
II. The Benchmark System for Monitoring the Countywide Planning Policies:

Identifying Trends in Community Indicators

Background

In 1990 the Washington State Legislature passed the Growth Management Act (GMA). For the first time in the State's history, all urban counties and their cities were required to develop and adopt comprehensive plans and regulations to implement the plans. To achieve a coordinated countywide plan across King County's jurisdictions, GMA further required that King County and its now 39 cities develop framework policies- the King County *Countywide Planning Policies*- to guide the development of the jurisdictions' plans.

In order to obtain interjurisdictional coordination, the Growth Management Planning Council (GMPC) is responsible for defining and refining the policies in the *Countywide Planning Policies*. The original *Countywide Planning Policies* were adopted by the Metropolitan King County Council and ratified by the original 31 cities in 1994. Since then, they have been amended several times.

Purpose

The *Countywide Planning Policies* are goals for maintaining and improving the quality of life in King County. To measure our progress in attaining these goals, the GMPC identified 45 community indicators in five policy areas: economics, environment, affordable housing, land use, and transportation. As one of the first and most durable efforts at monitoring outcomes in the public sector, the King County Benchmark Program was created to measure broad quality-of-life outcomes to determine if public policy and programs are making a difference.

Public outcome monitoring is a strategy for a change: it alerts us to what we are doing well, and to where we need to do better. It is intimately connected to both the policy goals that it monitors, and to the strategic planning, programs, and services that are intended to implement those goals. Effective implementation of countywide policies also depends on strategic planning and performance monitoring at the jurisdictional and department levels. For example, monitoring how efficiently we are using urban land countywide presumes that responsible jurisdictions and departments are undertaking the appropriate actions to use urban land efficiently, and are tracking the effectiveness of their programs in achieving the countywide goal.

It is important to note that macro-level outcome measurements such as the 45 Benchmark Indicators are often affected by external factors outside the direct control of government agencies. Some, such as the economic indicators, are less responsive to local government strategies than others, such as land use indicators. But policy goals imply that something can be done. Through concerted efforts in both the public and civic sectors we can have some effect on all of these indicators. The intention is to work collaboratively to define the society we want to create and inhabit. Tracking these indicators allows policy-makers to know if we are improving the quality of our lives in King County and effecting positive change.

The following pages select several indicators from the 45 that make up the King County Benchmark Program and key findings in the five policy areas.

Highlights of the Most Recent Benchmark Indicators

Economic Development. By mid-2003, employment in King County was once again on the rise, after more than two years of recession and job loss. Although unemployment hovered around 7%, wages for those who were employed continued to rise modestly. Median household income was \$60,400, which was about 140% of the national median household income.

These indications of a modest recovery were encouraging. However, the poverty rate in King County in 2002 was 9.2%, an increase from 1980 levels. The distribution of income in the County changed during the 1990 - 2002 period as well, with the lowest and highest income groups increasing while the middle income groups declined slightly as a proportion of the population.

New, more accurate data on the percent of high school students graduating within four years indicated that only 66% of King County public school students graduate "on time" with their cohort. Large disparities between ethnic groups and among different school districts in the County suggest that we have much work ahead to help all students to succeed in school. However, in 2002 42% of all King County residents had a bachelor's degree or higher, and 91% had graduated from high school, making this one of the most highly-educated communities in the country.

Land Use. The King County Countywide Planning Policy strives to protect the natural environment by reducing the consumption of land and concentrating development. While there has been some growth management success in King County, there is still progress to be made.

Urban centers attracted 21% of residential development and 29% of all jobs created in King County from 1995 to 2004. Residential development in urban centers was growing close to the target percentage of 25%. Urban and manufacturing centers combined have accommodated about 41% of job growth in King County from 1995 to 2002. With a modest economic recovery that began in 2003, opportunities for job growth in all the centers should improve.

King County's urban population grew 8.9% from 1996 through 2003, while only 4% of urban land was newly-developed in the same period. While this trend meets the policy goal of using urban land more efficiently, even greater efficiencies will be needed in the long run, as the available supply of vacant land in King County continues to diminish. As the supply of vacant land is reduced, it is likely that a greater proportion of development will take place on redevelopable land or at higher densities.

Environment. The trend in air quality has been generally upward since 1980, although the number of good days dipped between 1998 and 2000 because stricter federal standards for particulate matter were put into effect in 1999. Since 2000 there has been a slight improvement in air quality based on the total number of good air quality days.

