II. The King County Benchmark Program

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 land use 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) was established to define and refine 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.

The GMA further required the establishment of a monitoring program to track the progress of the county's *Countywide Planning Policies*. As a result of this mandate, the King County Benchmark Program was adopted by the GMPC in 1995 and includes 45 indicators that collectively articulate the impact of land use and development policies/ practices on our natural, built and social environment. Rather than focusing on the jurisdictional programs of the county's 40 jurisdictions, the Benchmarks provide a high level analytical view of change within the geographic boundaries of King County.

The Tenth Annual Benchmark Report Series

The King County Benchmark Program reports cover five policy areas: land use, economic development, transportation, affordable housing and the environment. This section summarizes the findings of the 10th Annual Benchmark Report Series, published from 2005 to 2007.

With 1,078,000 jobs, King County increased employment 15% between 1995 and 2005. Rising steadily from 1995 to 2000, employment then dipped through 2004 as a result of a regional recession. Incomes in King County were also affected by the recession, increasing through 2002 and then holding relatively steady until 2005. However, income growth struggled to keep pace with inflation, which is reflected in a downward trend in real income since 2002. When adjusted for inflation, 2006 incomes were just ahead of where they were in 1995.

While incomes have increased over the last 10 years, growth has not been evenly distributed among King County households. In 1990, there was a fairly even distribution of households earning moderate incomes and those earning very low and very high incomes. By 2005, that was no longer the case as moderate income households accounted for only 44% of the county's households.

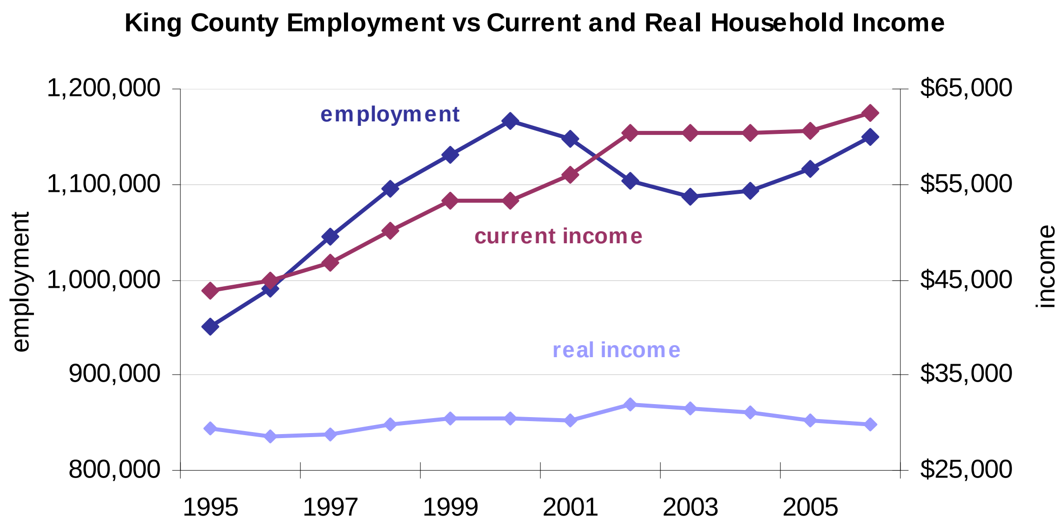
As incomes struggled to keep pace with inflation, home prices continued to rise at a healthy clip leading to a housing market that is increasingly unaffordable for King County's households. In 1990, 27% of the county's households were spending more than 30% of their income for housing. By 2005, the percent of households paying more than they could afford for housing had increased to 38% (almost one-third of the county's home owners and one-half of the county's renters).

Since 1993, total Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT) in King County have increased at a fairly steady pace. Commute times have also increased and even though more people are using public transportation, almost two out of three workers still use their personal vehicles to commute. While car traffic still accounts for the vast majority of vehicular traffic, the increase in truck traffic on King County roads has dwarfed the growth in car traffic. While indicative of a recovery from recession, this increase in commercial truck traffic has also driven a 50% increase in diesel consumption in the last decade. This is particularly noteworthy as the transportation sector contributes one-half of the county's Greenhouse Gas emissions, which increased from 1999 to 2003.

The following pages further discuss these changes and their impact on our natural, built and social environments. For more information about these indicators and the King County Benchmark Program, reports are available on the Internet at http://www.metrokc.gov/budget/benchmrk.

