing racial disproportionality was adopted by the Community Crisis Alternatives Workgroup, which drafted the mental illness action plan, as one of the guiding principles in determining service priorities.

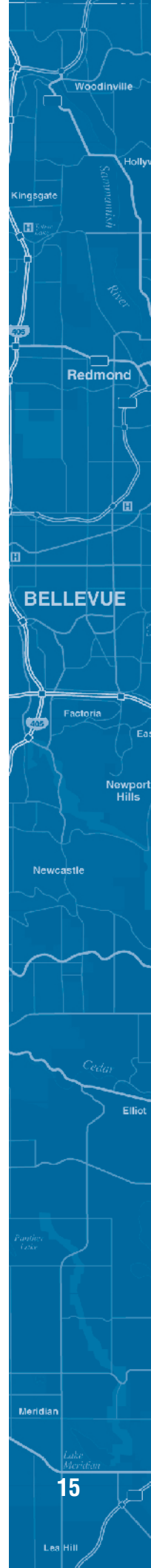
### **Action**

- The Department of Community and Human Services will increase its knowledge and understanding of disproportionate access to mental health and substance abuse services through better identification of affected populations, measurement of appropriate levels of service, and determination of whether outcomes are equally effective across population groups.

*Prevention and early intervention:* A variety of county programs and departments seek to identify emerging needs in infants, children and youth at the earliest possible point, with the goal of providing prevention and early intervention programs and services that might serve to reduce or prevent more serious illness or disability or justice system involvement down the road.

### **Action**

- With its partners, the Department of Community and Human Services will review its services for inequities related to prevention and early intervention for the population birth through age three and, where they exist, craft and implement mitigation strategies.





*Homelessness:* Similar to nearly every social disparity nationwide, homelessness is disproportionately borne by persons of color. For instance, persons of color represent nearly two-thirds (61 percent) of shelter/transitional housing users nationwide yet comprise just 31 percent of the U.S. population. In line with the national trend, persons of color are heavily overrepresented among King County's shelter/transitional housing population. According to the 2007 One Night Count, persons of color made up 62 percent of this population although they represent less than a quarter (24.5 percent) of King County residents.

There are multiple factors contributing to this inequality. They include lack of income, lack of educational opportunities, housing and support services and lack of engagement in services due to the shortage of culturally competent programs – as well as the effects of criminal records and racial discrimination.

#### **Action**

- Under guidance of the DCHS, King County will use Safe Harbors data, program-generated data and the Committee to End Homelessness' Strategy Recommendations to link people of color, immigrants and refugees with homeless housing and services and understand barriers in accessing and succeeding in housing. DCHS will use the understanding gained through such investigations to identify strategies that can be implemented through its programs that will increase access to and success in housing for those populations. DCHS will seek to work with the Committee to End Homelessness on addressing the issues.

#### **Development and environmental services**

The Department of Development and Environmental Services aims to serve, educate and protect the community by administering King County's development and environmental regulations. This department is a national leader in promoting responsible and sustainable development to foster environmental quality, economic vitality and social benefit.

In recognition of the vital role of land use and

built-environment policies and practices as a cause of inequity, the department will review and revise land use codes and policies and facilitate the creation of affordable housing in King County to create and promote equity and social justice.

#### **Actions**

- The Department of Development and Environmental Services will rewrite the zoning code to allow maximum development flexibility in exchange for the provision of public benefit, and it will review and revise comprehensive plan policies to encourage vibrant, mixed use neighborhoods that are diverse and integrated.
- The department will create an interagency team to coordinate the siting, funding, permitting, and development of infrastructure to partner and/or support and facilitate affordable housing projects in unincorporated King County and on King County surplus properties.

#### **Executive office**

The focus on equity and social justice will be a key element of the work programs of all Executive Office staff. In particular, the Executive Office will work with departments and the Budget Office to incorporate equity and social justice into King County operations and policy development. In addition, it will work with communities, stakeholders and media to educate the region on equity and social justice needs and to help develop and implement social justice and equity actions.

Two specific activities for the Executive Office in 2008 are to provide research and policy support for this initiative through its fellowship programs and to coordinate efforts to address the impact of climate change on vulnerable populations.

*Research and policy support:* The Executive Office recruits from two programs to assist with research and implementation of major policy initiatives. The King County Executive Fellowship Program (KCEFP) was created in the spring of 2003 to recruit recent public policy graduates from leading institutions.

