

Chapter Five

Parks, Open Space and Cultural Resources

The quality of life in King County is directly linked to the quality of our region's environment, with its diverse landscapes reaching from Puget Sound to the Cascade Mountains, scenic beauty and the variety of cultural and recreational opportunities that enrich our lives. These vital natural and cultural resources contribute to the physical, mental and emotional well-being of county residents and are integral to attracting employment and business activity.

The policies in this chapter focus on the county's role as a regional leader in acquiring and protecting its system of county-owned parks and other open spaces and in supporting cultural opportunities such as music, theater, ethnic heritage museums, literary activities, public art collections, urban historic districts and rural landmarks.

I. Parks, Recreation and Open Space

The Growth Management Act states that counties are the providers of regional services and local rural services, while cities are the appropriate providers of local urban services. As the regional government, King County manages a regional open space system of parks, trails, natural or ecological areas and working resource lands. While the cities are the managers of local park, trails and open space lands in the Urban Growth Area, King County will continue to be the provider of local park, trails and open space lands in the Rural Area.

Population growth and associated development in recent years have transformed the county's landscape as forested and open lands have been converted to urban uses resulting in the fragmentation of wildlife corridors, riparian habitat and the depletion of working resource lands and open vistas. The policies in this section provide guidance for the open space system of lands the county owns and manages to protect the health of natural systems, provide recreational opportunities, shape community character, and help sustain agriculture and forestry economics. The policies also reinforce the county's focus on linking components of the open space system.

Regional active and multiuse parks serve a countywide population and provide high-quality, highly developed facilities to support multiple events, large group gatherings and special events. Local rural park sites provide for active and passive recreation close to home. Local trails provide recreation, circulation within the local community and access to the regional trail system.

Natural areas and some parks contain undeveloped or undevelopable acreage that remain in a natural or near natural state and support habitat and other ecologically significant attributes. Together these sites enhance environmental and visual quality and meet regional and local rural recreation needs.

P-101 For the purposes of the King County Open Space system, “Regional Parks” shall mean sites and facilities that are large in size, have unique features or characteristics and serve communities from many jurisdictions, and “local” shall mean sites and facilities that predominantly serve communities in the unincorporated area.

A. The Regional Open Space System of Parks, Trails, Natural Areas and Working Resource Lands

The policies in this chapter provide the basis to develop a contiguous open space system, connecting and including active and passive parks, trails, natural areas and working agricultural and forest resource lands. The Open Space System map shows these publicly-owned open space lands and provides the basis for identifying the linkages necessary to strengthen the physical and functional connectivity of the county's open system. The following policies reinforce the importance of the county's open space system, and guide planning and management of appropriate recreational opportunities that best meet regional and local needs, preserve ecologically significant resources and protect working resource lands. Implementation of these policies is guided by the *King County Park, Recreation and Open Space Plan*, adopted in 1996 (and subsequent updates).

P-102 King County shall be a regional leader in the provision of a regional open space system of parks, trails, natural areas, working resource lands, and flood hazard reduction lands. The regional network of open spaces provides benefits to all county residents including: recreation facilities, conservation of natural and working resource lands, flood hazard protection and related programs, and services.

Preservation will include wildlife corridors and riparian habitat, as well as open space areas separating urban and rural areas.

B. Local Parks

In the Rural Area, the large geographic area and dispersed populations, individual lots, low residential density and economies of site management dictate fewer individual park sites. Nearby regional parks and other open spaces also provide recreational opportunities. King County's role in the Rural Area will reflect rural levels of service.

- P-103 Local parks, trails and other open spaces that complement the regional system should be provided in each community, in Rural Areas, to enhance environmental and visual quality and meet local recreation needs. King County shall provide local parks, trails and other open spaces in the Rural Area.**
- P-104 King County should provide local parks within rural communities with fields and other facilities that provide opportunities for active sports. These facilities shall be in addition to and compatible with King County's regional park system.**

C. Components of the Regional Open Space System

King County's regional open space system contains lands with many functions including active and passive recreation, special purpose sites such as pools and trails; natural areas, including waterways, greenways, and forested areas with educational, scientific, wildlife habitat, cultural or scenic values; working resource lands including agriculture and forest lands; and community-defining systems, including physical and or visual buffers between areas of urban and rural development. Many sites within the open space system serve more than one function, but each site serves a primary role within the system.