Of particular concern for King County's air quality is the level of particulate matter in the air, which is caused predominantly by motor vehicles, diesel engines, and wood-burning. While per capita consumption in residential and commercial energy has declined since 1996, per capita use of automotive energy (gasoline and diesel) has risen. Diesel continues to increase, while gasoline consumption peaked in 2002, and has declined in the past two years. Efforts to decrease automotive energy consumption include reducing the diesel use in King County's Metro fleet, promoting public transportation, promoting energy-efficient building practices.

A second area of environmental interest in King County is the quality and quantity of our water sources. To protect King County's water quality, the Department of Natural Resources (DNRP) set a target of reducing the number of poor and very poor stream locations to under 50%, and raising the number of measured stream locations rated as good or excellent to 18% by 2007. DNRP appears to be making progress in that direction as the percent of sampled streams in King County in poor or very poor condition decreased from 52% in 2002 to 51% in 2003.

Finally, efforts are being made to decrease the amount of waste produced in King County through recycling, food waste collection programs and commercial paper waste reduction programs. The notable countywide recycling rate of 49.3% is considerably higher than the national average rate of 30% for residential recycling.

Transportation. Issues such as congestion, economic development, pollution, and the mingling of various modes of transportation have been present in King County life for decades. With a growing population and developed landscape, residents are faced with traffic congestion, lost productivity, and health risks- all resulting from an increase of vehicles on our roads.

In 2003, 68% of King County residents drove to work alone. Though this was a decrease from 2002, a larger workforce in 2003 resulted in a slight increase in the average commute time in King County from 2002 up to 25.4 minutes in 2003. The majority of these workers were commuting to work alone. More people drove alone than all other forms of commuting combined, including carpooling, using public transportation, walking, and biking.

Increased congestion contributes to lost productivity for both commuters and commercial transporters. While truck traffic only accounted for 8% of the traffic on King County highways, it has increased faster than car traffic from 1994 levels. While a rise in commercial traffic is a sign of economic health in the region, it also adds stress to an already congested highway system. Moving commercial traffic efficiently and reducing single occupancy vehicle trips are critical for air quality, energy consumption, greenhouse gas emissions, and improved mobility.

Affordable Housing. King County had considerable success in creating and preserving affordable units in 2003. With nearly \$20 million in local funding, over 1,750 units were created or preserved for long-term affordability. This was up from \$17.8 million in 2002 local funding.

However, affordable housing is still lacking for many King County residents. Among all households, 46% of renters and 32% of home owners were paying more than 30% of their income for housing costs in 2002. When households pay more than 30% of their income for housing, resources are often diverted from other essentials such as food, healthcare, clothing, and utilities as well as saving for future needs, such as college tuition and retirement. This is particularly true for those households in the lower income groups.

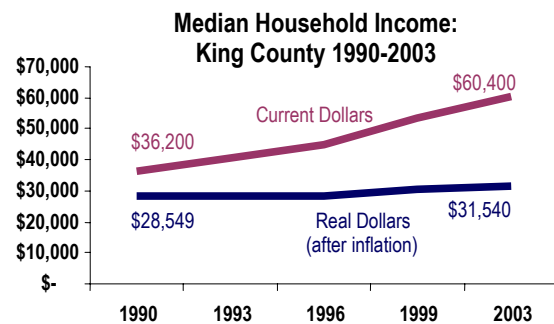
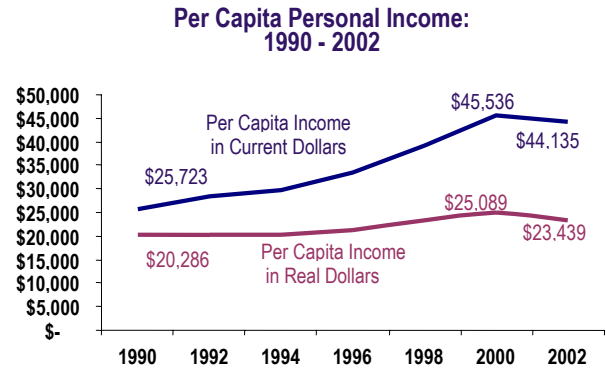
The King County median home price in 2004 was \$293,000, up 9% from 2003. During the 1997-2004 period, home prices grew at a faster rate than incomes, yet despite this King County's home ownership rate rose above 61% for the first time since 1980. With low interest rates and modest signs of a recovery from recession, more King County households took the opportunity to buy a home, many of them for the first time.

