

2016 Update
Executive Recommended Plan

King County Comprehensive Plan



King County

Office of Performance
Strategy and Budget

((~~2012~~ (~~2013~~ Update))

~~Adopted December 3, 2012, Update adopted November 4, 2013
King County Department of Permitting and Environmental Review
35030 SE Douglas St., Suite 210
Snoqualmie, WA 98065-9266))~~

Legend for Revision Marks

XYZ	Text or policy unchanged
((XYZ))	Text or policy deleted
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King County

Office of Performance, Strategy and Budget

March 1, 2016

Dear King County Resident:

After more than a year of research and engagement with community members and stakeholders, I am pleased to present the Executive Recommended 2016 King County Comprehensive Plan. The 2016 update is a major (every four year) review of the Comprehensive Plan and the Executive Recommended Plan represents another important step in the update process. The Executive Recommended Plan will now be considered by the King County Council, with adoption expected in the fall or winter of 2016.

About three months ago, King County released the Public Review Draft of the 2016 Comprehensive Plan and began a two-month public comment period. During this time, King County held six community meetings and nearly 300 people attended. In addition to verbal comments at the meetings, King County received about 65 letters, comment cards, and emails.

The Executive Recommended Plan continues to build on King County's 25 years of success in implementing the Growth Management Act, and also responds to critical new challenges, such as providing equitable access to opportunity, reducing carbon pollution, positioning the County to respond to a changing climate, addressing housing affordability, and strengthening mobility options.

In addition to these broad themes, highlights of the Executive Recommended Plan include a strong commitment to protecting rural lands from expansion of the urban growth area, the launch of a new subarea planning program that will create more detailed local plans across the entire unincorporated area, the inclusion of a workplan that makes transparent the major planning initiatives to be implemented between major updates, and a continued effort to encourage annexation of unincorporated urban areas through working with cities on interlocal agreements and through countywide planning organizations. Additional highlights include implementing updated environmental regulations such as the stormwater manual and new environmental commitments found in the Strategic Climate Action Plan, addressing the risks of oil transport by rail, refining tools such as the transfer of development rights program, and promoting new tools such as the Green Building Code and the Local Food Initiative.

The Plan establishes a new chapter on Housing and Human Services, to heighten the focus on equity and the human-dimensions of land use planning. The new chapter consolidates and updates existing policies, and reflects initiatives such as Communities of Opportunity and the Health and Human Services Transformation program.

Proposed amendments call for the establishment of new community development tools including food innovation districts and residential improvement districts, policies to increase housing density and affordable housing near business corridors and frequent transit, and policies to address public health issues including tobacco-free parks, smoke-free housing, healthy food retail, and urban agriculture.

The year 2016 marks the 25th anniversary of the passage of the Growth Management Act. This landmark legislation created a new planning approach in Washington State that sought to address the harmful impacts of uncoordinated and unplanned growth. The Growth Management Act requires jurisdictions to designate an urban growth area within which growth would be encouraged and outside of which growth could occur only if it was not urban in nature. It also requires the adoption of regulations to assure the conservation of agricultural, forest, and mineral resource lands of long-term significance as well as regulations to protect environmentally critical areas including wetlands, aquifer recharge areas, fish and wildlife habitat corridors, frequently flooded areas, and geologically hazardous areas.

By almost any measure, King County has been successful in realizing these broad goals. Since adoption of the first comprehensive plan in 1994, the vast majority of housing growth countywide – 96 percent – has occurred in urban areas. And, through incorporations and annexations, more than 60 percent of the unincorporated urban area that existed in 1994 is now within cities, which continues to fulfill the goal of transitioning counties to serve as providers of rural and regional services. In rural areas and natural resource lands, the County has preserved working farms and forests through a balanced strategy that includes regulations, incentives, and technical assistance, and this has led to a sustainable rate of development.

If you have any questions about the proposed amendments in the Comprehensive Plan, please contact Ivan Miller, Comprehensive Plan Manager at (206) 263-8297 or ivan.miller@kingcounty.gov.