1. Active Recreation, Multiuse Sites and Trails

King County's local and regional parks and facilities accommodate a wide range of active and passive recreation activities. Active recreation includes a functional system of highly developed sites with organized, scheduled activities such as soccer and softball. Passive recreation includes activities such as informal play, hiking, walking, jogging and picnicking. Multiuse sites can include a combination of active recreation and passive recreation with less intensely developed facilities and natural areas. The Trail System is a major element of the recreation and natural systems and provides recreation and nonmotorized transportation, as well as corridors often used by wildlife.

Regional programs serve a broad spectrum of users. These programs include those not generally viable for individual communities due to site or facility requirements or the unique nature of the offering requiring a broader user base to support them. Educational or interpretive programming promotes appropriate and enjoyable use of the park system. Public awareness of resources and their values builds support and stewardship for the system and its resources.

- P-105 King County shall provide regional parks and recreational facilities that serve users from many neighborhoods and communities. Regional parks include unique sites and facilities that should be equitably distributed.**
- P-106 King County shall complete a regional trails system, linking trail corridors to form a countywide network. King County will continue to primarily own the land necessary for the operation and management of the trail.**
- P-107 King County should facilitate educational, interpretive and aquatic programs on county-owned properties that further the enjoyment, understanding and appreciation of the natural, cultural and recreational resources of the park system and the region.**

- P-108 King County should facilitate and seek regional and national programs and special events at regional sites and facilities.**

2. Natural Areas (Ecological Sites)

The King County Open Space system includes many sites whose primary purpose is to conserve and restore ecological value. These sites may allow public use that does not harm the ecological resources of the site. These natural areas include many environmental features of King County's landscape, which play a role in protecting a diversity of vegetation and fish and wildlife important to the beauty and character of the region. King County will focus on linking natural areas to create regional open space corridors of greenways and waterways along the major river systems, shorelines, and the Mountains-to-Sound Greenway.

Preserving these areas in partnership with other agencies, private groups and individuals will provide multiple values including environmental and economic benefits of surface water management, aquifer recharge, and fish and wildlife habitat preservation and enhancement.

- P-109 King County will manage its natural areas to protect, preserve and enhance important natural resource habitat, biological diversity, and the ecological integrity of natural systems.**

- P-110 King County shall recognize and protect the natural character and ecological value of its natural areas. These areas are important for preserving fish and wildlife and their habitat, native vegetation, and features of scientific and educational value. Development and public use may be limited to preserve the natural state and reduce disturbance of the natural resources. Site improvements should be focused on providing educational and interpretive opportunities. Public access should be directed to the less fragile portions of a site to ensure continued protection of the ecological resources.**

3. Working Resource Lands

The county's open space system includes lands that are managed as working farms and forests. The county has purchased several properties with the intention of conserving the resource use on the site. County ownership and management of these lands conserves the resource land base, allowing the resource activity to continue, while contributing to the local rural economy, providing education about agriculture and forestry, and providing passive recreational opportunities on some properties. The county's policies to conserve farmland and encourage agriculture are discussed in Chapter 3.

The Farmland Preservation Program (FPP) is a county program that preserves farmland through the purchase of development rights. The farms in the FPP generally remain in private ownership. The county has purchased a farm outright in few cases, with the intention of reselling the land without the development rights to a private farmer. The county has developed a program to lease farms to small-scale farmers until such time that the property can be resold.

- P-111 Farmland owned by King County shall contribute to the preservation of contiguous tracts of agriculture land and make affordable farmland available for use by small-scale and new farmers.**

- P-112 Farmers leasing properties owned by King County shall use Agricultural best management practices, Integrated Pest Management and other sustainable farming methods.**

- P-113 The use and management of farmlands owned by King County shall be consistent with any requirements imposed by the funding program used to purchase each**

property and shall serve to meet and enhance the objectives of the King County Agriculture Program.

One element of the King County Forestry Program is the conservation of forestland through acquisition to allow forest management on the property. The working forests owned by King County are generally very large parcels of land (several hundred acres or more), which support sustainable forest management practices and contribute to the retention of a contiguous forest. These properties contribute to environmental protection, high-quality passive recreation, the public understanding of forestry, and scenic vistas.

