

QUARTERLY NEWS

DDES SENDS HOLIDAY GIFT TO PERMIT CUSTOMERS

SOME FEES ROLLED BACK TO PRE-2004 LEVELS, REFUNDS FOR SOME 2004 FEES

On December 17, 2004, King County Executive Ron Sims held a press conference in partnership with the Master Builders Association, announcing fee rollbacks to pre-2004 levels for value-based building permit fees at DDES. As part of this initiative, 2004 permit customers will receive refunds for a portion of the value-based fees paid to DDES. For customers who have already received a permit during 2004, the refunds will be mailed during the first half of 2005. For customers who applied for a building permit in 2004 but have not yet received approval, fees will be adjusted at the cashier's desk at the time of permit issuance.

In June of 2003, the Metropolitan King County Council approved fee increases at DDES, effective for 2004. Several factors subsequently



King County Executive Ron Sims announcing the fee rollback/refund during the 12/17/04 press conference. Master Builders Association President Peter Orser (background) also spoke in favor of the decision.

produced a higher than anticipated demand for building permits during 2004. First, interest rates remained at historical lows throughout the year. Second, the demand for quality single family homes remained strong. Two key legislative actions, approval of the International Building Code and the Critical Areas Ordinance package, also increased the demand for building permits in mid to late 2004.

Approximately 6,100 customers will receive refund checks and the total dollar amount to be refunded to customers is approximately \$2 million.

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CHANGES TO THE RESIDENTIAL BUILDING PERMIT PROCESS

CRITICAL AREA DESIGNATIONS REQUIRED PRIOR TO HEALTH REVIEW

PROCESS CHANGE

The Critical Areas Ordinance package, which went into effect on January 1, 2005, specifies that customers seeking a building permit with a new/updated well or septic system must secure a Critical Areas Designation from DDES prior to applying for new well and/or septic installation approval from Seattle-King County Public Health. The Critical Areas Designation allows DDES to determine whether there are critical areas on the property and, if so, the type and exact location. The designation is valid for five years.

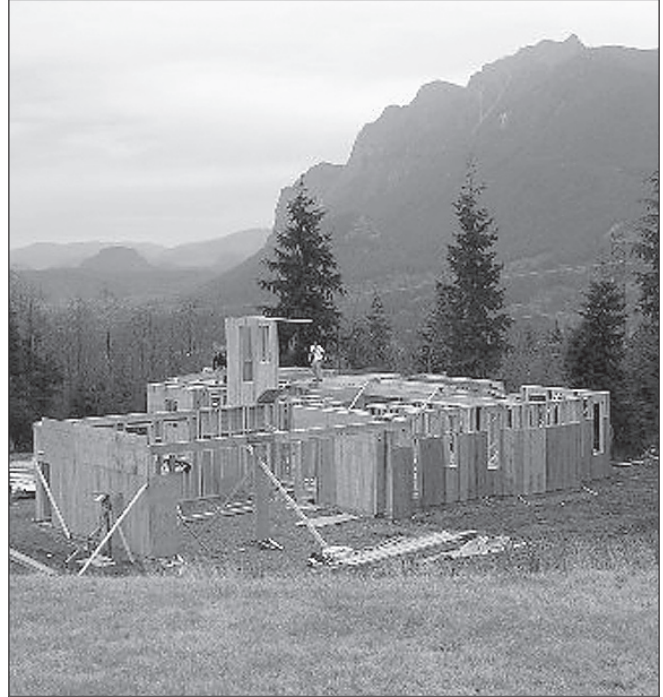
DDES has always included critical areas analysis within the permit review process for residential construction. However, this new standard for an initial Critical Areas Designation moves critical areas review to the very beginning of the permit review process, ensuring that property owners know up front where they can and cannot build. This can prevent costly plan changes and time delays during the permit review phase.

This process change will not apply in the following circumstances:

- building permit applications deemed complete by DDES or Public Health prior to January 1, 2005;
- building permit applications on lots created through land segregations recorded less than five years before the building permit application date.