I encourage you to view the Executive Recommended Plan at <http://www.kingcounty.gov/compplan/>. And, I encourage you to remain actively engaged over the coming months as the King County Council moves the Executive Recommended Plan towards adoption later in 2016. Together, we can ensure that that our region continues to manage growth effectively while protecting thriving rural and resource lands, and remain in compliance with the Growth Management Act.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Dow Constantine". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Dow" being more prominent and the last name "Constantine" following in a similar style.

Dow Constantine
King County Executive

Table of Contents

Introduction	I-1
Chapter One – Regional Planning	1-1
Chapter Two – Urban Communities	2-1
Chapter Three – Rural Legacy and Natural Resource Lands	3-1
Chapter Four – Environment	4-1
Chapter Five – Shoreline Master Program	5-1
Chapter Six – Parks, Open Space and Cultural Resources	6-1
Chapter Seven – Transportation	7-1
Chapter Eight – Services, Facilities and Utilities	8-1
Chapter Nine – Economic Development	9-1
Chapter Ten – Community Plans	10-1
Chapter Eleven – Implementation	11-1
Glossary	G-1
Area Zoning Amendments	AZ-1

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	1
About King County	2
Guiding Principles & Objectives	4
New in the 2016 Plan	5
Plan Elements	6

CHAPTER 1 REGIONAL GROWTH MANAGEMENT PLANNING	1
I. About King County	2
II. King County Planning Framework	3
III. King County Planning Objectives	16
IV. Summary of the King County Comprehensive Plan	25
V. Technical Appendices	28

VI. The Regulations	29
VII. For More Information	30
CHAPTER 2 URBAN COMMUNITIES	1
I. Urban Communities	2
II. Potential Annexation Areas	36
CHAPTER 3 RURAL AREAS AND NATURAL RESOURCE LANDS	1
I. Rural Area	4
II. Rural Designation	7
III. Rural Densities and Development	15
IV. Rural Public Facilities and Services	29
V. Rural Commercial Centers	30
VI. Resource Lands	38
CHAPTER 4 HOUSING AND HUMAN SERVICES	1
I. Housing	1
II. Regional Health and Human Services	28
CHAPTER 5 ENVIRONMENT	1
I. Natural Environment and Regulatory Context	5
II. Climate Change	15
III. Air Quality	34
IV. Land and Water Resources	36
V. Geologically Hazardous Areas	84
VI. Monitoring and Adaptive Management	90
CHAPTER 6 SHORELINES	1
I. Introduction	1
II. Shoreline Jurisdiction	10
III. Shoreline Policy Goals	14
IV. Shoreline Element Policy Goals	20
V. Shoreline Plan Relationship to Other Laws	25
IV. Shoreline Environment Designations	28
VII. Environment Protection Policies	40
VIII. Shoreline Use and Shoreline Modification	55
IX. Primary and Administrative Policies	80

CHAPTER 7 PARKS, OPEN SPACE AND CULTURAL RESOURCES	1
I. ____ Parks, Recreation and Open Space	2
II. ____ Cultural Resources	14
CHAPTER 8 TRANSPORTATION	1
I. ____ Creating an Integrated, Sustainable, and Safe Transportation System that Enhances Quality of Life	2
II. ____ Providing Services and Infrastructure that Support the County Land Use Vision	11
III. ____ Ensuring Effective Management and Efficient Operations	26
IV. ____ Financing Services and Facilities that Meet Local and Regional Goals	35
V. ____ Coordination and Public Outreach	40
CHAPTER 9 SERVICES, FACILITIES AND UTILITIES	1
I. ____ Regional Services	2
II. ____ Facilities and Services	4
III. ____ Energy and Telecommunications	38
CHAPTER 10 ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT	1
I. ____ Overview	2
II. ____ Business Development	7
III. ____ Workforce Development	11
IV. ____ Infrastructure Development	15
V. ____ Sustainable Development in the Private Sector	15
VI. ____ The Rural Economy	17
CHAPTER 11 COMMUNITY SERVICE AREA PLANNING	1
I. ____ Bear Creek / Sammamish Area	7
II. ____ Four Creeks / Tiger Mountain Area	14
III. ____ Greater Maple Valley / Cedar River Area	15
IV. ____ Southeast King County Area	22
V. ____ Snoqualmie Valley / Northeast King County Area	27
VI. ____ Vashon/Maury Island Area	38
VII. ____ West King County Area	48
CHAPTER 12 IMPLEMENTATION, AMENDMENTS AND EVALUATION	1
I. ____ Regulations	2
II. ____ Comprehensive Plan Amendments	3
III. ____ Review and Evaluation	6
IV. ____ Land Use Designations and Zoning Classifications and Codes	9