The executive summary provided in this chapter highlights only a selection of the trends reported since last fall. The Economic, Affordable Housing, and Land Use Indicators are drawn from their respective reports published in 2004. The Environment and Transportation Indicators are drawn from their 2005 reports.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

OUTCOME: INCREASE PERSONAL AND MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME

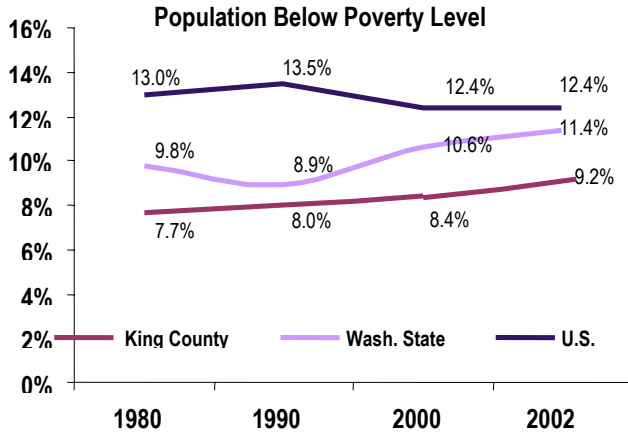
- 2002 per capita personal income for King County residents fell slightly from its high levels in 2000 and 2001. At \$44,135, it was 143% of the national per capita income, down from a high of 155% in 2000. In real dollars, 2002 per capita personal income showed a decrease from the previous three years. However, incomes may show improvement as the region recovers from recession.
- Median household income for King County in 2003 was estimated at \$60,400, which was about 140% of the U.S. median household income. A downward revision from H.U.D.'s estimates of the past few years reflects a more realistic assessment of the effects of the recession from 2001-2003. Even with this revision, both current dollar and real dollar income is higher in 2003 than it was in 2000. Although unemployment hovered around 7% for this period, wages for those who were employed continued to rise modestly.



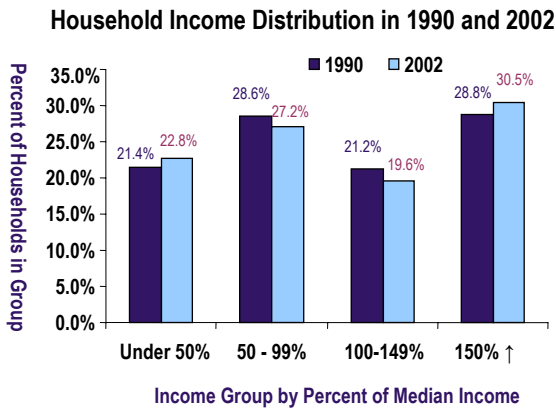
OUTCOME: INCREASE INCOME AND REDUCE POVERTY

- In 2002, a family of four with a household income under \$18,300 and an individual with an income under \$9,350 was considered to be living in poverty. The percent of the population living in poverty in King County has risen slowly over the last three decades. With an increase of nearly 20% from 1980 levels, the percent of the population in King County living in poverty in 2002 was approximately 9.2%.
- King County's poverty rate remained significantly lower than the national rate. However, the national rate declined by a full

percentage point since 1990, while the King County rate rose one and a half percentage points.



- The distribution of income in the County changed as well. There were fewer households in all the middle income groups and more households in the lowest and highest income groups compared to 1990. In 2002, the poorest households - those earning under 30% of median income (less than \$16,500) - grew from 11.1% of all households to 13.2%. Approximately 15,000 more households were considered very low income. At the same time, nearly 2% more households earned over 150% of the median income.



OUTCOME: INCREASE EDUCATIONAL SKILL LEVELS

- The rate of students in the class of 2003 graduating “on time” was 66.3%. A 2002 nationwide study by the Manhattan Institute ranked Washington state 39th among 50 states in its public school graduation rate. The national nationwide 2001 cohort graduation rate at 70%.
- 42% of King residents have a bachelor’s degree or higher, and 91% have graduated from high school, making this one of the most highly-educated communities in the country. Nationally, just 26% have bachelor’s degree, and 38% have graduated from high school.

Percent of population over 25 with:	1970	1980	1990	2000	2002*
High School Diploma or Higher	69%	83%	88%	90%	91%
Some college (includes A.A. degree)	16%	23%	32%	31%	31%
Bachelor's Degree or Higher	17%	26%	33%	40%	42%

*Based on ACS 2002 (U.S. Census Bureau), not decennial census

- In King County only 36.5% of American Indians, and about 42% of Black and Hispanic students graduated with their cohort. These groups fared slightly better at the state level, where 42% of American Indians, and 48 - 50% of Black and Hispanic students graduated on time.