WHAT A CRITICAL AREAS DESIGNATION ACHIEVES

A Critical Area Designation offers customers consistency and predictability in decision-making as applied to critical areas and associated buffers. The Critical Areas Designation puts critical area review at the beginning of the permit review



Customers seeking a building permit with a new/updated well or septic system must secure a Critical Areas Designation from DDES prior to applying for new well and/or septic installation approval from Seattle-King County Public Health.

process. This means that customers will know where they can and cannot build on their property. In the case of wells, septic tanks and drain fields, customers will know prior to hiring an engineer or consultant where these systems can be located. Customers can also save the time and money associated with plan changes or redesigns that might occur in the middle of the permit process if critical area issues have not been addressed prior to Health Department review.

The critical areas designation also allows customers who wish to sell property an opportunity to identify critical areas and their buffers on site. The designation helps identify buildable areas and offers the associated predictability and reliability for five years after the determination.

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Effective February 1, 2005, the DDES Permit Center will offer a full range of technical support for walk-in customers between the hours of 8:30 and 10:30 a.m.

DDES PERMIT CENTER OFFERS FULL RANGE OF TECHNICAL SUPPORT EACH MORNING

Beginning February 1, 2005, the DDES Permit Center will offer a full range of technical support to customers between the hours of 8:30 and 10:30 a.m. each day. Customers often need specialized information from specific permit review disciplines such as Plan Review, Critical Areas, Drainage and Site Review or Clearing and Grading.

In the past, staff in these areas may not have been readily available to assist customers without an appointment. Staff in specific review disciplines will now be on call to assist in the Permit Center each morning. This assistance is intended for both walk-in customers and customers with specific questions and/or issues during the permit intake process.

For additional information, please contact Chris Ricketts, Permit Center Supervisor at 206-296-6750.

DDES SENDS HOLIDAY GIFT TO PERMIT CUSTOMERS, CONTINUED

SOME FEES ROLLED BACK TO PRE-2004 LEVELS, REFUNDS FOR SOME 2004 FEES

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Refund amounts will vary. However, preliminary averages have been calculated for the following permit types:

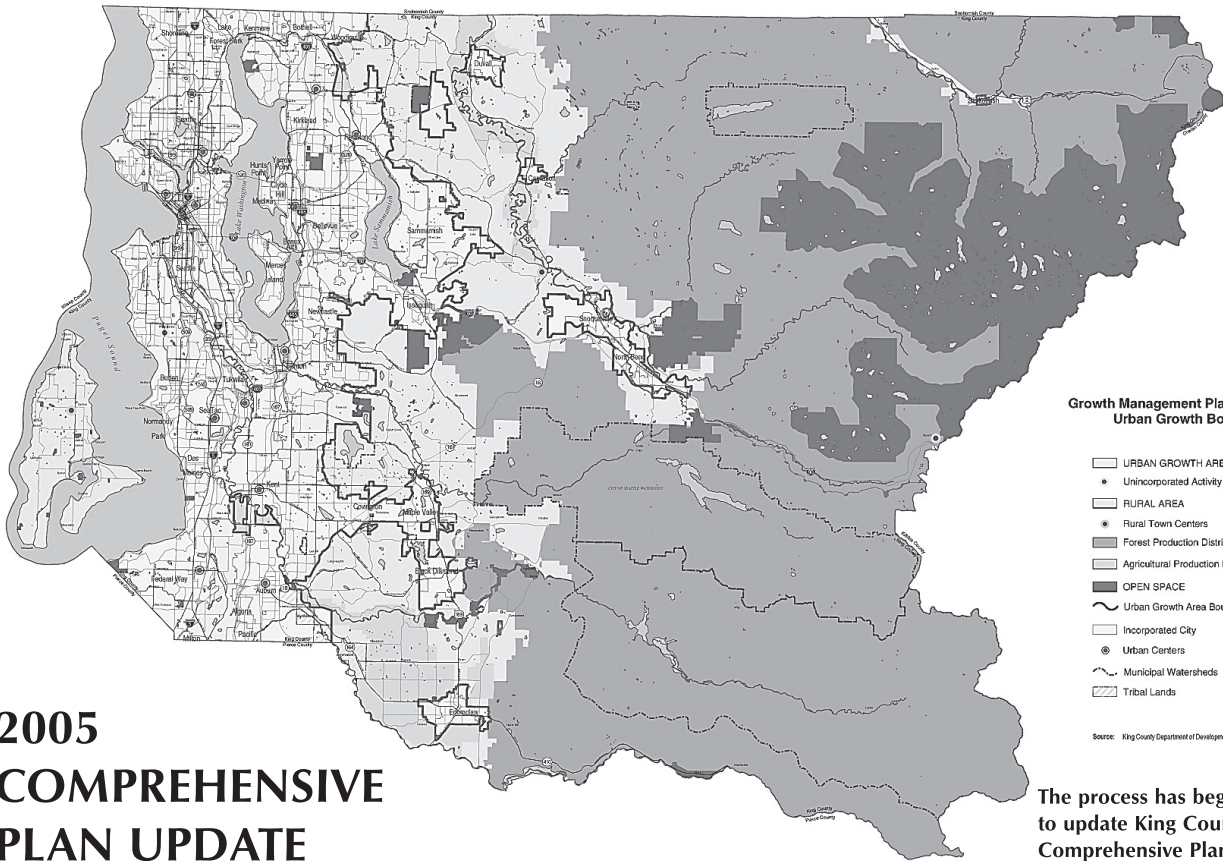
- The average refund for a single-family home permit customer will be \$630.00.
- The average refund for a remodel permit customer will be \$131.00.
- The average refund for a commercial permit customer will be \$1,076.00.