- P-114 Forest land owned by King County shall provide large tracts of forested property in the Rural Forest Focus Areas and the Forest Production District (FPD) that will remain in active forestry, protect areas from development or provide a buffer between commercial forestland and adjacent residential development.**
- P-115 Forest land owned by King County shall be used to sustain and enhance environmental benefits, demonstrate progressive forest management and research, and provide revenue for the management of the working forest lands.**
- P-116 Forest land owned by King County shall provide a balance between sustainable timber production, conservation and restoration of resources, and appropriate public use.**

4. Other Open Spaces

Preservation of open space in the county is grander than the county system. Large areas of the county are owned and managed by federal agencies, the state, and other local jurisdictions that manage the land for environmental protection, resource production, or a wide range of recreation opportunities. Additionally, open space benefits are often provided by private land owners managing their land in ways that protect the environment, conserve natural resources, or provide open vistas. King County acquires for other reasons, such as flood hazards or providing needed public facilities. These lands can also contribute to open space conservation efforts.

King County has acquired lands and manages facilities along major river and stream systems for the primary purpose of flood plain management and flood hazard protection. Major streams and rivers are vital components of the county's open space system, therefore the flood hazard reduction lands function as critical links in the county's open space network. King County will continue to maintain flood hazard reduction land and facilities within available funding levels. The county will also seek innovative measures for maintaining and improving flood protection, reducing maintenance costs, integrating flood protection and recreational opportunities, and achieving wildlife habitat protection and salmon recovery.