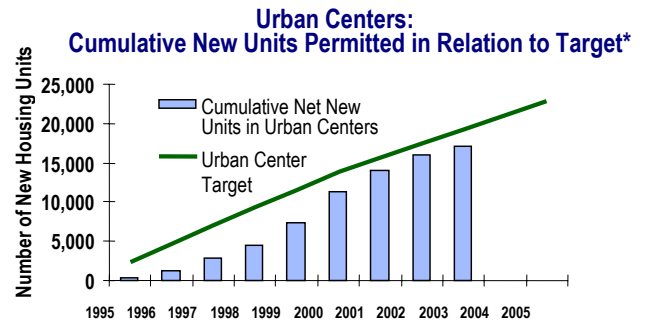
2003 Cohort Graduation and Dropout Rates in Washington State and King County by Ethnicity				
Ethnic Group	WA State	King County		
	On-time Graduation Rate	Percent remaining in cohort at end of Grade 12	On-time Graduation Rate	Annual Dropout Rate
American Indian	41.8%	52.6%	36.5%	14.8%
Asian	71.0%	80.5%	69.0%	5.3%
Black	48.3%	62.5%	42.7%	11.0%
Hispanic	49.5%	62.8%	41.9%	10.7%
White	69.7%	84.1%	73.5%	4.2%
All	65.7%	79.0%	66.3%	5.7%

*The annual dropout rate affects each cohort four times. Hence the overall dropout rate for a cohort is roughly four times the annual rate, although some individuals may dropout, and return, or dropout again.

LAND USE

OUTCOME: ENCOURAGE A GREATER SHARE OF NEW HOUSING GROWTH IN URBAN AREAS AND URBAN CENTERS; LIMIT GROWTH IN RURAL/ RESOURCE AREAS

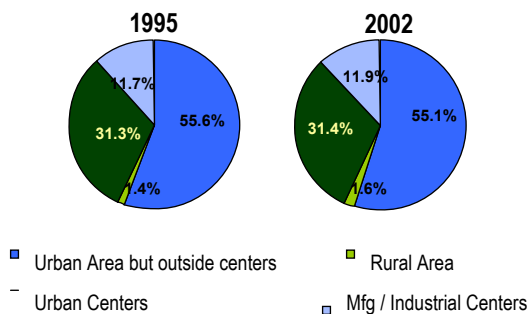
- 96% of King County’s residential growth occurred in the urban growth area, while just 4% occurred in the rural area in 2003. While the recent recession slowed development in the urban centers, over the last nine years the urban centers have succeeded in attracting about 21% of all units built, close to the target percentage of 25%. However, in 2003, new residential units permitted in urban centers accounted for only about 10% of all new residential units permitted. This is well below the target of 25%.



*Target is 25% of the target for all new housing units. It amounts to about 1795 units per year in the urban centers. The target was adjusted in 2002.

OUTCOME: ENCOURAGE A GREATER SHARE OF NEW JOB GROWTH IN URBAN AREAS AND URBAN CENTERS; LIMIT GROWTH IN RURAL/ RESOURCE AREAS

Location of Jobs in King County



- There was only slight change in the location of jobs between 1995 and 2002. In 1995, 43% of all jobs in the County were in the urban and manufacturing centers; in 2002 43.3% are in those centers. Combined, the centers have accommodated about 41% of all job growth during the seven-year period.

OUTCOME: MAKE EFFICIENT USE OF URBAN LAND

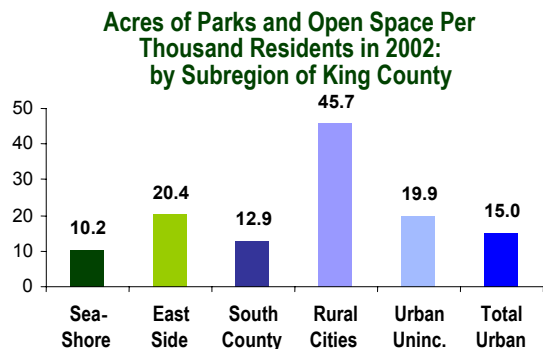
Percent of New Housing Units Built Through Redevelopment by Sub-Area				
	2000	2001	2002	2003
Seattle-Shoreline	71%	81%	77%	72%
Greater East Side	20%	9%	44%	28%
South King County	36%	12%	34%	37%
Rural Cities	0%	0%	8%	12%
Urban Total*	51%	46%	53%	44%
Unincorp KC*	na	29%	23%	17%
Total County	46%	44%	52%	43%

- In 2003, about 43% of all new residential units were permitted on land that had a pre-existing use. In the urban area, the proportion was about 44%. As would be expected, the highest rate of redevelopment is in the older and more densely-populated

Sea-Shore subregion, while the Rural Cities have a relatively low redevelopment rate.