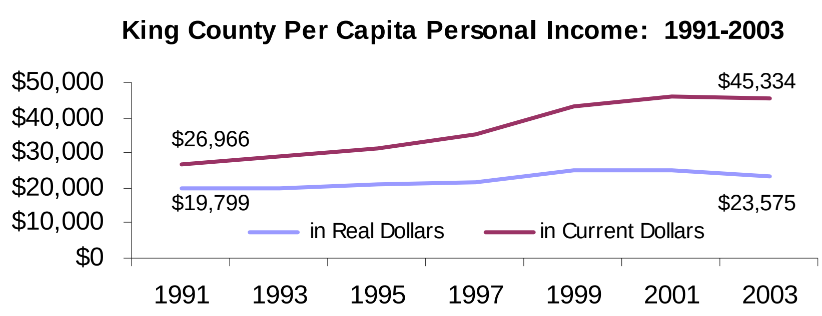
Recovering From Recession

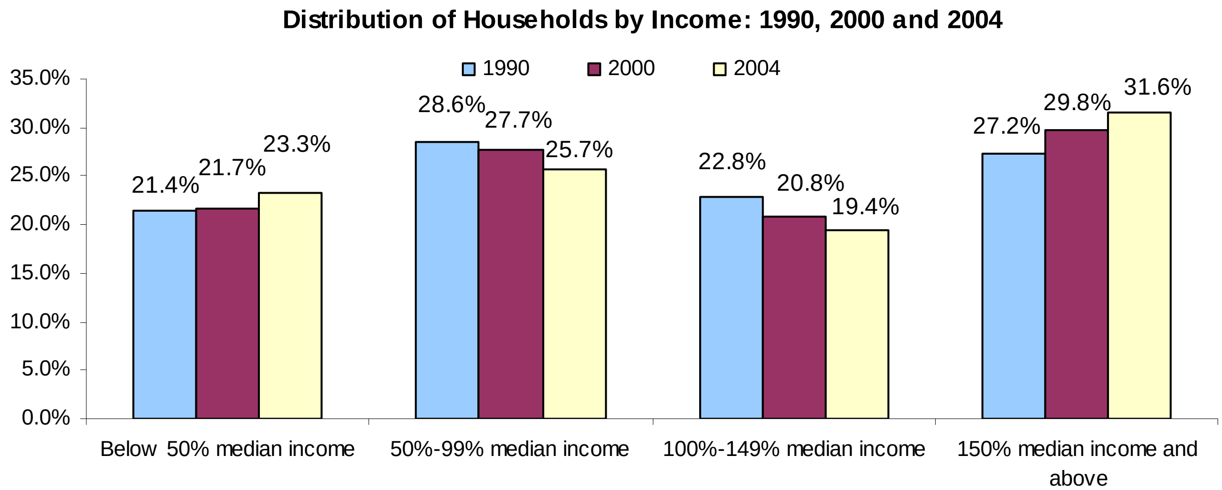
The Economic Bulletin highlights long-term trends that indicate the county has seen substantial growth over the last decade. Though the county has not fully recovered from the economic slowdown from 2001-2004, short-term indicators suggest a modest recovery is underway. King County's unemployment rate fell to 5.1% in 2004, dipping below 5% in 2005. However, that employment growth was unevenly distributed as construction, health care, administrative professions, and the hospitality industry saw growth while losses occurred in finance and insurance and manufacturing (mainly aerospace manufacturing).



Though unemployment dropped, wages and income have struggled to keep up with inflation. After extraordinary growth in wages in the mid to late 1990's, wages for software publishers decreased almost 20% per year since 1999 when they peaked at nearly $190,000. The high wages in 1999 were bolstered by stock options paid out in the information industry. Excluding the software industry, real wages have grown by a little over 1% per year since 2000.

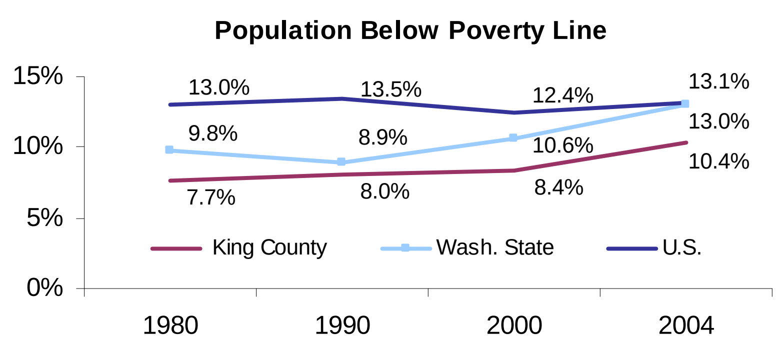
After 25% growth during the 1990's, real per capita personal income was still below 2000 levels but rallied with a nominal increase from 2002 to 2003. Despite the considerable slowdown in income growth after 1999, real per capita personal income rose 17% from 1993 to 2003.





When adjusted for inflation, median household income grew 2% from 2000 to 2004. However, household income did not grow evenly among King County's households. The proportion of households earning under 50% of median household income and those earning more than 150% of the median grew while the proportion of households earning between 50% and 149% of the median shrunk.

With uneven growth in incomes, many households continue to struggle to make ends meet. While the poverty rate in King County is significantly lower than the national rate, it has grown at a faster rate. The 2004 national poverty rate of 13.1% was a one percent increase from 1980 while the poverty rate in King County grew to 10.4% in 2004, a 35% increase in the same time period. As King County's population grew by close to 520,000 persons, the number of people living in poverty has nearly doubled in the last 24 years.