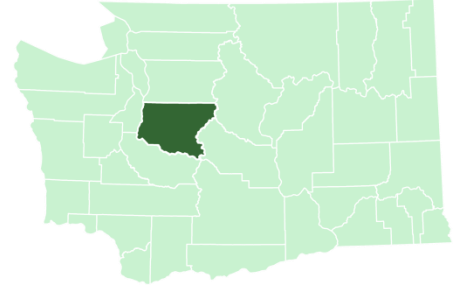
V. Other Implementing King County Codes	10
VI. 2016 Comprehensive Plan Workplan	11
VII. Incentives	13

GLOSSARY 1

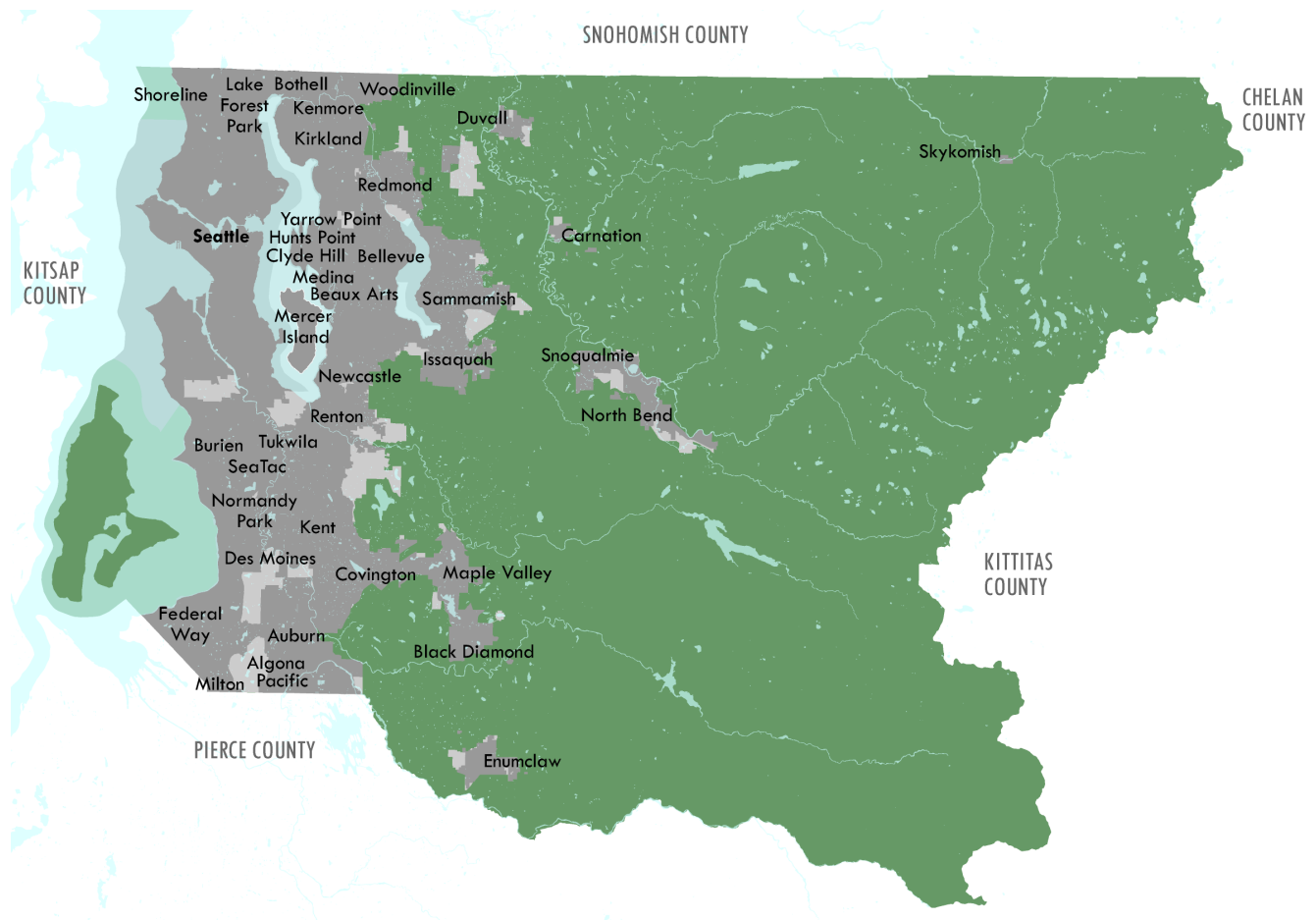
Frequently Used Acronyms	31
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 2015, King County was the **most populous county in Washington State** and the **13th most populous county in the nation**. Between 2014 and 2031, King County is targeted to **grow by 286,500 residents and 396,000 jobs**.