- King County’s urban population grew 8.9% from 1996 through 2003. After growing rapidly during the late 1990s, population growth slowed considerably from 2001-2003. In this same period, about 4% of urban land was newly-developed, reflecting a ratio of land consumption to population growth approximately 1:2 indicating that land was consumed at less than half the rate that the population grew.

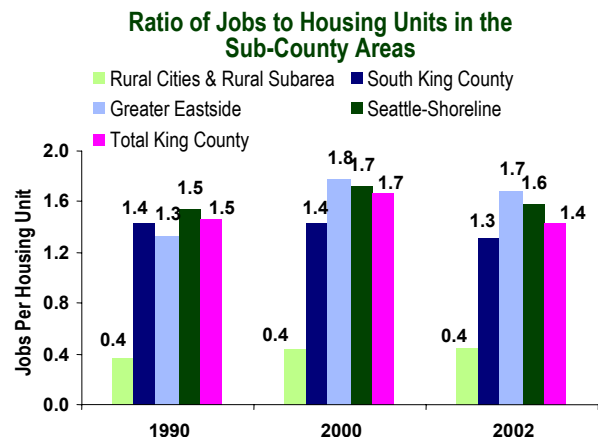
OUTCOME: ENCOURAGE LIVABLE, DIVERSE COMMUNITIES



- In 2003, King County had over 24,500 acres of urban parks and open space, which was an 11% increase in eight years. In 2003, King County offered 15 acres of park land per one thousand urban residents, with the Eastside and unincorporated urban areas having the most generous amounts of parkland. The rural cities had an abundance of park land per resident. Some of these are regional parks that serve residents throughout the county.

OUTCOME: BALANCE JOBS AND HOUSEHOLD GROWTH

- In 2002, King County had just over 1.4 jobs per housing unit, with some significant shifts in the ratio of jobs to housing among the four King County sub-regions. While there was an increase in proportion of jobs in the Eastside since 1990, the jobs-housing ratio in the South County decreased slightly.
- In most cases, the ratio of jobs to housing was much higher in the urban centers than in the County overall. Those with particularly high ratios may need to encourage more residential growth to house local workers and fulfill the purposes of the centers.