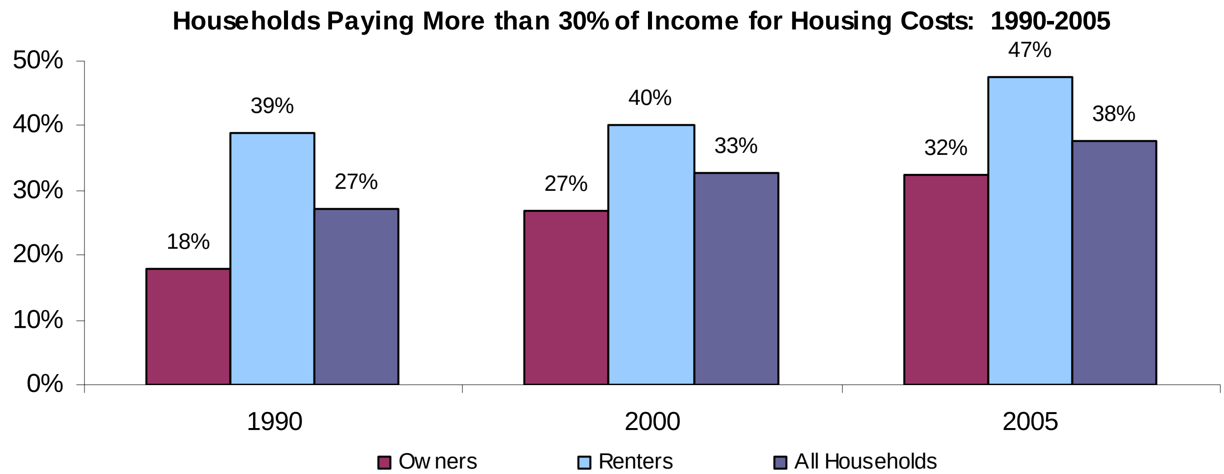


Educational Background of Adult Population: 2004			
	King County	Washington State	U.S.
High School Diploma or Higher	91%	89%	84%
Bachelor's Degree or Higher	43%	31%	27%

King County continues to have a highly educated workforce, with 91% of the 2004 adult population having a high school diploma or higher and 43% having a bachelor's degree or higher. In 2004, 75% of the high school graduating class graduated with their cohort.

Affordable Housing Not Available for Many King County Households

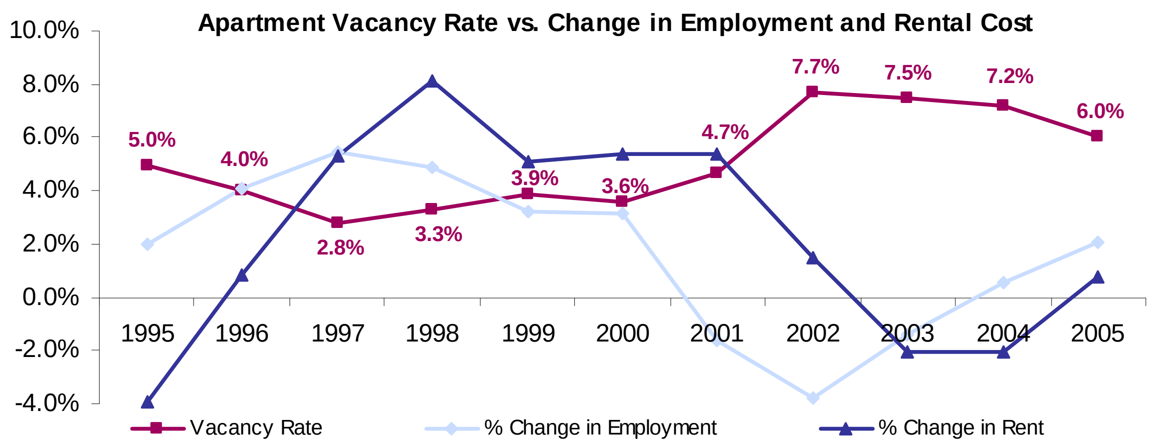
The factors that influence affordable housing have aligned to produce a discouraging outlook for a significant number of the county's households. While the home ownership rate in King County has increased since 1990, the percent of owner households paying more than 30% of their income toward housing has also grown. Likewise, nearly one-half of renter households pay more than they can afford for housing, a notable increase since 1990. This signals a worrying trend in housing and is the focus of the 2006 Affordable Housing Bulletin.



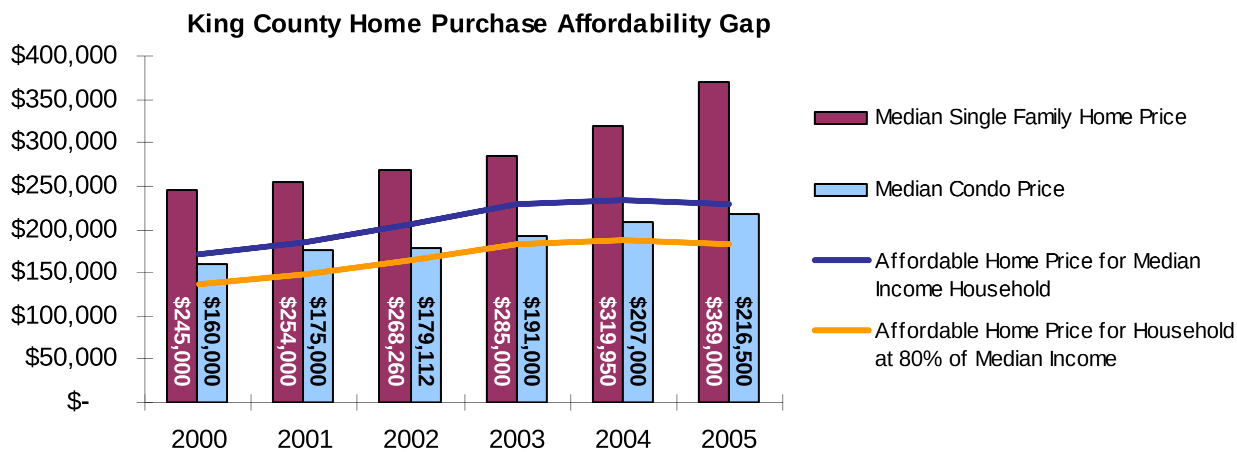
In 2005, more than four out of five rental households earning less than half of median income did not have affordable housing in King County, paying more than 30% of their income toward housing. Such households must divert their resources from other necessities such as food and healthcare, and are at greater risk of homelessness.