At the December 17, 2004 press conference, King County Executive Ron Sims emphasized that King County and DDES have honored their commitment to taxpayers and the development community. Development in King County is paying for itself and is not subsidized by general tax dollars. Executive Sims noted, "When economic conditions remain as favorable as they have in 2004, King County has always said that we would re-examine the permit fees we charge and, if possible, lower them. I am extremely proud to have honored that commitment."

For additional information on refunds for value-based fees, please contact Jim Schaber, Administrative Services Division Director, 206-296-6711.

DDES OFFERS WEB PAGE DEMONSTRATIONS

If you and/or your professional group are interested in a demonstration of the DDES Web site, we would be happy to show you our online services. For more information, contact Paula Adams, DDES Communications Director, at 206-296-6682.



2005 COMPREHENSIVE PLAN UPDATE

The process has begun to update King County's Comprehensive Plan for 2005.

The King County Comprehensive Plan guides growth and development in unincorporated King County and sets county policy on issues such as annexation, transportation, and environmental protection. During the annual update process, small, routine or technical changes can be made to the plan.

The 2005 Comprehensive Plan update proposes modifications to development codes and policies including three land use and zoning amendments

affecting White Center and Vashon Island. The complete amendment document is available for review via the DDES Web site at www.metrokc.gov/ddes/compplan/2005. Copies are also available at the DDES cashier's desk in Renton. Customers can request a copy simply by sending an e-mail to compplan@metrokc.gov.

For additional information, please contact Paul Reitenbach, DDES Senior Policy Analyst at 206-296-6705.

CHANGES TO THE RESIDENTIAL BUILDING PERMIT PROCESS, CONTINUED

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The Critical Areas Ordinance package now allows the Critical Areas Designation to address critical areas issues beyond location and classification. For example, wetland buffer widths or a mitigation plan for driveway crossing impacts could be included within the designation.

HOW TO GET STARTED

To apply for a Critical Areas Designation, please visit the DDES Web site at www.metrokc.gov/ddes and review **Customer Information Bulletin 21, Critical Areas Review**. The application form can be found at <http://www.metrokc.gov/ddes/forms/lis-ins-sadesap.pdf>. Customers can also call Steve Botheim, Critical Areas Section Supervisor, at 206-296-7144.

PERMIT HARMONIZING UPDATE: DDES AND STATE AGENCY COOPERATION EASING PERMITTING HURDLES

As reported in the Fall, 2004 issue of DDES Quarterly News, permit applicants for many large and/or highly sensitive construction projects will find the regulatory process easier to navigate, thanks to two agreements signed by King County, the Washington State Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW), the Washington State Department of Ecology (Ecology) and the Army Corps of Engineers (Corps).

The agreements demonstrate a new working relationship among these local, state and federal agencies as they implement regulations supporting federal and state environmental resource protection laws. Over time, each agency has developed independent permit processes, procedures and compliance standards for projects requiring multi-agency review. Inconsistent requirements among permit agencies often added time, expense and frustration to the permit process.