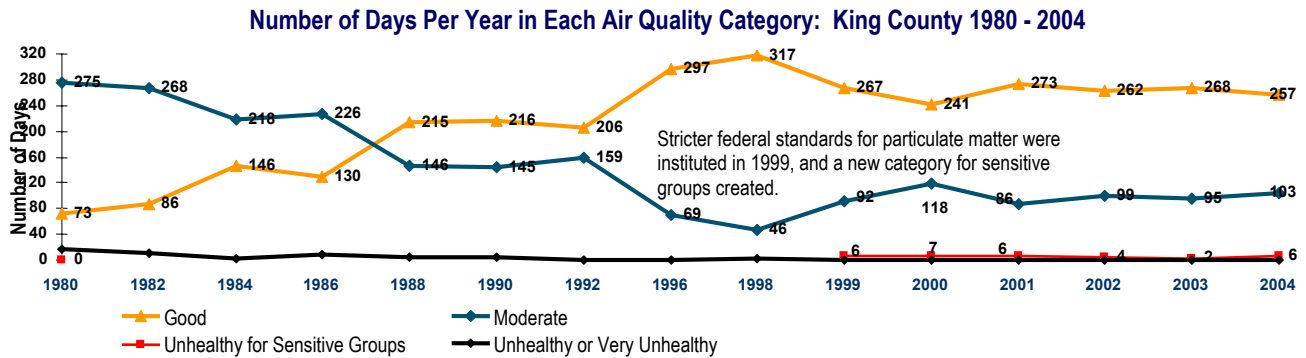
ENVIRONMENT

OUTCOME: IMPROVE AIR QUALITY

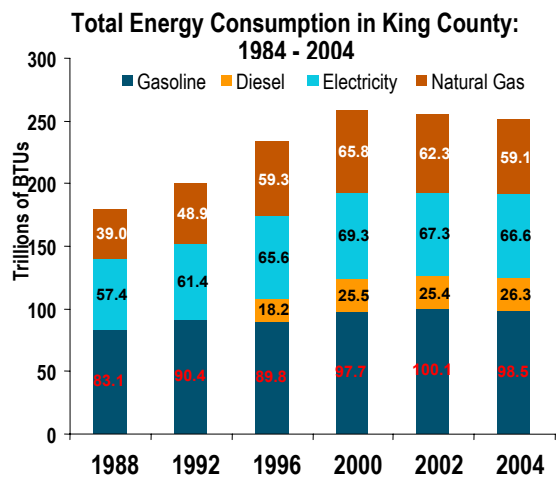
- Compared to 2002, there were 5 fewer “good” air quality days, and 2 more days that were “unhealthy for sensitive groups,” in 2004. Also, an average of five days per year has been classified as “unhealthy for sensitive groups” since this category was created in 1999.
- Exposure to elevated levels of particulate matter- a significant pollutant- aggravates asthma, chronic pulmonary disease, and

heart disease. Asthma disproportionately affects the very young, the very old, and the very poor. It is a leading cause of school absenteeism.

- Motor vehicles are by far the largest overall contributors to air pollution, responsible for about 55% of the total. Vehicles also contribute to ozone, greenhouse gas emissions and other air toxics.



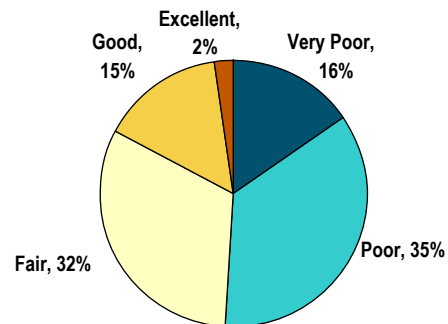
- Excluding diesel, King County’s total energy consumption increased about 10% from 1990 to 2004 and has declined significantly since its high point in 2000. Of the four main types of energy consumed, the use of automotive fuels has risen more rapidly than electricity and natural gas.
- Per capita consumption of electricity and natural gas has declined by nearly 7% since 1996 and is now at about the same level as it was in the mid-1900s after peaking between 1999 and 2002. Though total energy consumption has increased, per capita consumption has decreased, indicating that energy-efficient buildings, appliances, and other conservation measures are having a positive impact.



OUTCOME: PROTECT WATER QUALITY AND QUANTITY

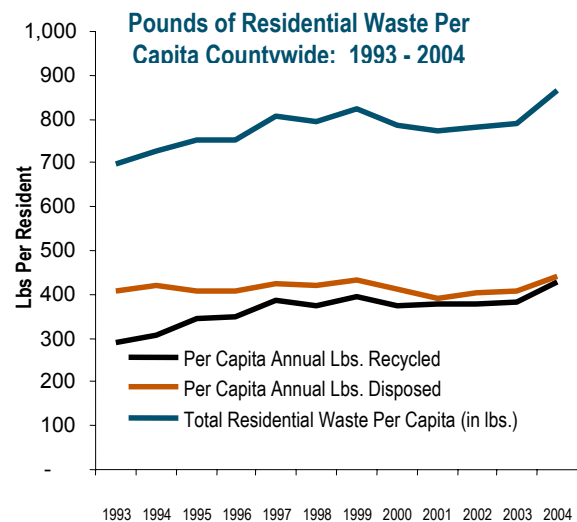
- In 2003, only 2% of the sampled streams in King County were in excellent condition, 32% were in fair condition, and 15% were in good condition. Over 50% of sampled streams in King County were in poor or very poor condition. This is a slight improvement from 2002, when 52% were in poor or very poor condition. Most of the sampled streams are within the Urban Growth Area and results for the stream sub-basins in more-densely settled incorporated areas in King County were generally poorer than for those on the fringe of the urban area.