The proportion of King County households earning less than half of median income rose over the last decade, as highlighted in the 2006 Economic Development bulletin. Should this trend continue without a corresponding increase in low-income rental housing, even more households will be burdened by high housing costs. Changes in rental housing suggest that this is already happening. Apartment vacancy rates declined in 2005, signaling increased demand for rentals and portending higher rents. In fact, average rent did increase in 2005 after relative stability the previous three years.

The graph below illustrates the relationship between employment and rental costs in King County. As jobs were added in the late 1990's, increased demand on rental housing drove down the vacancy rate resulting in an increase in rents countywide. Conversely, the recession experienced in this region in the early years of this decade resulted in higher unemployment and vacancy rates, leading to a drop in rental rates.



Following several years of economic growth in the late 1990's, the early years of this decade saw a region wide recession that slowed income gains. Still, demand for housing remained strong, and although low interest rates provided homebuyers with greater purchasing power, the market responded with increased home prices. Consequently, the gap widened between what typical households could afford and what typical homes cost, making home ownership less affordable for many King County households.



In 2005, the home purchase affordability gap for a median-priced home more than doubled what it was only two years prior. Only one in 10 single-family home sales in the county were affordable to the median income household. However, homebuyers found more affordable alternatives in the condominium market; over half of all condo sales were affordable to the typical King County household in 2005. Condominiums also provided an affordable home ownership option for moderate income households with nearly one-third of the 2005 condo sales being affordable to those households.

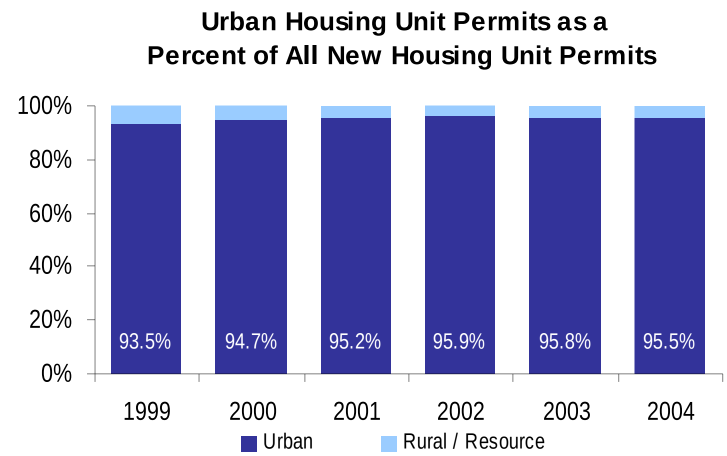
King County Affordable Home Sales by Subarea: 2005						
	Sea-Shore	**East**	**South**	**Rural Cities**	**Uninc. KC**	**KC Total**
Single Family Home Sales	**12,433**	**8,257**	**9,186**	**1,147**	**8,605**	**39,628**
Percent Affordable to Median Income Household	*7.2%*	*1.5%*	*21.2%*	*11.6%*	*11.3%*	*10.3%*
Percent Affordable to 80% Median Income Household	*2.7%*	*0.8%*	*5.9%*	*3.4%*	*3.9%*	*3.4%*
Percent Affordable to 50% Median Income Household	*0.4%*	*0.1%*	*0.6%*	*0.3%*	*0.4%*	*0.4%*
Condo/Townhome Sales	**4,443**	**4,025**	**2,386**	**115**	**1,111**	**12,080**
Percent Affordable to Median Income Household	*36.6%*	*51.6%*	*87.3%*	*44.3%*	*67.1%*	*54.5%*
Percent Affordable to 80% Median Income Household	*18.3%*	*29.7%*	*67.4%*	*16.5%*	*47.3%*	*34.5%*
Percent Affordable to 50% Median Income Household	*0.6%*	*4.8%*	*18.4%*	*3.5%*	*13.1%*	*6.7%*