The National Urban Fellowship (NUF) is a “leadership development organization founded to counter the under-representation of people of color and women in leadership positions.” The Executive Office has participated in NUF to recruit multiethnic, multicultural mid-career women and men into fellowship positions.

In the past, Executive Fellows and National Urban Fellows in the Executive Office have worked on major initiatives such as reducing health care costs, establishment of the KingStat countywide performance management system, and the development of climate change mitigation and adaptation strategies. King County’s work on promoting equity and social justice will be a focus area for the 2008 Executive Fellows and National Urban Fellows.

### Action

- In the 2008 term of the King County Executive Fellowship and National Urban Fellowship, special emphasis will be dedicated to outreach, policy support and implementation activities articulated in this report.

King County’s climate change actions, green jobs and vulnerable populations: There is consensus among the world’s leading scientists that human emission of greenhouse gases is leading to global climate change, with dangerous effects on human settlements, health and livelihoods. Globally, according to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change 2007 report, “Impacts, Adaptation and Vulnerability,” climate change will have disproportionate negative effects on the poor in developing nations and “even in prosperous societies.” Because this concern extends to vulnerable populations in the Northwest, King County is seeking to identify and reduce the impacts of climate change on vulnerable populations.

To prevent catastrophic climate change for future generations, the countries of the world must slow, stop and reverse the growth of greenhouse gas emissions. Solutions already exist in the areas of land use, transportation,

waste-to-energy technology and clean fuels. These solutions are driving the new green economy and are expected to create “green collar” jobs here in King County. These new jobs are an important economic opportunity for the region and, in particular, a pathway out of poverty for disadvantaged communities.

Under the direction of the Executive Office, King County’s interdepartmental Climate Team was convened in January 2006 to review the county’s plans, policies and investments on a regular basis in light of evolving climate change information, to develop strategies to reduce the county’s contribution to climate change through greenhouse gas emissions, and to protect public health, property and natural resources from regional climate change impacts.

### Action

- The King County Climate Team will support regional efforts to define “green collar” jobs and the creation of a green collar jobs initiative. This work includes identifying green collar jobs within King County government and business community and tailoring jobs initiatives and training programs in the short term to connect people facing the most significant barriers to these new jobs.
- The King County Climate Team will continue to research and seek to reduce the effects of climate change on vulnerable and economically disadvantaged populations in the region.

### Executive services

The vision for King County is to be a high performance regional government known for fair and equitable treatment of all its employees and residents. County leadership and ultimately all county employees must be fully knowledgeable of the elements of equity and social justice in their work responsibilities and understand their accountability to uphold the county’s values, standards and expectations. This can be accomplished through avenues such as management staff training and new employee orientation and through participation of all employees in





benefits such as the Health Reform Initiative, which offers both positive financial and health outcomes.

### Action

- The Department of Executive Services will create an equity and social justice focus in the supervisory, manager and director training curricula. It will integrate the issues of social equity into the curricula and develop a specific class focused on social justice and public sector decision making. Segments of this curricula will be incorporated into the New Employee Orientation.

Data show that King County's Health Reform Initiative has a positive financial and health impact on those who participate. An analysis showed that there are higher levels of bronze (i.e., higher out-of-pocket medical expense) in workgroups that work independently and do not use computers to do their jobs – bus drivers and custodians are examples. Health Reform Initiative staff also found evidence of language barriers in some workgroups. The same cultural barriers to accessing health care that exist in the county population at large also are present in our workforce. King County can ensure all employees have access to the health and financial benefits of the program by addressing barriers to participation.

### Action

- The Department of Executive Services will identify and address worksite barriers to participation in the Health Reform Initiative; the department will develop and implement an outreach plan for groups that have low participation rates.

### Management and budget

*Community Enhancement Initiative:* Through the Community Enhancement Initiative, King County supports comprehensive community revitalization efforts to create livable and sustainable neighborhoods that are economically and culturally diverse. The initiative involves partnering with many stakeholders to clarify priorities and create healthier, livable communities. Drawing on their existing strengths and the support

of public and private partnerships, these communities will be places that embrace equity of opportunity, tread lightly on the environment, and share in the health and prosperity of the region. As an example, the Skyway Community Enhancement Initiative is comprised of several early stage projects that intend to achieve broad community revitalization goals.

### Action

- The Office of Management and Budget will facilitate a community planning process to create a vision for restoring park vitality based on meaningful community participation and leadership. The process intends to encourage community participation and engagement, strengthen collaborative relationships and build leadership capacity. This inclusive public process will help the community articulate shared goals, identify creative and constructive solutions, increase community ownership of an important neighborhood asset and achieve multiple successes beyond immediate park improvements.