Percent of Stream Stations in Each Condition
Category: King County 2003



OUTCOME: DECREASE WASTE DISPOSAL AND INCREASE RECYCLING

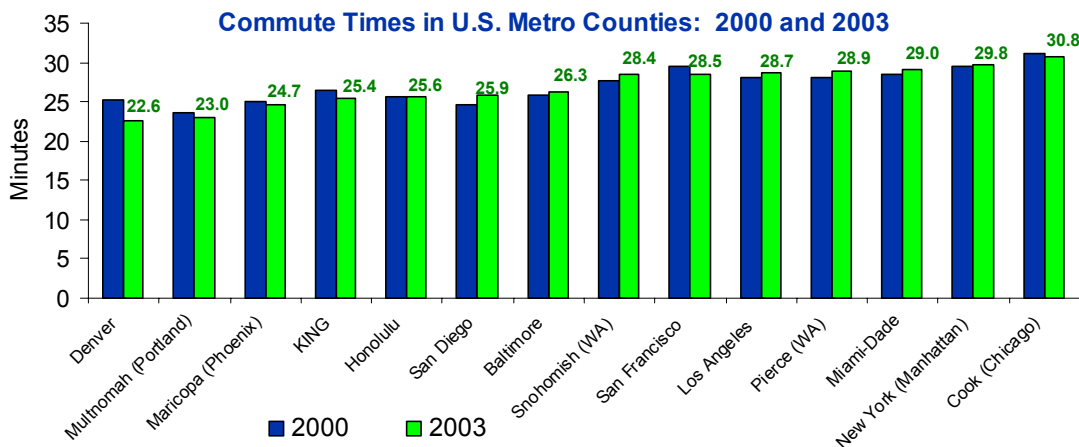
- In both Seattle and King County outside of Seattle, the residential recycling rate is improving gradually, reaching 50% in Seattle in 2004 and just under 49% in King County outside of Seattle. The aggregated countywide recycling rate was 49.3%, which compared very favorably with a U.S. average rate of about 30% for residential recycling.
- There has been a steady increase in the amount of total waste generated in King County during the years from 1993 through 2004, an increase of roughly 2% per year. Fortunately, the number of pounds recycled per capita has risen more rapidly, increasing 47% over 12 years. Despite the increase in recycling rates, the amount of garbage disposed per capita has also risen slowly, increasing by 8% from 1993 to 2004.



TRANSPORTATION

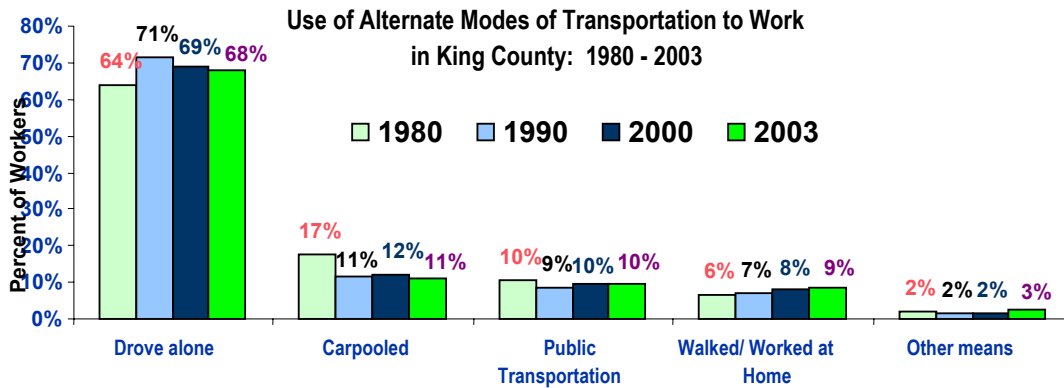
OUTCOME: ENCOURAGE LINKAGES BETWEEN RESIDENCES, COMMERCIAL CENTERS AND WORKPLACE LOCATIONS

- According to the Census Bureau's American Community Survey, King County's average commute trip time in 2003 was 25.4 minutes, down from the 26.5 minutes reported in the 2000 census and up slightly from the 25.0 minutes reported by the ACS in 2002. There are several possible reasons for the decline including the possibility that recession in 2001-2003 may have resulted in fewer workers and commercial vehicles on the road. Overall,
- King County's average commute time is relatively low for major metropolitan counties.
- Of the 14 metropolitan counties below, King County is the fourth lowest. About half of these counties have seen an increase in their average commute time since 2000, while the other half have stayed the same or declined slightly.