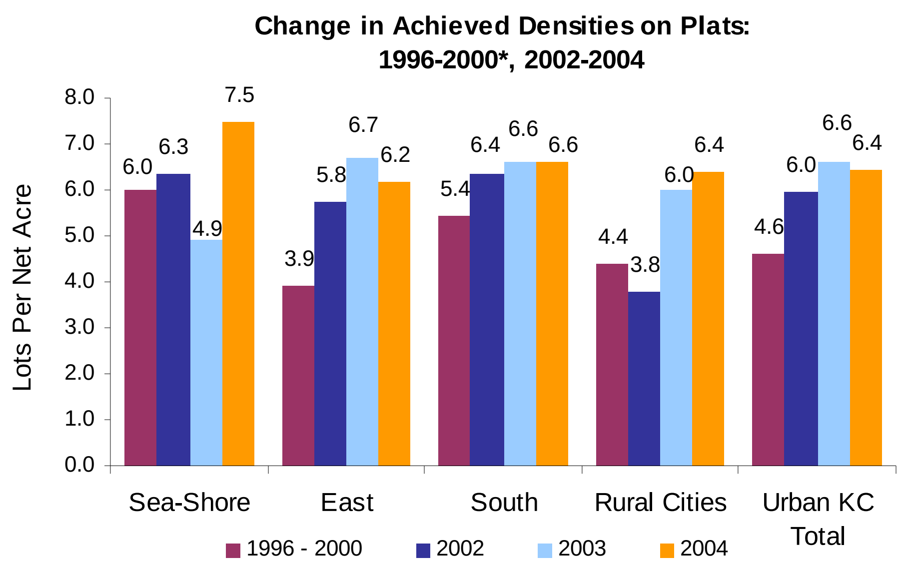
Growth Management Efforts Succeeding in King County

Since 1994 the King County Countywide Planning Policies have directed the county's land use planning under the Washington State Growth Management Act. The Land Use Bulletin highlights the success of many of our land use policies to encourage urban development and preserve our natural environment.

The King County Countywide Planning Policies (CPPs) call for development to occur within the Urban Growth Area (UGA) to promote efficient use of land. Growth is to be directed first to urban centers, then to areas already urbanized, and lastly to areas requiring major infrastructure improvements.

Approximately 95% of overall growth in the county is going to the UGA. Four years into this 22-year planning period, indicators suggest that only 50% of the existing capacity is needed to accommodate current population estimates for the year 2022.





*Blue columns represent average densities achieved over the five-year period from 1996 - 2000.
**SeaShore had just 3 plats in 2003, on a total of 5.36 acres. 26 new lots were created.

Plat densities increased throughout the urban area, increasing to 6.4 lots per acre in 2004 from an average of 4.6 lots per acre from 1996 to 2000. During this same time period, densities achieved by new permits in single family zones increased from 3.8 dwelling units (DU) per acre in the 1996-2000 period to 5.3 DU in 2004.

By promoting more efficient use of land within the Urban Growth Area, King County has successfully preserved farms and forestland while also maintaining close to 25,000 acres of urban parks and open space in the Urban Growth Area.

The urban center strategy- whose goal is to attract employment and housing in the county's urban centers- is an important element of the Countywide Planning Policies. On the whole, the strategy has been successful, even in the face of recession, but growth has not been evenly distributed among the centers.

As employment centers, the urban centers were particularly susceptible to the recession, losing 11% of their jobs from 2000 to 2003. Despite these setbacks, the urban centers accommodated nearly 25% of the job growth throughout King County from 1995 to 2003. Combined, the urban centers and manufacturing centers accommodated almost 40% of King County's job growth.

King County Job Growth: 1995-2003	
Countywide	137,129
Urban Centers*	33,017
Mfg/Industrial Centers	21,251

**excluding Urban Centers added after 2001*

Though the rate of housing growth slowed in 2004, the urban centers attracted close to 20% of all housing permitted in King County from 1995 to 2004. The urban centers in Seattle and Bellevue supported the majority of this urban center growth.

Housing Units in King County Urban Centers: 2004

	Total Existing Units at end of 2003*	New Units Permitted in 2004	Units Demolished in 2004	Existing Units + Net New Permits 2004
Auburn	1,063	24	-	1,087
Bellevue	3,569	30	-	3,599
Burien	1,076	2	(1)	1,077
Federal Way	846	-	-	846
Kent	710	-	(2)	708
Kirkland: Totem Lake	2,944	-	-	2,944
Redmond	1,276	-	(1)	1,275
Renton	1,045	2	-	1,047
SeaTac	4,082	-	(9)	4,073
Seattle: Downtown	16,056	218	(4)	16,270
Seattle: First Hill/Capitol Hill	23,587	81	(6)	23,662
Seattle: Northgate	3,667	-	-	3,667
Seattle: Seattle Center	4,700	111	-	4,811
Seattle: University	7,213	9	(4)	7,218
Tukwila	2	-	-	2
Total	**71,836**	**477**	**(27)**	**72,286**