*King County Systems Integration Initiative:* Traditionally, juvenile justice, child welfare, and other child serving systems have worked independently of each other to address the issue of racial disproportionality. For instance, the juvenile justice system has a special committee in place to examine, recommend and implement strategies to reduce racial disproportionality. In the child welfare system, the King County Coalition on Racial Disproportionality has completed an in-depth independent study of system practices and is supporting implementation of those practices that can reduce disproportionality.

While these efforts are important and should continue, the experience of many practitioners in these systems is suggesting that the “siloes” approaches are not enough. Racial disproportionality continues at alarming rates in these systems. Research is also beginning to describe a pipeline between the child welfare, education, mental health and juvenile justice systems. Fortunately, over the past three years, partners from juvenile justice, child welfare, mental health, school and other systems have

come together to form the King County Systems Integration Initiative.

#### **Action**

- Under the guidance of the King County Systems Integration Initiative, the Office of Management and Budget will lead a study to understand how clients are involved in the child welfare and juvenile justice systems, the impact of multi-system involvement on outcomes, and how these results compare across various demographic categories. Based on the results of this study, the community and system partners will develop and pursue cross-system strategies to reduce the disproportionate involvement in child-serving systems.

*Budget development:* As noted earlier in this report, King County is fashioning a tool to assist decision makers in understanding the equity implications of policy decisions. Another opportunity to consider equity in decision-making is the annual budget development process. In particular, the concentrated period of developing the Executive's proposed budget for King County is an important opportunity to incorporate elements of equity impact review tool in the decision-making process.

#### **Action**

- During the 2009 budget development process, the Office of Management and Budget will pilot, with selected agencies, revised budget forms and process that incorporate elements of the Equity Impact Review Tool. This trial will inform full implementation when developing the 2010 Executive proposed budget.

#### **Natural resources and parks**

The Department of Natural Resources and Parks has a broad service portfolio with hundreds of programs that provide both community and environmental services to residents and businesses throughout and beyond King County. These include siting and management of solid waste, wastewater and parks facilities, each of which has a significant potential to create, increase or decrease equity. The department will ensure a more equitable

distribution of the key benefits and burdens associated with its service provision and facility locations.

#### **Actions**

- The Department of Natural Resources and Parks will complete a department-wide GIS-based Equity Assessment to identify potential areas of inequity in delivery of key services.
- This department will conduct a detailed Equity Impact Review of the Parks Capital Investment Program to inform changes that will ensure a pro-equity capital improvement program.
- It will also conduct a partial review (in select unincorporated and incorporated areas) of the equity impacts of the proposed updates to the Solid Waste Comprehensive Plan to help ensure a pro-equity posture in the final adopted plan and policies.

#### **Public health**

In recent years Public Health - Seattle & King County has worked to eliminate health inequities through community interventions and policy-focused programs aimed at prevention and creating healthy environments. The Infant Mortality Prevention Program, Steps to Health King County, the REACH diabetes coalition, the Healthy Eating Active Living Program and the Built Environment and Land Use Program are just a few examples of current programs and community coalitions focusing on inequities. Internally, the department's Diversity & Social Justice Group has conducted an inventory of programs that work to assess, reduce or eliminate health disparities and inequities in the county.

In 2008, the Equity and Social Justice Initiative plan for Public Health is framed by the Public Health Operational Master Plan. This framework sets forth guiding principles that are the foundation for future decisions regarding health. Specific to equity the Operational Master Plan states, "King County's Public Health strategies, policies and programs shall be driven by social justice."

#### **Actions**

- Apply the Equity Impact Assessment tool





and review process in decision-making within each public health function area: protection, promotion, provision and organizational attributes. Public Health will identify a menu of proposed actions and policy decisions and determine impacts on equity as well as mitigation options. Public Health will use this information to select the most promising strategies for further development in a business plan.

- Public Health will work with external partners to achieve equitable access to health care for uninsured and underinsured residents in King County. In the context of Public Health's provision assessment work plan, the department will apply methods of the Equity Impact Assessment tool and review process to measure equity impacts of alternative service delivery system options for the safety net population and incorporate relevant findings.
- In order to promote fair and equitable access to public health information produced for people with limited English proficiency, Public Health will create a system for translation services to make the process more efficient and produce translations that are of a consistent high quality. Additionally, Public Health will encourage other King County departments to replicate this translation system.