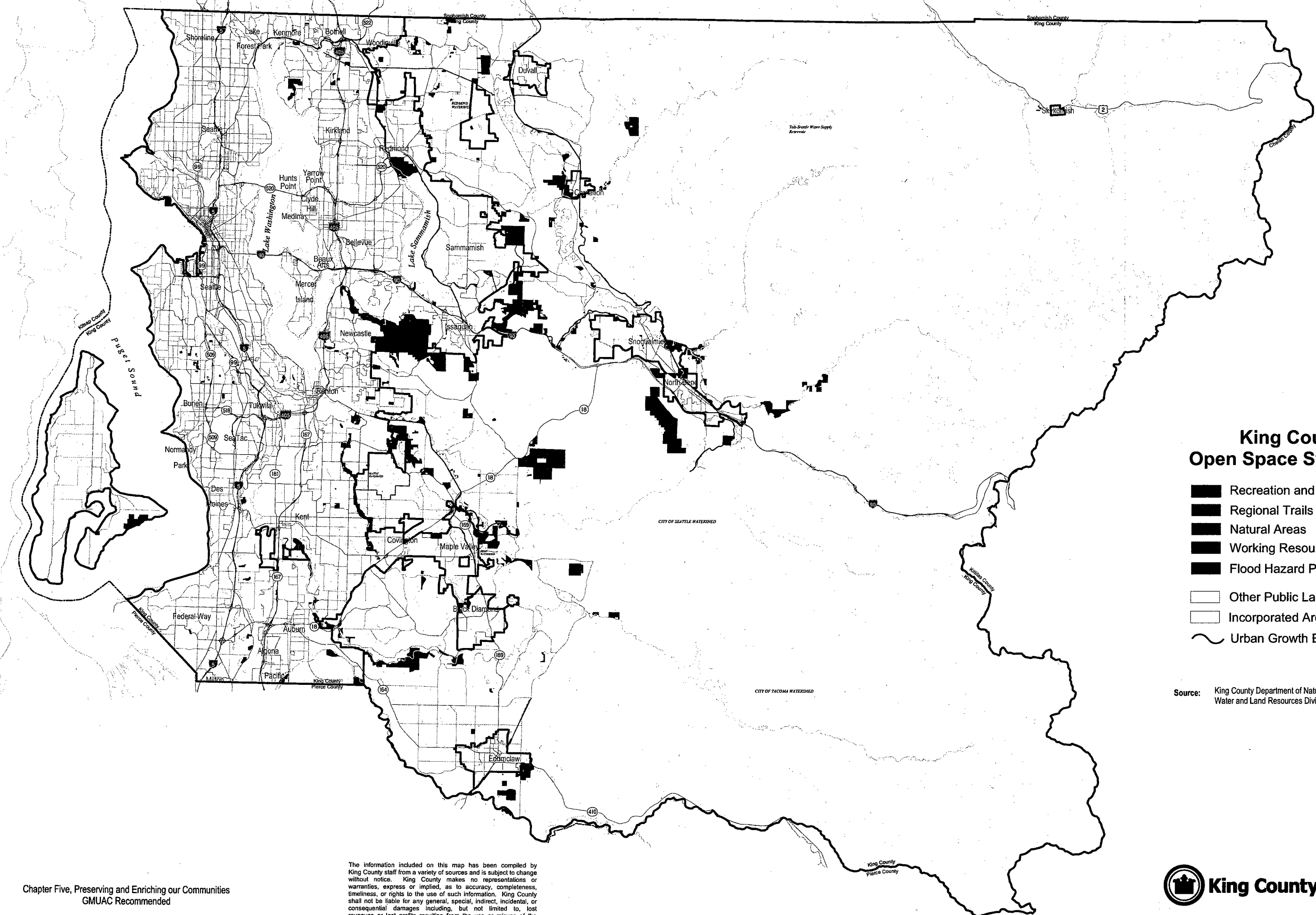
D. Achieving the Open Space System

Parks and other county-owned open space lands ensure a quality of life today and a legacy to generations of tomorrow. In King County, many types of open spaces and fish and wildlife habitat remain in private ownership and may be subject to future development. To ensure that these lands and resources are protected and to offer an alternative to acquisition, the county offers landowners a wide variety of tools to preserve their property. Policies outlining strategies for using these tools can be found in chapters 3, 4, and 7.

Cooperation, coordination and partnerships with public agencies, private groups and individuals are necessary to develop the regional parks and open space system, to meet existing needs for park and recreation facilities and to accommodate the needs of growth. The Mountains-to-Sound Greenway, along the I-90 corridor, is a successful model for coordination of efforts by public and private entities to protect the backbone of the county's open space system.

King County will achieve the multiple benefits of resource protection and recreation by building partnerships and coordinating with providers and user groups of the parks and open space system. Working together, stewardship can be fostered and these lands and facilities can be enhanced, restored and operated more economically and efficiently to benefit all county residents.

- P-117** King County shall explore incentives, regulations and funding mechanisms to preserve, acquire and manage valuable park and open space lands.
- P-118** Parks, trails and other open space lands should be acquired and developed to meet adopted standards with a combination of public funds and dedications or contributions from residential and commercial development, based on their service impacts.
- P-119** Open space sites should be acquired when identified in the King County Park, Recreation, and Open Space Plan, adopted in 1996 (and subsequent updates), or when needed to meet adopted local park and recreation standard, or to protect contiguous tracts of working resource lands or ecological resources.
- P-120** Trails should be acquired when identified in the King County Trails Plan or when identified as part of a community trail network.
- P-121** King County shall be a leader in establishing partnerships with cities, adjacent counties, federally recognized tribes, state and federal agencies, school and special purpose districts, community organizations, nonprofit organizations, land owners and other citizens. The county and these partnerships should work to promote and protect all aspects of environmental quality and complete the regional parks and open space system, linking local and regional lands and facilities.
- P-122** Decisions on acquisition and development of park, trail, and other open space sites should consider funding needs for long term maintenance and operations.
- P-123** Open space lands shall be classified to identify the primary role in the open space system and purpose of acquisition as active recreation, trails, multiuse, natural area or working resource lands. They will be classified as regional or local and the primary role and purpose of the site will be identified.
- P-124** Lands preserved for public parks or open space should provide multiple benefits whenever possible.
- P-125** A variety of measures should be used to preserve and develop regional and local parks, trails and open space. Measures can include: county funding, partnerships, incentives, regulations, and trades of lands and shared development activities. Where local park districts have been created, King County will work in partnership with the districts to maximize resources and meet community goals.
- P-126** King County will adopt an entrepreneurial approach to managing and operating the open space system and work aggressively to implement multiple and appropriate strategies to sustain fiscally the open space system.
- P-127** Management of the regional open space system of Parks, Trails, Natural Areas and Working Resource Lands is guided by the King County Parks, Recreation and Open Space Plan, as adopted in 1996 (and subsequent updates). The plan includes policies on the management of parks and trails, natural areas, and resource lands.



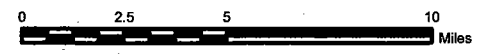
King County's Open Space System 2004

- Recreation and Multi-Use Parks
- Regional Trails
- Natural Areas
- Working Resource Lands
- Flood Hazard Properties
- Other Public Lands
- Incorporated Areas
- Urban Growth Boundary

Source: King County Department of Natural Resources and Parks
Water and Land Resources Division

The information included on this map has been compiled by King County staff from a variety of sources and is subject to change without notice. King County makes no representations or warranties, express or implied, as to accuracy, completeness, timeliness, or rights to the use of such information. King County shall not be liable for any general, special, indirect, incidental, or consequential damages including, but not limited to, lost revenues or lost profits resulting from the use or misuse of the information contained on this map. Any sale of this map or information on this map is prohibited except by written permission of King County.