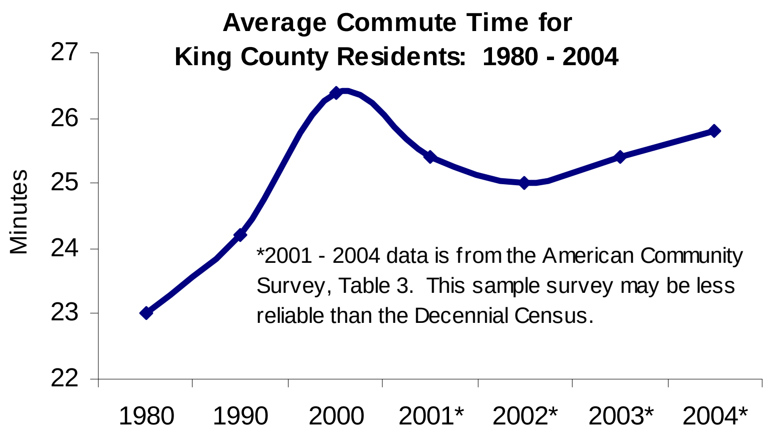
**Includes all units in the Urban Center completed prior to or during 2003 plus units still in process of completion, but permitted in previous years. Corrected by cities to account for withdrawn or expired permits or miscounts from previous years.*

Though King County's urban centers accommodated some job and housing growth, concerted efforts are needed to encourage greater growth in these important centers of economic and residential development. These efforts should be supported by zoning and transportation systems that allow the centralization of employment and housing in these centers.

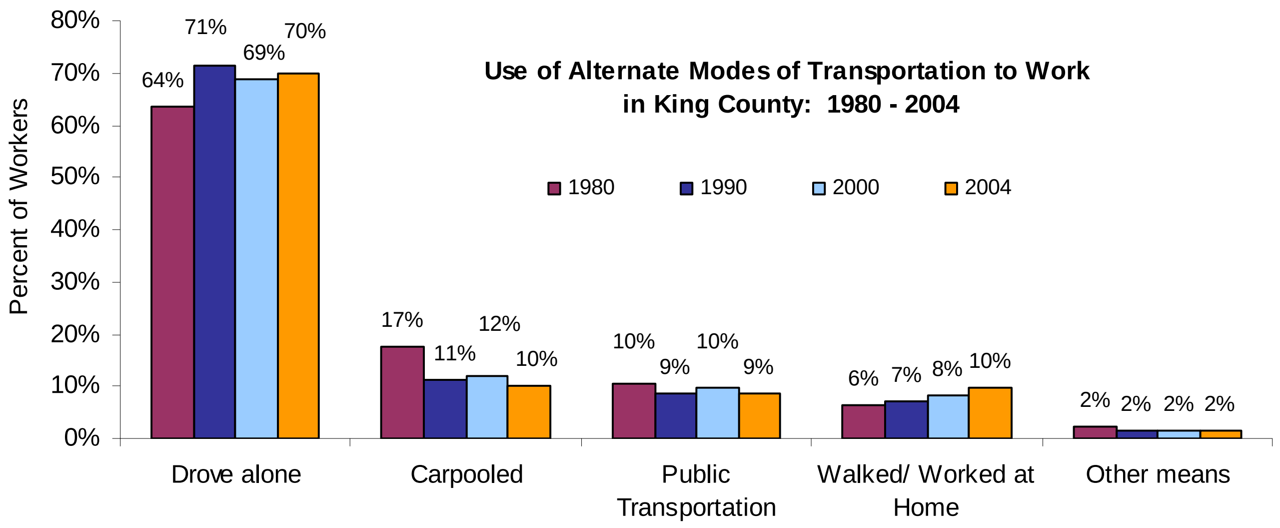
Transportation Key to Regional Growth

The central Puget Sound region is a growing and vibrant community but with that growth comes challenges, key among them transportation.

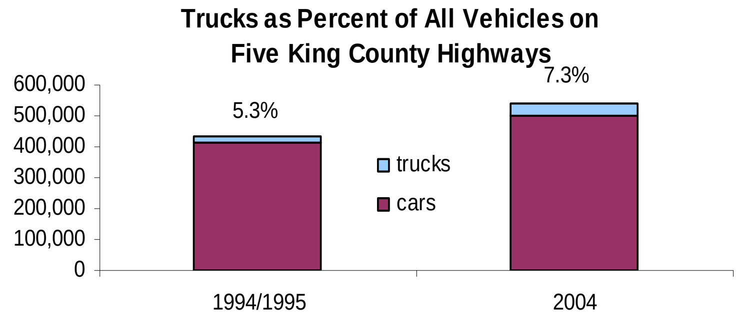
Following the national trend, commute times in King County have increased over the last two decades. From 2001 to 2004, several commute times increased substantially. The work commute on SR 520 between Bellevue and Seattle saw the greatest increase in travel time per mile, followed closely by the commutes on SR 520 between Redmond and Seattle and I-405 between Tukwila and Bellevue. However, following highway improvements on SR 167, the work commute between Renton and Auburn improved since 2002.