The first agreement between King County and the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife establishes inter-agency cooperation on Hydraulic Project Approvals (HPA permits), which are required for development/construction work altering the bed or flow of a river or stream. DDES is currently working to implement the details of the agreement. To date, DDES has established a WDFW work station in our Renton office to facilitate closer coordination on projects requiring permit review from both agencies.

The second agreement includes signatures from King County, the Washington Department of Ecology, the Governor's Office of Regulatory Assistance, and the Army Corps of Engineers. The agreement covers projects requiring certification under the Federal Clean Water Act and generally fall into the category of large

site disturbances with water runoff issues. As recommended in the agreement, DDES has adopted wetland mitigation ratios consistent with the DOE and the Corps, thus eliminating any inconsistency between local, state and federal standards. For projects proposing to clear over 5 acres, DDES is also coordinating with DOE on their Non-Point Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) process. Finally, DDES has joined the Joint Aquatic Resources Permit Application (JARPA) process, which allows applicants to apply for local, state and federal permits with the same application form.

These agreements improve customer service and reduce the cost of government regulation without compromising environmental standards. Applicants are generally willing to comply with environment requirements if their permits are processed efficiently. With this in mind, King County is committed to make environmental compliance as straightforward as possible for permit applicants.

For additional information, please contact Paula Adams, DDES Communications Director at 206-296-6682 or Barnaby Dow of the King County Executive's Office at 206-296-4186.

HELPFUL HINTS

CUSTOMER INFORMATION BULLETINS

The DDES Web page at www.metrokc.gov/ddes contains Customer Information Bulletins on over 50 topics pertaining to building and land development. Customers can also secure hard copies by calling the DDES customer service line at 206-296-6600.

KING COUNTY RECOGNIZED FOR GROWTH MANAGEMENT PLANNING AND NATURAL RESOURCE PROTECTION

The State Department of Community, Trade and Economic Development (CTED) recently sent a letter to King County Executive Ron Sims and Council Chair Larry Phillips congratulating King County on the 2004 growth management update. Excerpts from the letter are shown below and provide an excellent summary of King County's objectives in updating the Comprehensive Plan and implementing the Critical Areas Ordinance package.

Congratulations on completion of your growth management update. This first required full review of your comprehensive plan and implementing regulations is a significant milestone for the county. King County was one of the first local governments to reach this milestone and complete the task before the December 1, 2004, deadline, as required by RCW 36.70A.130. The power to guide development is one of the most important roles that local governments play. These decisions involve a great deal of controversy because they involve values that people cherish. Maintaining high quality of life is the foundation on which the economic development of Washington rests. We commend King County for taking the steps necessary to maintain and enhance that quality of life and protect the natural systems and natural landscape that makes Washington a place where people want to live and invest.

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

We would like to commend King County for taking steps to encourage redevelopment of existing urban areas and prevent sprawl. These actions help preserve the remaining rural landscape between the metropolitan core and the Cascade foothills. This rural landscape is an important asset to King County that allows for a

variety of both urban and rural lifestyles to exist in the county.

Supporting economic opportunity is essential to preserving rural areas. King County is to be commended for its efforts to ensure that the agricultural industry in King County remains viable. Changes in the agricultural market on a national and global scale make this a challenge. King County is using a number of tools to help meet this challenge, including transfer of development rights programs, the Puget Sound Fresh program, and recently adopted amendments to facilitate value-added accessory uses on agricultural resource lands. These approaches are tailored to the type of small-scale agricultural operations that exist in King County.

This preservation of the rural landscape is also supported by the leadership King County and its cities have shown in encouraging high-quality redevelopment of existing urban areas. The June, 2004 update of the countywide planning policies reflects the commitment on the part of King County and its cities to facilitate balanced, high-quality infill development of existing urban areas. This document shows the continued commitment to directing growth into urban centers where urban services and amenities are planned or available.

The policies also show a commitment to maintaining a stock of affordable housing. One of the goals of the Growth Management Act (GMA) is to ensure an adequate supply of housing that is affordable to all segments of the community. Maintaining an adequate supply of affordable housing is a problem King County shares with the nation's other metropolitan areas with growing economies, such as Boston, San Francisco, and Washington, D.C. King County is

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KING COUNTY RECOGNIZED FOR GROWTH MANAGEMENT PLANNING AND NATURAL RESOURCE PROTECTION, CONTINUED

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to be commended for providing a range of tools to address this critical need.