### Transportation

The Department of Transportation is committed to helping people travel around the region by providing many forms of transportation and the necessary programs, services and facilities, and designing and maintaining roads and bridges.

The Department has led recent studies, HealthScape I & II, with results that demonstrate the health and economic benefits of transit oriented, pedestrian friendly, mixed use development. Using these research data, the department will develop and implement mechanisms for incorporation into its planning and delivery of its services to King County residents.

### Actions

- The Transportation Department will develop

a tool to prioritize potential non-motorized transportation improvements based on transportation, health, air quality and equity outcomes.

- It will implement the HealthScape principles based on sustainable changes to the built environment to achieve the goals of efficient transportation, improved air quality, healthier communities and reduced greenhouse emissions in a disadvantaged neighborhood.
- It will work to expand the supply of affordable housing within close proximity to transit, housing, recreation and employment centers through public/private partnerships for transit oriented development.

### Community partnerships

Many key opportunities to promote equity and social justice go beyond the boundaries of any one program or community. Community engagement and education are an initial set of opportunities addressed in this report. Although in some of these areas King County government may have a limited role in setting policies or delivering services, it can be a catalyst for mobilizing and supporting effective partnerships and actions.

When disadvantaged communities have a strong voice in decisions that affect their well being, those decisions are more likely to be successful in promoting equity for them and for all residents. King County has an opportunity to address the historical lack of access to decision-making by involving community members in developing solutions to inequities. This will not only result in effective programs that improve the well-being of all King County residents, but it will also begin to level the field of opportunity for communities whose voices historically have been left out.

Starting in 2008, King County will carry out the activities in the areas of community dialogues and empowerment, as well as education.

### Community engagement

King County has the opportunity to support capacity building of all communities





and governments seeking to reduce the drop-out rates of minority youth in King County and to increase enrollment in post secondary education or jobs that pay a living wage. RIY has produced an in-depth study that provides comprehensive recommendations for a drop-out strategy at state and local levels. Second, developed by the educational taskforce of the King County Systems Integration Initiative, PathNet will develop a coordinated

countywide system to retrieve court-involved youth who are truant or out-of-school and guide them into a seamless pathway of education and career opportunities. Existing alternative education and vocational programs will be coordinated and linked via a regional network to serve the high number of court-involved youth who have disengaged or dropped out of school.

*“The time is always right to do what is right.”* —Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

#### APPENDIX I NATIONAL INEQUITIES

Despite broad economic and social gains in society and in this country in recent history, major differences exist and continue to persist for significant segments of our population, particularly communities of color and people who live in poverty, across the continuum of measures of health, well being and quality of life.

In 1998, the Council of Economic Advisors for the President’s Initiative on Race detailed how, on average, whites are more likely than non whites to:

- Attend primary and secondary schools with smaller class sizes
- Have access to computer technology in schools and at home
- Attend and graduate from college
- Earn higher salaries
- Retain employment during a downturn in the economy
- Have health insurance and access to health care and survive certain life-threatening illnesses
- Have better housing, spend less of their income to obtain house, and have access to mortgage loans and own their own homes
- Own stocks, mutual funds or retirement accounts

Six years later, in 2004, United for a Fair Economy released a study that showed very stark statistics for African Americans relative to whites:

- The typical black family had 60 percent as much income as a white family in 1968 but only 58 percent in 2002

- One in nine blacks could not find a job. Black unemployment was more than twice the white rate, a wider gap than in 1972
- Black infants were almost two and a half times as likely as white infants to die before the age of one, a greater gap than in 1970
- White households had an average net worth of \$468,200 in 2001, more than six times the \$75,700 of black households

In late 2007, the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, based on new data on real after-tax income from the Congressional Budget Office, found that uneven growth brought income inequality to its highest level since at least 1979, when they began gathering these data. Taken together with prior research, the new data indicate that income is now more concentrated at the top than at any time since 1929.

Over the 26-year period for which the new data are available, income gains among high-income households have dwarfed those of middle- and low-income households. The figures show:

- The average after-tax income of the top 1 percent of the population more than tripled, rising from \$326,000 to over \$1.07 million — for a total increase of \$745,000, or 228 percent.
- By contrast, the average after-tax income of the middle fifth of the population rose a relatively modest 21 percent, or \$8,700, reaching \$50,200 in 2005.
- The average after-tax income of the poorest fifth of the population rose just 6 percent, or \$900, over the past 26 years, reaching \$15,300 in 2005. (Figures



were adjusted for inflation and are presented in 2005 dollars.)