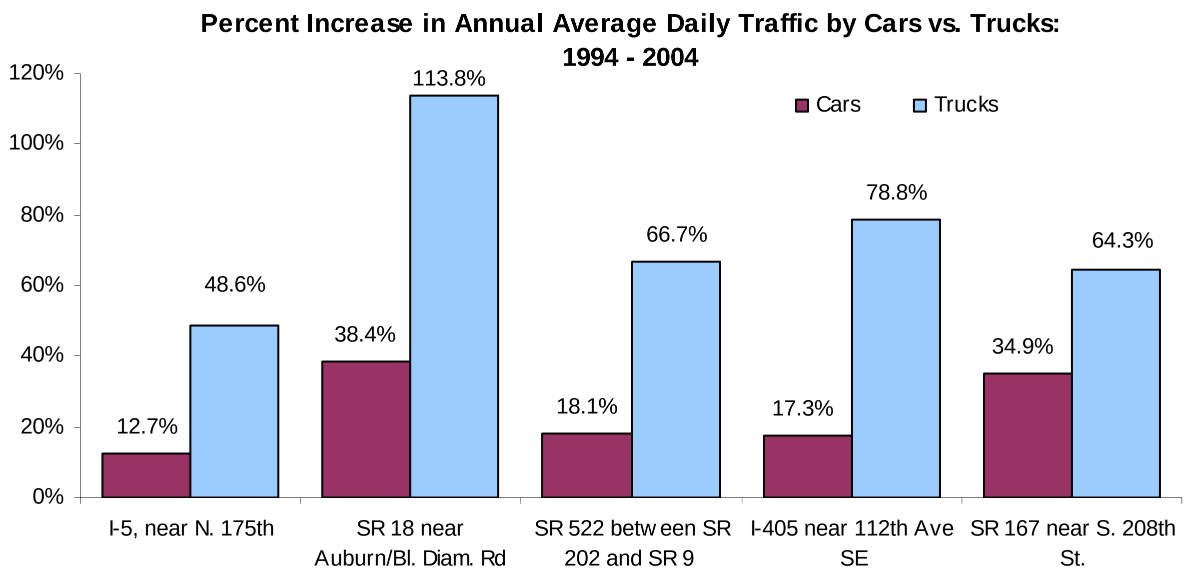


Several factors contributed to increasing commute times in King County. Commercial traffic grew, employment rebounded since the recession from 2001 to 2003, and the majority of King County's workers continued to commute alone. Combined, these factors created additional economic and environmental costs as goods, services, and people were unable to move efficiently through our region.



Responding to growth in activity at the Port of Seattle, commercial traffic grew faster than automobile traffic. While a rise in commercial traffic suggests economic growth in the region, it also adds stress to an already congested highway system.





Recovery from recession has had another impact on our transportation system. With growth in King County's population and workforce, more workers are commuting on our highways. As the percent of workers who commute by single occupancy vehicle has not declined appreciably, our roads remain congested and commute times increase.

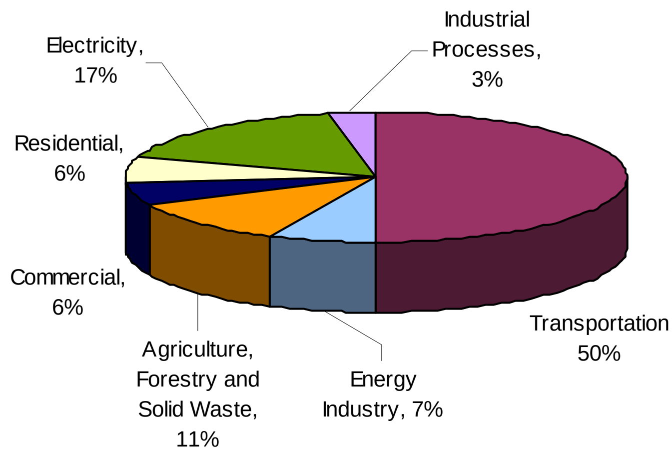
Facing increasing demands on our transportation infrastructure, local and state governments recognize the need for regional and long-term transportation investments. According to the Washington State Department of Transportation, statewide congestion—more prevalent in urban areas within the Central Puget Sound area—is estimated to be over 365,000 hours per weekday and represents about $1.6 billion annually in lost time. Transportation planning must link economic development and lifestyle preferences with infrastructure capacity. Public transportation should provide reliable, convenient, and frequent service. Land use planning should prioritize dense, pedestrian and bike friendly communities to encourage people to use alternatives to cars. The physical transportation infrastructure should be protected and improved to support our region's increasing demands.

Anticipating and Responding to Global Climate Change

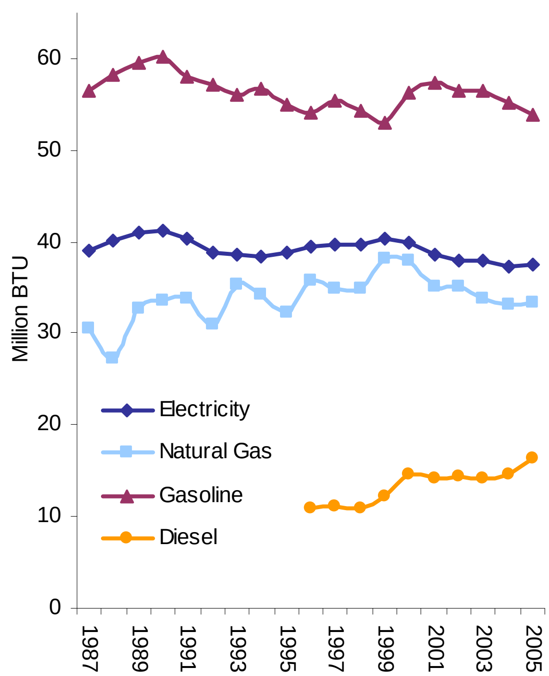
Global climate change has become a defining issue of this century. The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) identified 2006 as the second warmest year on record in the United States. U.S. and global annual temperatures are now warmer than at the start of the 20th century. Over the past 30 years, temperatures have accelerated at a rate that is approximately three times faster than the rate of warming over the last century. In fact, the past nine years have been among the 25 warmest years on record for the contiguous U.S., an unprecedented warming trend in this country.