CRITICAL AREAS PROTECTIONS PACKAGE

King County did an exemplary job of developing a consistent, practical, science-based approach to protecting critical areas in both the urban and rural areas. We are pleased to see that King County was able to develop a proposal that received broad support from a variety of interest groups. The ordinance protects environmental assets that exist in the urban areas while retaining the ability of urban areas to accommodate the growth anticipated in King County over the next 20 years.

King County developed a body of science in the development of the ordinance that not only informed the decisions on King County's package, but is a tool other jurisdictions can use as they move forward in protecting their own critical areas. The scientific record included an extensive review of available science, distilled that science into specific findings, clearly identified where the proposed ordinance departed from those findings and the reasons for that departure.

The package developed by King County is also a significant step forward in integrating all of the regulatory and non-regulatory tools the county can use to protect natural system. King County has provided an array of programs to protect the natural environment and integrated these programs together to form a comprehensive strategy. This package reflects the shared responsibility of all landowners for protecting the value of the county's natural

systems. For example, the scientific record shows that managing stormwater, not only in the areas adjacent to a wetland or a stream, but throughout the watershed, affects the health of the stream. By integrating stormwater management, floodplain protection, and critical areas protection into an integrated package, the county has developed an approach where responsibility is shared by all landowners.

King County has also done an excellent job developing a range of choices for landowners to pick from in deciding how to protect natural system. King County's Rural Stewardship program allows landowners to choose between using larger buffers or incorporating development features to better manage stormwater. King County's continued efforts to preserve open space through both the purchase and transfer of development rights are important tools to preserving the rural areas where natural systems predominate. King County is also developing a network of open space corridors. All of these actions, taken together, represent a well-integrated, balanced approach to protecting the natural systems in the county.

For additional information on the King County Comprehensive Plan, contact Paul Reitenbach, Senior Policy Analyst, at 206-296-6705. For information on the Critical Areas Ordinance Package, contact Harry Reinert, Special Projects Manager, at 206-296-7132. Both topics are covered extensively within the DDES Web site at www.metrokc.gov/ddes.

QUESTIONS – JUST ASK US

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(drainage review, parking, traffic, landscaping)

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Division Director

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Site Development Services Supervisor

(clearing, grading and forestry permits)

Randy Sandin 206-296-6778

Critical Areas Supervisor

(wetlands, streams, geo hazards)

Steve Bottheim 206-296-7144

Land Use Inspections Supervisor

(site infrastructure)

Steve Townsend 206-296-7204

Code Enforcement Supervisor

(building, environmental and health hazard complaints)

Elizabeth Deraitus 206-296-7090

CUSTOMER SERVICE NUMBERS

DDES Customer Information Line 206-296-6600

Permit Application Appointments 206-296-6797

DDES Billing Hot Line 206-296-6659

DDES WORKSHOPS ON CIVIC TELEVISION

DDES held two successful public workshops in 2004, both of which will be repeatedly broadcasted on King County Civic Television throughout 2005. Civic Television appears on Channel 22 in most areas.

The first workshop, entitled The Residential Building Permit Process occurred on April 7, 2004. This workshop featured information on avoiding costly mistakes during the permit review process, the benefits of the DDES Project Manager Program, and applicable codes and permit review fees. The second workshop occurred on December 10, 2004 and helped customers answer the question, What Can I Do with My Property? This workshop featured web based research methods offered by DDES, information on pre-application meetings, and information on critical areas and how they can affect a development proposal.

DDES is hosting a third workshop on the Critical Areas Ordinance (CAO) on January 28, 2005. There has been so much customer demand for this workshop that a repeat session has been scheduled for Friday, February 25, 2005 at the Master Builders Association offices in Bellevue. For registration procedures and driving directions, see the DDES Web page at www.metrokc.gov/ddes. This workshop will also be broadcast on Civic Television throughout 2005. Interested parties may also obtain a copy of the CAO Workshop on DVD by contacting **Paula Adams, DDES Communications Director, at 206-296-6682.**

Department of Development and Environmental Services

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