The King County Comprehensive Plan is fundamental for directing and managing this anticipated growth. It contains policies guiding development and land use in unincorporated areas of the County, as well as service provision throughout the County and the region. Since the 1994 update, the Comprehensive Plan has worked in accordance with the Washington State Growth Management Act to protect resources and enhance quality of life. The Plan does this by emphasizing the protection of Critical Areas and Natural Resource Lands, protecting Rural Areas and rural character, and designating an urban growth area where density and services should be concentrated. In addition, the Plan guides the County's work with its Cities through the countywide and multicounty planning policies in central Puget Sound.

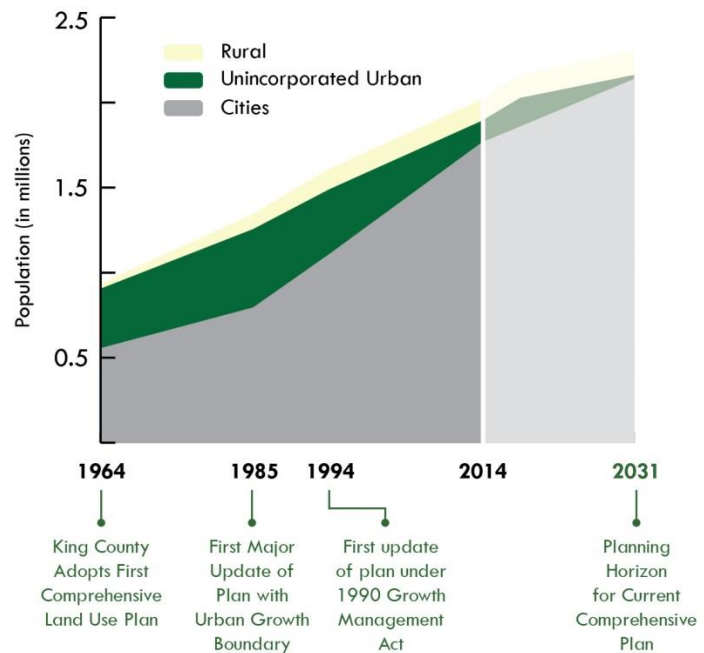


About King County

Demographics

According to most recent available data (2014), King County has an estimated population of **2.02 million people**. Approximately **94%** of King County's residents live in urban areas and **6%** in unincorporated Rural Areas and Natural Resource Lands.