The degree to which these worldwide weather patterns are due to human activity and the means by which these effects can be mitigated is the subject of a large body of analysis occurring throughout the scientific community.

Sources of Greenhouse Gas Emissions (2002)



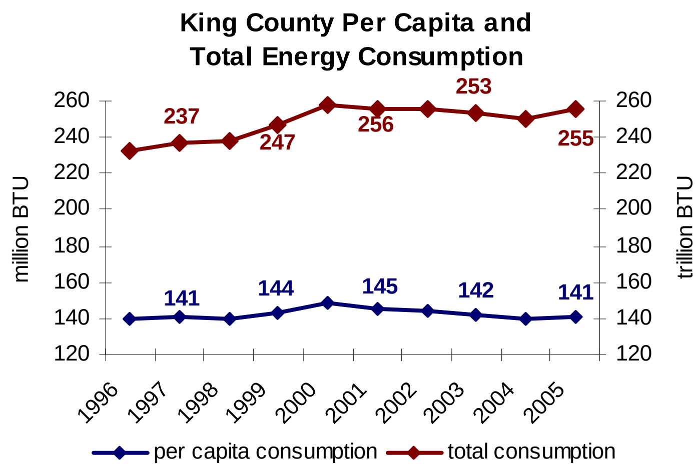
Per Capita Energy Consumption by Type: King County 1986-2005

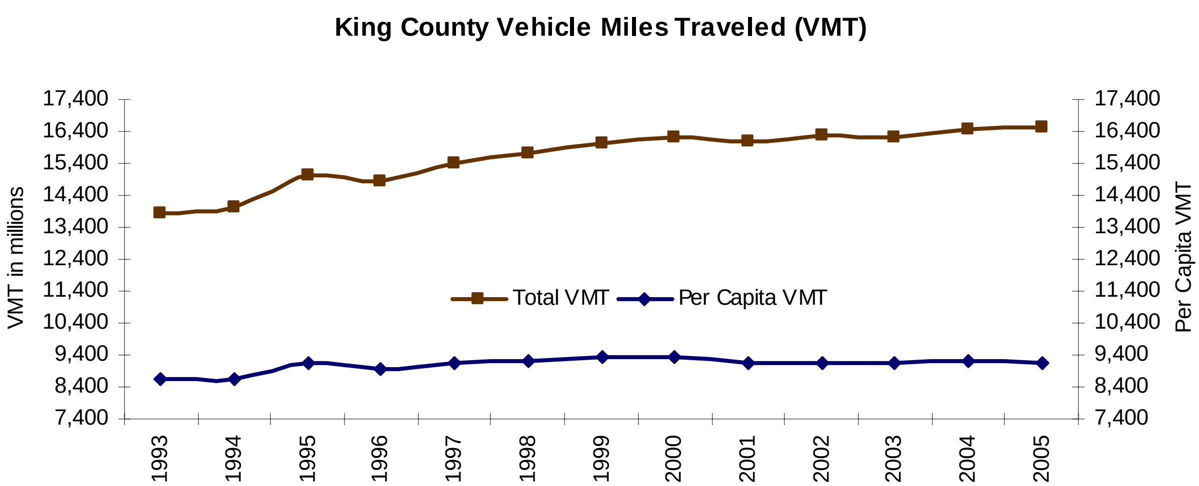


While greenhouse gases do occur naturally, disproportionate amounts are caused by human activity, most notably as carbon dioxide emissions from transportation. Total petroleum consumption in King County increased almost 20% over the last 10 years, driven by almost 50% growth in the consumption of diesel fuel. As a result, diesel fuel steadily contributes to a larger share of total petroleum consumption in King County.

This is consistent with the increase in activity at the Port of Seattle, which has contributed to the increase in commercial traffic as shown in the 2006 Transportation Bulletin. Indeed, the number of commercial trucks on King County's major highways has increased almost 70% since 1994.

With an increase in commercial traffic, total vehicle miles traveled (VMT) has crept ahead slightly since 1995. Per capita VMT rose during the late 1990's but has actually been on a nominal downward trend since 1999, even though almost two-thirds of workers in King County continue to use their personal vehicle for work commutes.





This per capita decrease may be attributed to the combined effect of two factors over the last seven years: a recession that resulted in resulting in job losses throughout the region through 2003, followed by an increase in public transit ridership as the county regained jobs in 2004. However, despite the growing number of King County residents using public transportation, the increased use of light- and heavy-duty trucks, as well as thriving port activity, have contributed to increased VMT and elevated greenhouse gas emissions.