In 1987, the United Church of Christ Commission for Racial Justice released its groundbreaking study *Toxic Wastes and Race in the United States*. The report was significant because it found race to be the most potent variable in predicting where commercial hazardous waste facilities were located in the U.S., more powerful than household income, the value of homes, and the estimated amount of hazardous waste generated by industry. The *Toxic Wastes and Race* study was revisited in 1994 using 1990 census data.

- Over nine million people are estimated to live in circular host neighborhoods within 3 kilometers of the nation's 413 commercial hazardous waste

facilities. Over 5.1 million people of color live in neighborhoods with one or more commercial hazardous waste facilities. For 2000, neighborhoods within 3 kilometers of commercial hazardous waste facilities are 56 percent people of color whereas non-host areas are 30 percent people of color. Thus, percentages of people of color as a whole are 1.9 times greater in host neighborhoods than in non-host areas. Percentages of African Americans, Hispanics/Latinos, and Asians/Pacific Islanders in host neighborhoods are 1.7, 2.3, and 1.8 times greater, respectively.

- Poverty rates in the host neighborhoods are 1.5 times greater than non-host areas (18 percent vs. 12 percent) and mean annual household incomes and mean owner-occupied housing values in host neighborhoods are 15 percent lower.

## APPENDIX II NATIONAL EFFORTS

### Multnomah County Health Equity Initiative

The Multnomah County initiative addresses health inequities by directly engaging communities, building upon knowledge gained from successful initiatives and public dialogues launched by the Departments of Health, Community Justice and the Library. The initiative has a multi year strategy that involves community engagement, assessment and policy development with three overarching goals:

- To create a common understanding among health professionals, civic leaders, and community members of the causes of and solutions to health inequities with a focus on justice and equity
- To raise the visibility of current disparities elimination efforts of community based organizations and county departments
- To explore and advance policy solutions to health inequities

Multnomah's success will be evaluated over the short and long term in six areas:

- Civic engagement in dialogues about health inequities
- Increased visibility of current efforts to address inequities
- Inventory of efforts to address inequities in health and human services
- Policy and practice improvements
- Community-wide policy and practice changes that address root causes
- Documented improvements

### Alameda County Place Matters Initiative

Alameda's initiative aims to promote more equitable

distribution of social goods by influencing policies in housing, education, economic development, incarceration, land use and transportation with a long-term view towards sustained effort over many years. Alameda, is conducting in-depth assessments of the problems associated with each policy arena. The learning from these assessments will form the basis and guide roundtable discussions with community stakeholders. From these community dialogues, a solid local policy platform will be created and partnerships for advocacy and implemented leveraged. Alameda County's goals include:

- **Affordable Housing:** An adequate supply of housing is constructed and preserved in proportion to demand for that housing with regards to size and affordability, so that the cultural, racial, and class diversity of the community is maintained. All housing is safe, habitable, and supports good health. No household resides in overcrowded conditions, is homeless due to housing costs, or resorts to spending more than 30 percent of the income on housing costs.
- **Education:** All school-aged youth have access to a quality education that prepares them to be productive members of the community, provides a safe and stimulating learning environment, and prepares them to achieve their goals and dreams. Schools expect and ensure that all students graduate. Life-long learning opportunities are accessible to all residents.
- **Economic Development:** All residents have access to high quality, local employment opportunities that provide healthy, safe and meaningful work, so as to increase income and wealth equity.
- **Incarceration:** By interrupting the cycle of





recidivism and reducing the disproportionate minority contact with the justice system, men of color will no longer be incarcerated at disproportionate rates. An equitable judicial system will be achieved at each state of the process, including arrest, trial, sentencing, and reentry.

- **Land Use:** Communities are designed to promote and support safe walking and biking, and to provide access to quality affordable food, including fresh fruits and vegetables. All residents live in communities where the air, soil, and water are clean and provide the conditions for good health. All residents have access to living wage jobs and culturally appropriate health care services, including prevention, treatment, and emergency response, in their communities.
- **Transportation:** Citizens are easily able to go about their daily lives utilizing transportation systems that are accessible from their home and work and that are affordable. All public transit systems run on-time with well maintained vehicles and shelters.

