



Community Health

Objective:

Protect the health of communities

What is happening in King County?

Protecting our community's health both from human and natural contaminants requires multiple strategies, to keep our food, air and water safe, and to ensure that what we eat, drink and breathe is as healthy as possible. One measure regarding part of our community's health is King County's ranking on measures of health outcomes in the National County Health Ranking Index. King County is ranked 6th of all Washington counties.

King County's air quality is generally very good, based on data from the Puget Sound Clean Air agency. 2010 is the latest year for which there is full air quality index data. Most days in King County have air quality in the good or moderate category. Since before 2000, there have not been any days with Very Unhealthy or Hazardous air quality days. See the technical note for definitions of air quality categories.

Healthy retail options help families purchase the healthy food that they need, in their neighborhoods. Increasing evidence suggests that the food available for purchase in a community - the retail food environment - influences the types and quantities of food that people purchase and consume. Retail food outlets that sell affordable, high quality, nutritious foods can encourage a healthy diet, reducing an individual's risk for chronic diseases, including obesity and diabetes.

The Retail Food Environment Index (RFEI) shows the ratio of unhealthy to healthy food outlets. A RFEI higher than 1.0 indicates there are more unhealthy than healthy outlets in an area; a RFEI of less than 1.0 indicates healthy food outlets are the majority. Fast food restaurants and convenience stores are classified as unhealthy, while supermarkets, small grocers, and produce vendors (produce stores and farmers markets) are classified as healthy.

In King County, the food environment varies by location. The RFEI varies from a high of 7 in East Federal Way to .5 in Vashon Island, with the county average at 2.4. This means that there are approximately two and a half times the fast-food restaurants and convenience stores compared to grocery stores and produce vendors across King County. In general, South King County tends to have higher RFEI compared to the King County average. The effect is most pronounced in the Health Reporting Areas along the I-5 corridor.

In King County, the amount of noise pollution varies by location. The proportion of parcels with high or extremely high noise pollution is highest in North Seattle, South Seattle where I-90 and I-5 connect, through the southern part of the County near SeaTac, in Northeast King County, and in Bellevue.

What role does King County play?

King County strives to increase the health of our community through health protection, health promotion and providing high quality medical care and other services for those in need. Major activities include tracking disease and other threats to the public's health, preventing and treating communicable diseases, regulating dangerous environmental and workplace exposures, and ensuring the safety of food, air and water. King County conducts policy advocacy and health education and provides clinical care as well.

For example, King County works with nearly 11,000 permitted restaurants and food service operations through education/training and regulatory oversight and makes inspection reports available to the public online, including customer concerns and complaints. Trans-Fat was eliminated from food service establishments by Board of Health policy in February 2009 and in January 2009, King County became one of the first local communities in the nation to require nutritional labels on menus to provide information to consumers. The county has developed guidelines for cities to use in developing local plans and investments in infrastructure to support health and exercise (such as sidewalks and bike paths - these plans and investments also have a positive impact on air quality) and guidelines for public agencies and private businesses that want to improve the health of food and vending options for their employees and their customers. Other health education efforts have included working with small businesses (corner stores) to increase access to fresh produce, and increasing available healthy food choices (and decreasing unhealthy choices) for students at local schools and child care sites.

King County works collaboratively with the Puget Sound Clean Air Agency to monitor and communicate air quality issues to citizens. King County also works to educate the public about the dangers of tobacco use, including second hand smoke, and enforces the state's Clean Indoor Air law, which prohibits smoking in most public places and workplaces. King County works to support people trying to quit by advocating for tobacco cessation support and passes policies to ensure that our community keeps moving towards 100 percent smoke free. These include one of the nation's first ordinances to ban use of electronic cigarettes and sale of flavored tobacco, in order to prevent new addictions to tobacco and future smoking.

King County works in coordination with other local governments and the state government to keep our water clean, safe and available for drinking, swimming and for shellfish growing. The county inspects and regulates sewage treatment systems for properties without sewer connections and inspects and permits plumbing to make sure untreated sewage does not enter our water sources, monitors shellfish harvest areas, and closes them when algae produces biotoxins and make harvest unsafe, checks swimming beaches for bacteria and closes them when unsafe, and ensures that pools and spas are constructed and operated safely for the public. Together, these actions allow the public to enjoy clean and safe water and avoid water-borne illnesses.

Many efforts to protect the health of our community require a community-level focus, as they are outside of the control of the individual. For instance, encouraging people to eat healthy food when none is available is frustrating and discouraging for the individual and does not help our community's overall health. King County will continue to focus on the systems, policies and environments that can help make the healthier choice the easier choice, for both the individual and the community.