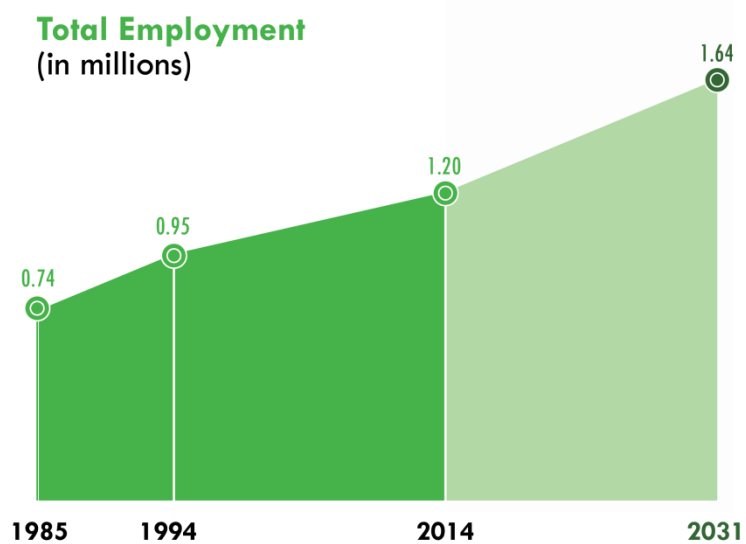
Over the past 20 years, King County has experienced a substantial 25% growth in its population. By 2031, King County is **expected to grow to a population of 2.3 million**, adding just under 300,000 residents to its overall population. Based on the guiding principles of the comprehensive plan, **95%** of this growth is targeted to be absorbed by cities and **5%** in unincorporated King County.



Economy

The substantial population growth that King County has experienced in recent years can largely be attributed to the area's thriving economy, which has fostered a massive influx of individuals adding to the County's overall workforce. King County comprises the majority of the Seattle-Bellevue-Tacoma metropolitan statistical area and consists of **approximately 70,000 businesses providing nearly 1.2 million jobs**.

The vast majority of King County's workforce is employed in the service sector, such as in the trade-transportation-utilities, professional-businesses services, and education-health services industries. Overall, King County **accounts for 50.3% of Washington's total payroll**.

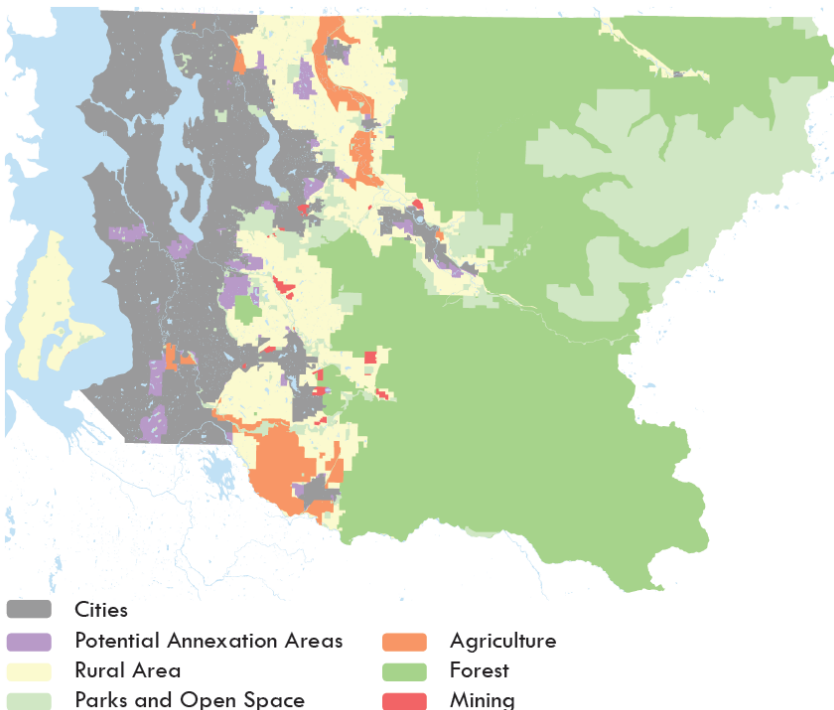


Geography



King County is characterized by beautiful scenery and geographic diversity, stretching from the Puget Sound in the west to the Cascade Crest in the east. There are 39 cities in the county, ranging in size from the 205-person town of Skykomish to the bustling metropolis of Seattle, with a population greater than 660,000. In addition, King County has a variety of working farm- and forestlands, as well as a vast open space network. Numerous water bodies, including rivers, lakes, and streams, provide a key resources and create valuable land assets and unique ecosystems along coastlines and river corridors.