### **Louisville Metro, Kentucky Center for Health Equity**

The Louisville, Kentucky Center for Health Equity is a new and hopeful approach to the public's health. Seeking out root causes, the Center addresses glaring socio-economic and racial inequities in health. While drugs, diet, a healthy lifestyle and medical technologies are important, the Center's philosophy is that there is more to health than bad habits, health care or genes. Their premise is that the social conditions, into which people are born, live and work, profoundly affect well-being and longevity. The Center for Health Equity supports projects, policies and research indicating that health and longevity are correlated with socio-economic status. Further, they recognize research that supports the fact that people of color face an additional burden from racism and discrimination and propose that solutions lie in better social policies.

*More information at: [www.louisvilleky.gov/Health/equity/](http://www.louisvilleky.gov/Health/equity/).*

### **Washington State Interagency Coordinating Council on Health Disparities**

In 2006, the Washington State Legislature created the Governor's Interagency Coordinating Council On Health Disparities which is charged with "creating an action plan and statewide policy to include health impact reviews that measure and address other social determinants of health that lead to disparities as well as the contributing factors of health that can have broad impacts on improving status, health literacy, physical activity and nutrition." Specifically, the Council exists to:

- Promote and facilitate communication, coordination and collaboration among relevant state agencies and communities of color and the private and public sector, to address health disparities
- Use a variety of assessment mechanisms to gather data and recommend initiatives for improving the availability of culturally appropriate health literature and interpretative services with public and private health related agencies
- Create an action plan by 2012 for eliminating disparities in Washington State. The plan will look at health disparities broadly and also must specifically address a number of diseases and conditions specified in the legislation.
- In collaboration with the State Board of Health, in the development of health impact reviews requested by the Governor or the Legislature
- Through public hearings, inquiries, studies and other information gathering efforts, work to understand how the actions of State government ameliorate or contribute to health disparities
- Use advisory committees to address specific issues
- Provide regular updates of its progress to the Legislature starting in 2008

*More information at: [www.governor.wa.gov/boards/profiles/250.asp](http://www.governor.wa.gov/boards/profiles/250.asp).*

### **City of Seattle's Race and Social Justice Initiative**

The City of Seattle is becoming increasingly diverse. A primary challenge of this diversity is the ongoing struggle to create a community where all people are valued, regardless of their background. Mayor Nickels' Race and Social Justice Initiative seeks to reduce disproportionality in economic opportunity, education, civic engagement, health, and criminal justice; to foster more inclusive civic engagement; to ensure equity in City business and personnel practices; and to deliver City services that are relevant to Seattle's diverse populations.

Seattle's Race and Social Justice Initiative, coordinated by Seattle Office of Civil Rights, is a citywide effort to:

- Create a community where residents and employees experience our cultural and ethnic diversity as an asset
- Eliminate institutional attitudes, practices, and policies that result in racial disproportionality
- Understand the challenges that cultural pluralism places on democracy and transform our civic and citizen engagement processes to address those challenges

*More information at: [www.seattle.gov/mayor/issues/rsji](http://www.seattle.gov/mayor/issues/rsji).*

## Web Resources

### King County Resources

King County AIMS High: Annual indicators and measures  
[www.metrokc.gov/aimshigh/equity.asp](http://www.metrokc.gov/aimshigh/equity.asp)

Health disparities resources  
[www.metrokc.gov/health/library/topics/H.htm](http://www.metrokc.gov/health/library/topics/H.htm)

Health of King County report  
[www.metrokc.gov/health/hokc](http://www.metrokc.gov/health/hokc)

King County Communities Count report  
[www.communitiescount.org/](http://www.communitiescount.org/)

### National and International Resources

California Newsreel's *Unnatural Causes* video series and resource for discussion on social determinants of health  
[www.unnaturalcauses.org](http://www.unnaturalcauses.org)

Dellums Commission Report  
[www.jointcenter.org/publications1/publication-PDFs/Dellums%20PDFs/FinalReport.pdf](http://www.jointcenter.org/publications1/publication-PDFs/Dellums%20PDFs/FinalReport.pdf)

Urban Institute and racial disparities  
[www.urban.org/UploadedPDF/411563\\_racial\\_disparities.pdf](http://www.urban.org/UploadedPDF/411563_racial_disparities.pdf)

World Health Organization's Commission on Social Determinants of Health  
[www.who.int/social\\_determinants/en/](http://www.who.int/social_determinants/en/)

World Health Organization's Health Impact Assessment  
[www.who.int/topics/health\\_impact\\_assessment/en/](http://www.who.int/topics/health_impact_assessment/en/)

This report was developed by King County and its many employees who passionately serve and work with residents every day.

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