What else influences these indicators?

The safety of food can also be affected before it reaches the point of sale. The Federal government

regulates overall food safety. Water borne illness and poor water quality can be caused by contaminants that are not regulated by King County, as can illness from air toxics. Policies and systems are influenced by many levels of government, as well as the private sector.

What can you do?

To keep our food, water and air safe, individuals and businesses can follow national, state and local laws that support a cleaner environment, learn about policies, systems and environment change initiatives that support individuals' ability to make healthier choices, and take additional actions to protect their own and family members' health.

Related Links

[County Health Rankings & Roadmaps](#)

[King County KingStat Air Quality Measures](#)

[King County Food Inspection System](#)

[Public Health Operational Master Plan](#)

Technical Notes

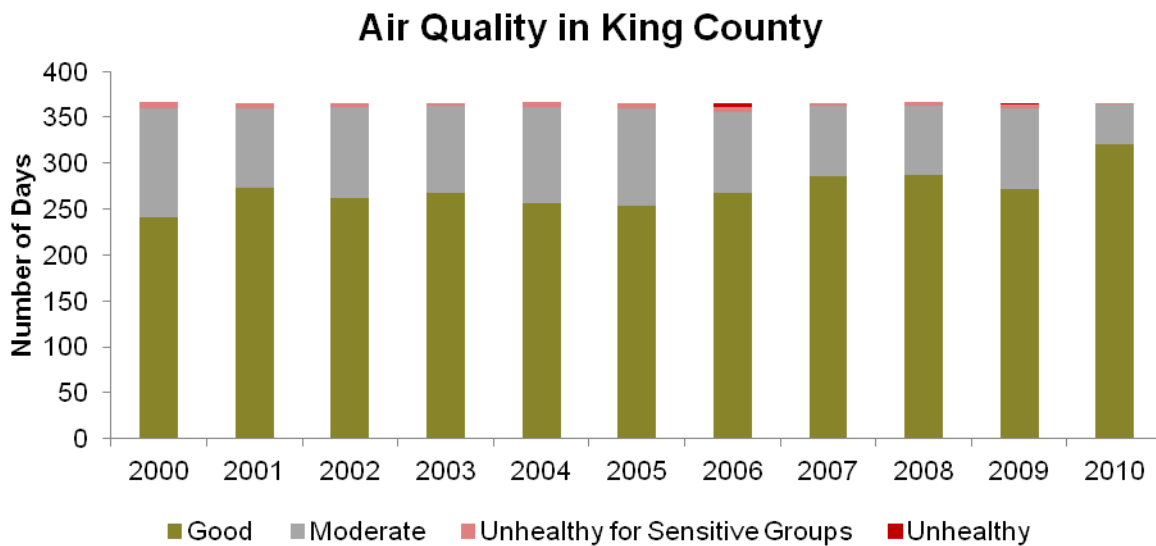
Data for Air Quality based on the Puget Sound Clean Air Agency 2010 Air Quality Annual Summary Report. Air quality categories are based on Air Quality Index (AQI) values from 1 to 500. The AQI measures levels of the six criteria pollutants regulated by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)-fine particles, ground-level ozone, carbon monoxide, sulfur dioxide, nitrogen dioxide and lead. The AQI does not measure two other issues of concern in our region and other parts of the country as well -- air toxics and greenhouse gases. EPA currently has no comparable standards for measuring and reporting air toxics and greenhouse gases. The index includes the following categories:

- Good (0 to 50 AQI): Air quality is considered satisfactory and air pollution poses little or no risk.
- Moderate (51 to 100 AQI): Air quality is acceptable; however, for some pollutants there may be a moderate health concern for a very small number of people who are unusually sensitive to air pollution.
- Unhealthy for Sensitive Groups (101 to 150 AQI): Members of sensitive groups may experience health effects. The general public is not likely to be affected.
- Unhealthy (151 to 200 AQI): Everyone may begin to experience health effects; members of sensitive groups may experience more serious health effects.
- Very Unhealthy (201 to 300 AQI): Health alert; everyone may experience more serious health effects. Hazardous (301 to 500 AQI): Health warnings of emergency conditions. The entire population is more likely to be affected.

Data for Areas without Access to Healthy Foods from the US Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service Food Desert Locator .

Healthy Food Access map was created by KCGIS, analysis conducted in 2010 based on walking and bus ride proximity to farmer's markets or grocery stores with produce sections.