Land Use



King County's total land area is 2,130 square miles, accounting for 3% of all land in Washington State. Through careful zoning and development regulations, King County manages its land use in a manner that ensures a high quality of life for its residents. Growth management in King County is largely implemented by directing development toward the urban growth area, while protecting existing Rural Areas, open spaces, and Natural Resource Land assets. The map offers a general snapshot of land use across the county, and shows urban land uses located towards the western Puget Sound area and more Rural and Resource located in the central and eastern parts of the county.

Guiding Principles & Objectives

Moving Towards a Sustainable King County

King County's Comprehensive Plan has long been based on a vision of the county as a livable area with healthy, thriving, and dense urban communities; ample open space, forest and farm lands preserved for long-term use; a vibrant economy inclusive of numerous sectors; and a transportation system providing a variety of options. In addition, the Plan reflects the 14 goals of the Growth Management Act and the goals of the King County Strategic Plan. In 2015, King County adopted an update to its Strategic Plan, which aims to promote: **justice and safety, health and human potential, economic growth and the built environment, environmental sustainability, service excellence, financial stewardship, public engagement, and a quality workforce.** The following principles, first adopted in the 2012 Plan, are updated to reflect these long-term goals and priorities.

1. Create Sustainable Neighborhoods



Ensure neighborhoods are developed in ways that supports and provides a high quality of life for present and future residents.

4. Provide a Variety of Transportation Choices



Increase multimodal accessibility and mobility for all residents to meet community needs and reduce environmental impacts.

2. Preserve & Maintain Open Space and Resource Lands



Conserve open space, working farms and forests, and healthy ecosystems with natural functions and human activities in mind.

5. Address Equity, Social, and Environmental Justice



Ensure that negative impacts and positive benefits of development are shared equitably among all segments of the population.

3. Direct Development Towards Existing Communities



Reduce sprawl and concentrate growth, consistent with regional agreements, in cities and centers where services and infrastructure exist or are planned to exist.

6. Achieve Environmental Sustainability



Collaborate with other local governments and other sectors to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and equitably prepare for climate change impacts.

New in the 2016 Plan

Major Four-Year Update

The 2016 update is a major four-year review of the Comprehensive Plan and, this year marks the 25th anniversary of the passage of the Growth Management Act. This landmark legislation requires jurisdictions to designate an urban growth area within which growth would be encouraged, and adopt regulations to conserve resource land and environmentally sensitive areas. By almost any measure, King County has been successful in realizing the broad goals of the Growth Management Act. However, success has not been easy and, looking forward, the Comprehensive Plan needs to respond to new challenges such as equitable access to opportunity, reducing carbon pollution and responding to climate impacts, addressing housing affordability and strengthening mobility. To address these, **the following updates are included.**

Land Use Policy Amendments

- **Annexation policies revised to be more city-focused.** Creates incentives for annexation by promoting joint planning, using city regulations or negotiating on transferable development rights in Potential Annexation Areas (PAAs) where there is an Interlocal Agreement, and revisiting PAA map and Countywide Policies with cities. Amendments in *Chapter 2*.
- **Rural Area policies strengthened to avoid incompatible uses.** Avoiding placement of urban serving facilities in the Rural Area (similar to intent of School Siting), and removal of the mining site conversion demonstration program. Amendments in *Chapters 2, 9 and 12*.
- **Transfer of Development Rights policies enhanced for PAAs.** TDRs can be negotiated in PAAs with annexing cities, and directing amenity funding into PAAs receiving significant TDRs.

Equity and Health Policy Amendments

- **Establishes a new chapter on Housing and Human Services.** The new *Chapter 4* consolidates and updates existing policies, and reflects new initiatives. It calls for new community development tools such as food districts and residential local improvement districts, and commits to explore increasing housing density and affordable housing near businesses and transit.
- **Increases emphasis on Equity and Social Justice.** This includes maps, illustrations, and more emphasis in policies throughout the plan.
- **Reflects current Public Health-related programs –** topics include tobacco-free parks, smoke-free housing, healthy food retail, urban agriculture, the **Local Food Initiative** and farm-supportive programs. Amendments in *Chapters 2 and 3*.

