



King County

Ron Sims

King County Executive

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February 29, 2008

The Honorable Julia Patterson
Chair, King County Council
Room 1200
COURTHOUSE

Dear Councilmember Patterson:

I am pleased to transmit for your review and consideration, the Executive Recommended King County Comprehensive Plan (KCCP) 2008. This plan satisfies the requirement in the King County Code for a four-year review of the comprehensive plan.

King County has had increasing success in controlling sprawl since adoption of the county's first comprehensive plan under the State Growth Management Act (GMA) in 1994. Over the last 14 years, the rate of annual residential growth in the rural area has been reduced from nearly twelve percent of the countywide total to hold steady at between four and five percent. This plan moves us forward by focusing on implementation and refinements that ensure rural areas retain their rural character while the urban areas become more vibrant.

Development of the Plan and Public Involvement

This plan represents the culmination of a year-long process that began on March 1, 2007, with the submittal to the King County Council of the Executive Proposed Scope-of-Work motion for the 2008 Comprehensive Plan Update. Motion 12497 was adopted by the King County Council on April 9, 2007, and is the foundation for the proposed comprehensive plan changes in 2008. Staff from several King County departments assisted in the development of this plan including: the Department of Development and Environmental Services, the Department of Natural Resources and Parks, the Department of Transportation, Department of Community and Human Services, the Business Relations and Economic Development Office, and Public Health Seattle and King County.

The KCCP Public Review Draft was the subject of a series of public meetings held throughout the county between October 2007 and January 2008. These meetings were held in Redmond, Kent, White Center, and Vashon Island; and in Snoqualmie and the area of East of Renton where we held two meetings each. Several presentations were also made at all King County Unincorporated Area Councils and before the Agricultural Commission and the Rural Forestry Commission. Hundreds of citizens attended these meetings and many submitted comments on



issues of concern and support. These comments enhanced the development of the Executive Recommended Plan that I am submitting to you today.

The Public Review Draft was available at many libraries throughout King County and copies were distributed to the Unincorporated Area Councils and to citizens at the public meetings and by request. We printed 300 documents although many more people accessed the plan and other information electronically. All information including policies, maps, and draft code language was available on the Department of Development and Environmental Services Website. Comments were accepted at meetings, through the mail, and via e-mail. A summary of the public involvement process and a matrix listing comments received is included for your review.

New and Emerging Issues

Smart Growth in King County started out as a single initiative in 1997, but since then we've moved beyond just one initiative—the quality of life and smart growth principles are now embedded in everything we do in King County. It is about breaking down barriers between agencies and policies and integrating land use, transportation, public health, environmental management and economic development in how we do business. This is an ongoing program that is flexible and searches out new opportunities and challenges. Consequently, Smart Growth in King County is dynamic and not focused on a single end point.

Smart Growth means citizens, the business community, environmentalists, and health professionals working together to improve the quality of life for all residents. It means not sacrificing the environment for jobs; it means promoting health and mobility; and it means supporting local farms and vibrant urban cores. For the first time, I am proposing that we add a series of framework policies to the Introduction Chapter of the Comprehensive Plan that will form the foundation for more detailed policies in the following topical chapters. These policies address the new and emerging issues that we face today including:

- Equity and social justice;
- Climate change;
- The HealthScape Program;
- The Puget Sound Partnership; and
- Food systems planning.

These core issues to planning in King County cross many disciplines and are represented in several chapters throughout the plan. For example, climate change is not just an environmental issue but also one of economic development and transportation.

Last month, I announced the **King County Equity and Social Justice Initiative** to take aim at inequities and injustices in King County. I stated a commitment to modify existing programs to incorporate pro-equity elements. I am proud to announce that the King County Comprehensive Plan is one of the first King County programs to outwardly address equity through policy development. I am firm on my pledge to look at our programs and policies through an equity

lens to identify areas where we can address the root causes of inequities and seek out and promote decisions aimed at equity.

Climate Change

Climate Change is included as a new and emerging issue in the Introduction Chapter and is presented as a core issue of the Comprehensive Plan. We believe that this is first comprehensive plan in the nation to fully integrate consideration of climate change into land use policies. The bulk of the climate change policies and discussion is located within the Environment Chapter. It is in this chapter that we outline our strategies for assessment, mitigation, and adaptation to climate change. We have also added a policy providing King County authority for evaluating development proposals subject to the State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) for their greenhouse gas emissions. The amendments to the King County Code to implement this policy will be forthcoming in late spring following extensive review with our stakeholder groups.

The Rural and Resource Lands Preservation Program

Rural and Resource Lands face increasing development pressure, yet the county must simultaneously plan for and allow appropriate future growth and development. This tension makes it incumbent on the county to strengthen its **Transfer of Development Rights** program. For this reason, King County seeks to increase the number of development right transfers and adopt an expanded Rural and Resource Land Preservation program to reduce and redirect rural development potential into the urban areas. One key attribute of this program is creating a better nexus, or direct connection, between areas to receive higher density and those areas to be protected through conservation easements or other similar mechanisms. We previewed this program with the general public at our public meetings in January, with the Unincorporated Area Councils, and with several stake holder groups. The initial feedback from all groups has been very positive.

I am recommending that we test this program through a handful of pilot projects over the next four years. Included in this transmittal is the first pilot under this program: the SR 18/I-90 interchange area. My staff is currently developing at least one additional pilot program that we will transmit to you later this spring for your review.