The maps in the King County Comprehensive Plan and its technical appendices are produced with a computer geographic information system. They are reduced in size but available at a larger scale.



- P-128** King County shall use park and recreation standards as adopted in the King County Park, Recreation and Open Space Plan, adopted in 1996 (and subsequent updates), as guidelines to evaluate and provide local parks, trails, and recreational services.
- P-129** In the Urban Area, King County shall work in partnership with other jurisdictions to facilitate annexation and transfer of local parks, trails and other open spaces to cities or other providers to ensure continued service to the community.
- P-130** King County should work with cities to share operational and maintenance costs of parks and other open spaces in unincorporated areas in which a substantial portion of the users are from incorporated areas.

II. Cultural Resources

Cultural resources make a significant contribution to the quality of life in King County. Arts and heritage organizations, public art and historic and archaeological properties contribute to the region's economic vitality, play an essential role in cultural tourism, and contribute significantly to the county's overall quality of life. As King County grows, the need to protect, support and enhance cultural opportunities and resources is essential in order to sustain livability.

King County continues to play an important role in support and guidance for cultural resources in the region. While the creation of the CDA places operational responsibility for cultural resources with that body, the King County Council approves nominations for membership on the Authority Board, participates directly through board membership of three county councilmembers; meets with the CDA board to receive annual reports on progress and discuss plans for the coming year, and similar functions.

In the following policies and discussion, the term "cultural resources" refers to all performing and visual arts events, programs and facilities: public art; heritage events; programs and facilities; and historic properties. The term "historic properties" means all historic buildings, sites, objects, districts, and landscapes, prehistoric and historic archaeological resources, and traditional cultural places.

P-201 King County shall protect cultural resources and promote expanded cultural opportunities for residents to enhance the region's quality of life and economic vitality.

P-202 King County shall support the transmission of the region's cultural legacy, promote cultural education, and encourage the preservation and celebration of cultural diversity and creativity.

County residents need arts and heritage opportunities that balance regional programs and facilities for attendance with a network of local community opportunities for participation and education. The regional cultural system is comprised of a regional and local infrastructure of cultural organizations, individuals and venues; an interjurisdictional program for historic resource protection; and region-wide enhancement of public places with art works.

P-203 King County shall support and encourage development of regional cultural organizations, facilities, and services that address a countywide audience or are dedicated to unique and significant cultural themes or disciplines.

P-204 King County shall support and encourage community cultural organizations, facilities, and services to provide opportunities for local access and participation by all residents throughout the county.

A. Arts

The region's artistic environment parallels its natural features in variety and richness. Its arts organizations, artists and opportunities are widely known and valued for their diversity, excellence and abundance of music, theater, dance, literary activity, and visual arts.

P-205 King County shall support excellence and vitality in the arts and support opportunities for attendance at and participation in diverse arts and cultural activities throughout the county.

- P-206 The Cultural Development Authority of King County or its successor organization shall advise the King County Executive and the Council on programs, policies and regulations that support and increase access to the arts.**

B. Historic Preservation

Preservation of historic properties provides multiple benefits to the region; historic properties maintain a tangible connection with the historic and prehistoric past. They contribute character, diversity and aesthetic value to communities, particularly in times of rapid change. Historic attractions play a significant role in the region's appeal to tourists. Many municipalities do not have sufficient resources to administer an historic preservation program. As a result, the shared history of the region is endangered. Comprehensive and coordinated protection of significant historic properties is necessary in order to ensure that King County's collective history is preserved.

- P-207 King County shall administer a regional historic preservation program to identify, evaluate, protect and enhance, historic properties.**
- P-208 The Landmarks Commission shall advise the King County Executive and the Council on programs, policies and regulations that support and enhance preservation and protection of significant historic properties.**

C. Public Art

Collectively, public art is a regional resource that enhances community character and diversity, sparks imagination, and provides a direct cultural experience for county residents every day. For new or changing communities, public art is a powerful contributor to local character, sense of place and belonging. Public art can also help mitigate the adverse effects of new development.