Environmental Policy Amendments

- **Increased focus on Climate Change in multiple chapters.** Integration of relevant policies from the Strategic Climate Action Plan and the County-Cities Climate Collaboration.
- **Stormwater Management Program and Permit policies updated.** Reflects the new stormwater permit, low impact development, sub-basin planning, infrastructure maintenance and retrofits, infrastructure mapping, integration of the Green Building Code, and evaluating stormwater credit trading. Amendments in *Chapters 5 and 9*.
- **New policies on Crude Oil Transport by Rail–** these define the County's role and interests in this emerging policy issue.
- **Various environmental topics updated –** topics include noxious weeds, beaver exclusion and removal, enhanced landslide hazard policies, and supporting a market-based price on carbon pollution. Amendments in *Chapters 5, 7 and 9*.

Subarea Planning Program

- **Initiation of a new Community Service Area Planning Program.** Starting in 2016, this process will use the Community Service Areas as the planning geography. Amendments in *Chapter 11*.
- **Starts process to adopt the Skyway–West Hill Action Plan.** This is an addendum to existing 1994 West Hill Community Plan.

General Amendments

- **Changes to make the plan more user-friendly** such as this Executive Summary, a more navigable Table of Contents, and a new Workplan section in *Chapter 12* that identifies major work items that start after adoption in 2016.
- **Other updates throughout the plan** including revised data, refined definitions, minor formatting enhancements, and updated references to partnerships and functional plans.

These amendments, along with others included in the following chapters, are intended to help the Comprehensive Plan remain responsive to the County's growth management challenges of today... and tomorrow.

Plan Elements

Chapters of the Comprehensive Plan

Chapter 1

Regional Growth Management Planning

King County's growth management policies and regulations are consistent and work in coordination with the Growth Management Act, multicounty and countywide Planning Policies, and other technical plans.

Chapter 2

Urban Communities

With the majority of King County residents living and working in the urban area, this chapter includes policies that guide urban development with the goal of creating healthy, sustainable communities.

Chapter 3

Rural Area and Natural Resource Lands

King County's rural area and natural resource lands are crucial for sustaining life into the future. This chapter's focus on protecting these assets from development and promoting sustainable economic development.

Chapter 4

Housing and Human Services

The availability of adequate and affordable housing has become one of the most pressing issues facing King County today. This chapter contains policies regarding the provision of housing and services for all residents.

Chapter 5

Environment

King County's natural environment comprises various unique and valuable assets. This chapter contains King County's approach to environmental protection, conservation and restoration, as well as, sustainability.

Chapter 6

Shorelines

Shorelines require particular focus and management given both their immense value and fragility. This chapter contains King County's Shoreline Master Program, which aims to protect and conserve this unique natural resource.

Chapter 7

Parks, Open Space & Cultural Resources

This chapter addresses King County's approach to conserving and maintaining its expansive open space system, which includes numerous local and regional parks, and trails, and its cultural resources and historic properties.

Chapter 8

Transportation

Recognizing that availability of safe, accessible, and efficient transportation options has significant implications for the quality of life of all county residents, This chapter addresses how King County will distribute investments equitably.

Chapter 9

Services, Facilities & Utilities

The provision of services, facilities and utilities should be concentrated in areas of density and at levels that can support existing and future demand. This chapter addresses how such crucial infrastructure should be developed.

Chapter 10

Economic Development

In its commitment to foster a prosperous, diverse and sustainable economy, the County recognizes that it must support actions and programs promote the success of both businesses and the workforce.

Chapter 11

Community Service Area Planning

This chapter includes policies that recognize the unique characteristics of particular communities and provides significant historical context, and describes the new subarea planning program.

Chapter 12

Implementation& Amendments

This chapter describes how the policies should be implemented and monitored, major actions that will occur to implement the plan, the procedure for amending the plan, and the role of zoning in the planning process.

Appendices

Integral to the vision and goals of the comprehensive plan are the detailed inventories, forecasts, financial plans, and urban growth area analysis required by the Growth Management Act. A set of technical appendices are adopted as part of the plan to meet Growth Management Act requirements.

Regulations

The King County Comprehensive Plan is implemented through adopted regulations, including the King County zoning Code and other code titles. All development must meet the requirements of the code.