OUTCOME: INCREASE THE AVAILABILITY AND USE OF MODES OF TRANSPORTATION OTHER THAN SINGLE OCCUPANCY VEHICLES

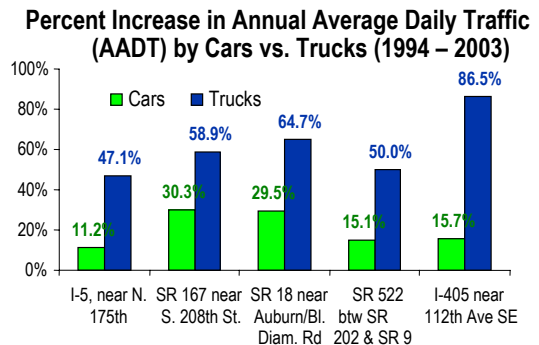
- In 2003, 68% of King County residents drove alone to work. Though down slightly from 1990, it was still higher than the 64% who commuted alone in 1980. Some of the shift could be attributed to a shift back to single occupancy vehicle commutes instead of carpooling, as this graph suggests. Public transportation remained fairly steady, accounting for only 10% of commute trips.
- to SOVs including carpooling, walking and using public transportation. In the more sparsely-populated rural areas, over 85% of residents drove alone or carpooled to work, while only 3% used public transportation. These results may reflect greater public transportation options, availability of sidewalks and trails, and closer proximity of homes to workplaces in the SeaShore sub-region.
- In the densely-populated SeaShore sub-region, commuters were more likely to use alternatives



OUTCOME: IMPROVE ABILITY OF GOODS AND SERVICES TO MOVE EFFICIENTLY AND COST-EFFECTIVELY THROUGH THE REGION

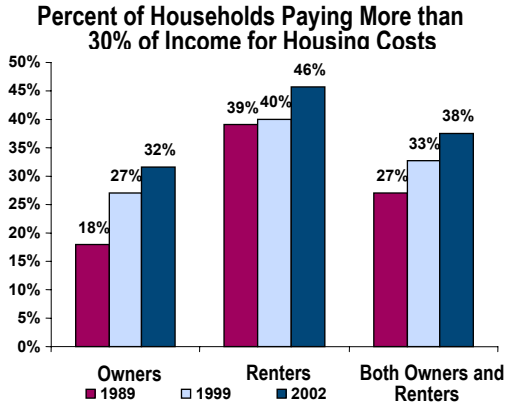
- WS DOT estimated that, in 2003, the cost of weekday delays on major Puget Sound freeways was about \$164 million per year. These delays affect both commuters and commercial transporters in lost productivity, higher fuel costs and wear and tear on vehicles.
- Though it only accounted for 8% of all traffic on King County’s major highways, truck traffic represented a significantly larger proportion than it did in the mid-1990’s. Truck traffic has been most noticeable on the I-405 corridor, where commercial traffic

increased by 86.5% from 1994-1996 levels. Car traffic increased just 15.7% during that same period.



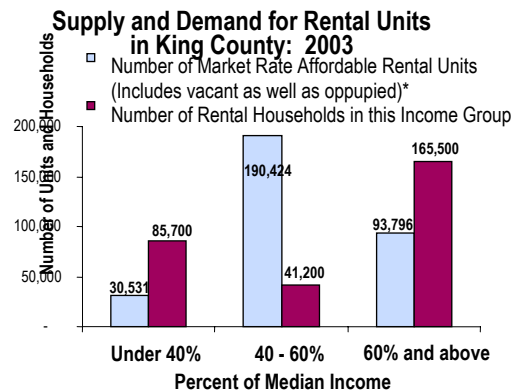
AFFORDABLE HOUSING

OUTCOME: PROVIDE SUFFICIENT AFFORDABLE HOUSING FOR ALL KING COUNTY RESIDENTS



- Among all households, the proportion paying more than 30% of their income for housing costs rose from 27% to 38% since 1989. In 2002, 46% of renters and 32% of home owners paid more than 30% of their income for housing.

- In 2003, there were over 85,700 households earning under 40% of median household income. These households were competing for over 30,000 affordable housing units. The deficit in affordable housing for these lowest income households was only partially compensated for by 30,000 subsidized units in King County.



*There are approximately 30,000 subsidized rental units in King County. Most of them are not included in this market rate unit count.

OUTCOME: PROMOTE AFFORDABLE HOME OWNERSHIP OPPORTUNITIES

- Home prices rose over 9% from 2003 to \$293,000 for all homes in King County. From 1997 to 2004, the rise in home prices has outstripped growth in income. During the 14 years since 1990, home prices rose at an annual rate of 5.4%, compared to income growth of just 3.7% annually.
- Though rents fell, more than half of all renter households earn under 70% of median income. These households are tacitly susceptible to home ownership affordability. Should home ownership rates drop, an increase in demand for rental units could

drive up rents, making units less affordable for these households.

Average Annual Increases in Income, Home Price, and Rent: 1990 - 2004