Additionally, we have been approached by the city of Black Diamond to take a second look at the John Henry mine site that is adjacent to their city. We have already denied the city's 2007 docket request for redesignation of this site to urban so that it could be annexed by the city. However, we have since learned that the mine may pose significant environmental hazards to the city and the surrounding natural environment. Given these potential environmental concerns and the opportunity to accelerate reclamation of the mine while studying cumulative impacts of growth anticipated for the area, I have directed my staff to work with the city on potential options for this site. We will look for alternatives that could yield a substantial public benefit especially when linked to a transfer of developments rights pilot project arrived at through a planning process. Executive staff will work closely with the King County Council Comprehensive Plan Update Project Manager as details of these proposals are developed.

Transportation Concurrency

Consistent with the recommendations of the report on concurrency modeling practices conducted by the auditor in 2006 and 2007, I am proposing a complete overhaul of the concurrency program to make it more streamlined and predictable. We will no longer be conducting tests on individual proposals. Instead, concurrency status is determined by broad geographic areas called travel sheds, which were drawn to reflect where travel patterns share common characteristics. Trips associated with development within a particular travel shed would use or be affected by arterials located within and bordering that travel shed. The concurrency status of all development proposals, including both residential and nonresidential, will be determined by looking at a single map which will be updated annually. This will result in greater certainty for prospective developers; they will now be able to simply consult an online map to determine whether or not their proposal will be able to obtain a concurrency certificate. These revisions were discussed and reviewed by the Transportation Concurrency Expert Review Panel, formed by the Council in 2007.

The Shoreline Management Program

The King County Shoreline Management Program Update was reviewed concurrently with the Comprehensive Plan Update. However, at the request of the council, I have decided to not transmit the update of the Shoreline Management Program as part of this Comprehensive Plan package. Chapter Five of the Comprehensive Plan is being reserved for the Shoreline Master Plan, which will be incorporated into the Comprehensive Plan at a later date. In accordance with Washington State's Shoreline Management Act (SMA), King County must adopt a shoreline master program that is based on state guidelines but tailored to the specific needs of our community. King County will incorporate the Shoreline Master Plan as a chapter of the comprehensive plan to fully integrate shoreline planning with land use planning and to ensure consistency. King County is required to update the shoreline master program to bring it into compliance with new state guidelines by December 1, 2009.

Land Use and Area Zoning Amendments

In conjunction with the cities, King County has determined that there is sufficient capacity in the urban growth area (UGA) to accommodate growth. The 2007 Buildable Lands Report, published in September 2007, demonstrates that the King County UGA contains the capacity to accommodate more than 289,000 added housing units. This capacity is substantially more than enough to meet the adopted 2022 growth targets which are based on the state population forecast for King County. In fact, the Buildable Lands Report measured a greater capacity in 2007 than the corresponding 2002 report found, even though 49,000 new housing units had been added during the intervening five years. This is due partly to actions taken by the county and its cities to use land more efficiently, including increased densities of residential development.

Therefore, this plan does not propose any major changes to the urban growth boundary to accommodate growth. The changes we are recommending are ones that establish more logical boundaries and have an overriding public purpose. The proposed changes include:

- Adding land to the Urban Growth Area (UGA) adjacent to Carnation to make up for 12 acres lost to development due to updated flood hazard maps.
- Changing the land use designation from rural to urban for two “islands” completely surrounded by urban areas. One of these would be within the City of Sammamish potential annexation area (PAA) and the other would be within the Maple Valley PAA.
- Adding Coal Creek Park to the UGA for eventual annexation by the city of Bellevue; and adding Sportsman Park and the Fairgrounds to the UGA for eventual annexation by the city of Enumclaw.
- Establishing a pilot project at the intersection of Highway 18 and Interstate 90 that requires the use of transfer of development rights from a designated sending area to expand the Snoqualmie Rural City Urban Growth area by about 70 acres, subject to an interlocal agreement.
- Designating a new Urban Separator on the north and east side of Lake Desire.
- Expanding the existing Hobart, Maple Valley, and the Kummer - SR 169 Rural Neighborhood Commercial Areas to allow minor expansion of existing businesses and recognition of the Maple Valley Food Bank.
- Reclassifying properties along Martin Luther King Jr. Way and South 129th Street from Industrial to Urban residential high Density to encourage redevelopment in this area.

We received 51 docket requests in 2007 and 35 requests in 2006 for changes to the Comprehensive Plan. We carefully considered each one before determining which proposal to advance in this update. To view the full docket reports, please go to the following link on our website: <http://www.metrokc.gov/permits/codes/CompPlan/docket/YearlyReport.aspx>

Supporting Documentation

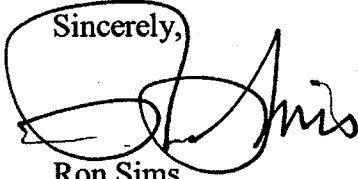
Included with this letter are the following attachments:

- Ordinance adopting the King County Comprehensive Plan 2008 and the land use and area zoning amendments
- The King County Comprehensive Plan 2008
- 22 land use and area zoning amendments
- Technical Appendices: Capital Facilities, Housing, Transportation, and the Urban Growth Area
- The King County Code Amendments
- RP-307 and RP-308 Analysis
- Area Zoning Studies
- Public Involvement Document
- Fiscal note and regulatory note

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The determination in accordance with the State Environmental Policy Act is underway and will be completed later this year, in advance of any action by the King County Council. If you have any questions, please contact Stephanie Warden, Director, Department of Development and Environmental Services, at 206-296-6700.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ron Sims", written over a circular scribble.

Ron Sims
King County Executive

Enclosures

cc: King County Councilmembers

ATTN: Ross Baker, Chief of Staff

Saroja Reddy, Policy Staff Director

Anne Noris, Clerk of the Council

Frank Abe, Communications

Bob Cowan, Director, Office of Management and Budget

Stephanie Warden, Director, Department of Development and Environmental Services (DDES)

Paul Reitenbach, Sr. Policy Analyst, DDES

Karen Wolf, Senior Executive Policy Advisor, King County Executive Office