- P-209 King County shall provide art in public facilities projects and places to enhance community character and quality of life. Maintenance and conservation shall be a consideration in the development and management of public art. King County undertakings (including public-private partnerships and development authorities) that include public funds or resources, have publicly visible physical components, or require mitigation should include public art. King County should encourage provision of public art in private development projects.**
- P-210 The Cultural Development Authority of King County or its successor organization shall advise the King County Executive and the Council on programs, policies and regulations that support and increase access to public art.**

D. Heritage

Museums, historical societies, ethnic organizations and other heritage groups, and historians, archivists, folklorists and other heritage specialists enrich community life and provide cultural experiences for county residents and visitors. Without appreciation, preservation and stewardship of local history by heritage specialists, groups and organizations, the county's rich history would be lost.

- P-211 The Cultural Development Authority of King County or its successor organization shall advise the King County Executive and the Council on programs and policies that support and enrich King County's heritage.**
- P-212 King County shall support, preserve and enhance its heritage and shall encourage opportunities for public attendance and participation in diverse heritage activities throughout the county.**

E. Cooperation

Cultural resource management crosses jurisdictional boundaries and involves countless public and private players throughout the region. The range and complexity of cultural activity in the region requires coordination and cooperation. King County government is uniquely able to provide regional coordination and leadership.

P-213 King County shall pursue its cultural resource goals by working with residents, property owners, cultural organizations, public agencies, federally recognized tribes, schools and school districts, and others.

P-214 King County shall work with cities to protect and enhance historic resources and public art located within city boundaries and annexation areas. The county shall advocate for and actively market its historic preservation services to agencies and cities that could benefit from such services.

Cultural facilities and services are needed in locations and ways that expand public access, broaden diversity of content and audiences and enhance cultural opportunities for all residents.

P-215 King County shall encourage shared, multipurpose use of regional and community facilities for cultural activities to maximize their efficient use and to expand public access to cultural opportunities.

F. Stewardship of Cultural Resources

Historic preservation is an ongoing activity that requires identification and evaluation of resources, use of a variety of regulatory protection measures and incentives, and attention to long-term preservation, enhancement and interpretation. Land use planning should direct and coordinate patterns of development so as to minimize current and future conflicts with historic resources in urban and rural areas.

P-216 King County shall encourage land uses and development that retain and enhance significant historic properties and sustain historic community character. County building and zoning codes and other regulations and standards should provide flexibility to accommodate preservation and reuse of historic properties. Zoning actions should take into account the effects of zoning on historic properties.

Project review can respond to and modify development proposals affecting historic and archaeological resources to eliminate or minimize adverse effects of development or changing land use. King County government can also protect historic resources through careful planning and review of its own undertakings, both direct and indirect. Archaeological resources are particularly sensitive and endangered.

P-217 King County shall review public and private projects and may condition them in order to protect historic properties. King County agencies shall coordinate with the Historic Preservation Program to provide consistent review and mitigation for projects within unincorporated areas and for county undertakings within cities.

P-218 King County shall inventory historic properties in order to guide decision making in resource planning, capital projects, operations, environmental review and resource management.

P-219 Archaeological properties shall be identified, evaluated and protected in a consistent and coordinated manner. King County shall establish consistent review and protection procedures and develop centralized professional archaeological staffing.

Cultural resources are often destroyed through neglect. Maintenance and other management practices that protect historic features and character can assure long-term preservation. Information about the history and significance of a property fosters appreciation and informs owners, users and the public about its value.

King County government can lead by example through stewardship and wise management of its own cultural resources. Historic public buildings and facilities, such as bridges and roads, can be preserved and continue to be used; other historic resources can be converted to public use.

- P-220** All King County agencies shall be stewards of cultural resources under their direct control. Agencies shall identify and assess cultural resources, preserve significant historic properties and public art, and provide public access to them whenever appropriate. Agencies shall collaborate with the Historic Preservation Program to nominate eligible properties for landmark designation.
- P-221** King County shall interpret its cultural resources to enhance their understanding and enjoyment by the public.
- P-222** King County shall acquire and preserve historic resources for use by county and other public agencies and shall give priority to occupying historic buildings whenever feasible.
- P-223** King County shall provide incentives to encourage investment in historic properties and public art. County programs and incentives for land and resource preservation and economic development shall support and be coordinated with cultural resource preservation and provision of public art.