Charts and Maps

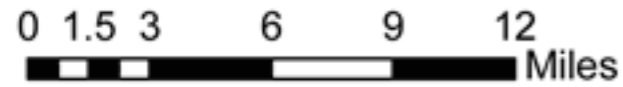
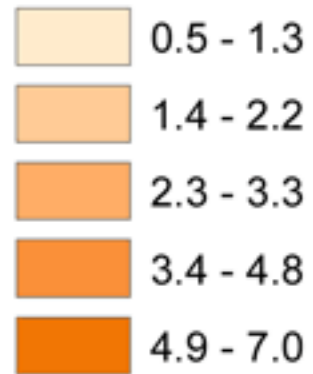


Data from Puget Sound Clean Air Agency 2010 Annual Air Quality Summary Report; Data includes all

Retail Food Environment Index by Health Reporting Area King County, Washington

Legend

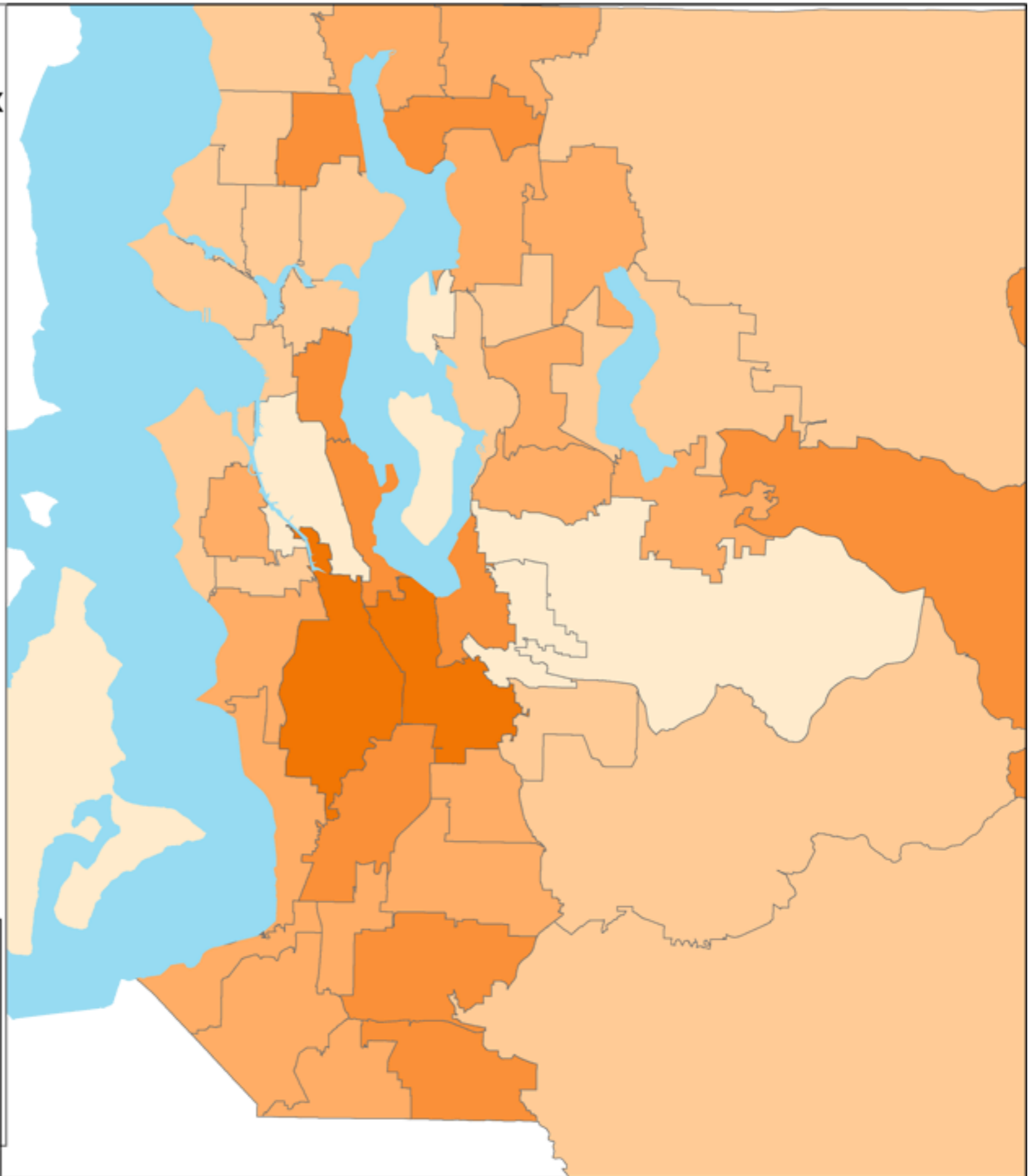
RFEI



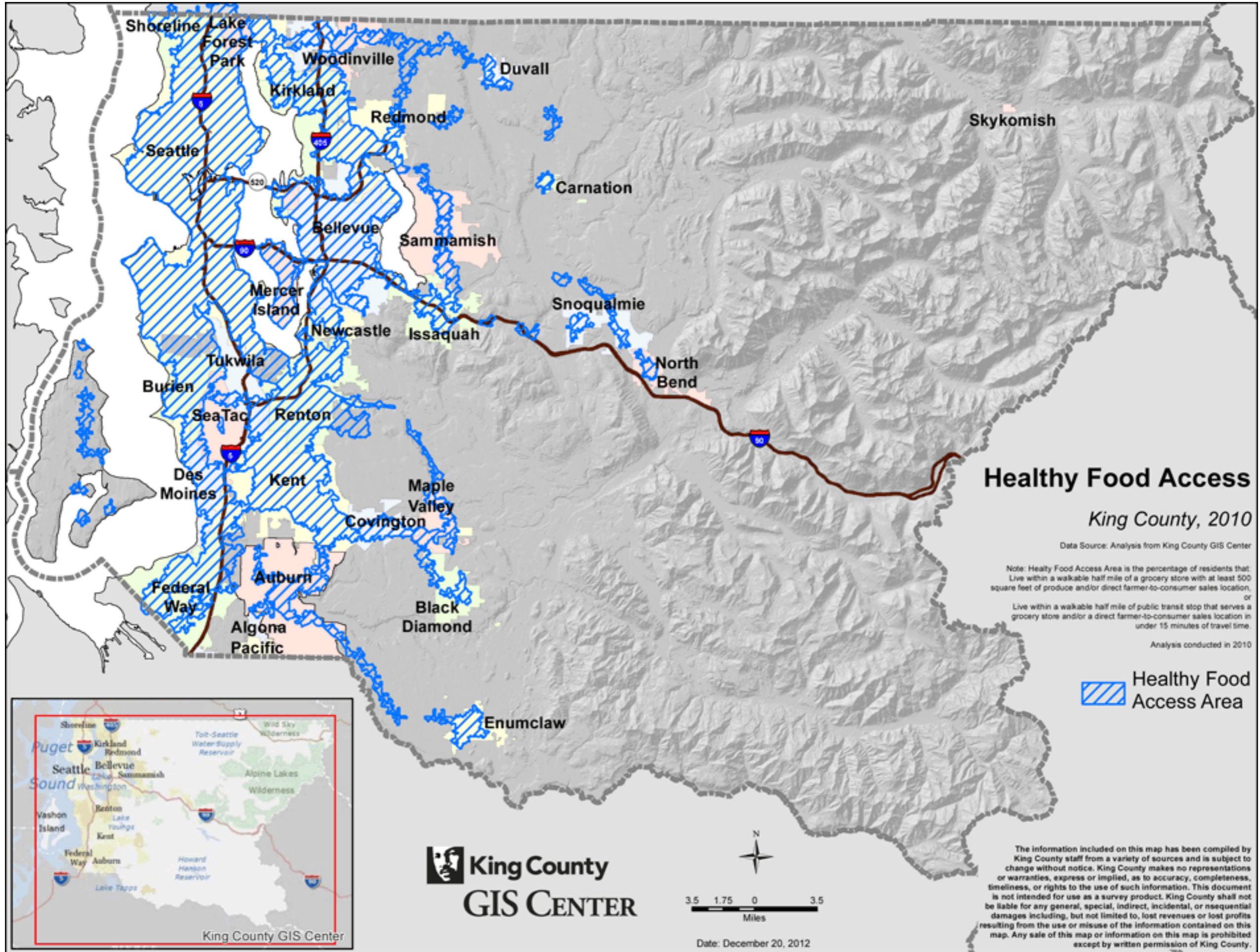
RFEI is a ratio of fast food restaurants & convenience stores, divided by the number of groceries, farmer's markets, and produce stands. Higher RFEI suggests greater concentration of unhealthy food. The King County average is 2.4

InfoUSA, 2/2010.

Produced by: Public Health - Seattle & King County; Assessment, Policy Development & Evaluation Unit, 9/6/2012



Healthy Food Access




Healthy Food Access

King County, 2010

Data Source: Analysis from King County GIS Center

Note: Healthy Food Access Area is the percentage of residents that:
 Live within a walkable half mile of a grocery store with at least 500 square feet of produce and/or direct farmer-to-consumer sales location,
 or
 Live within a walkable half mile of public transit stop that serves a grocery store and/or a direct farmer-to-consumer sales location in under 15 minutes of travel time.

Analysis conducted in 2010

 Healthy Food Access Area

 **King County**
GIS CENTER



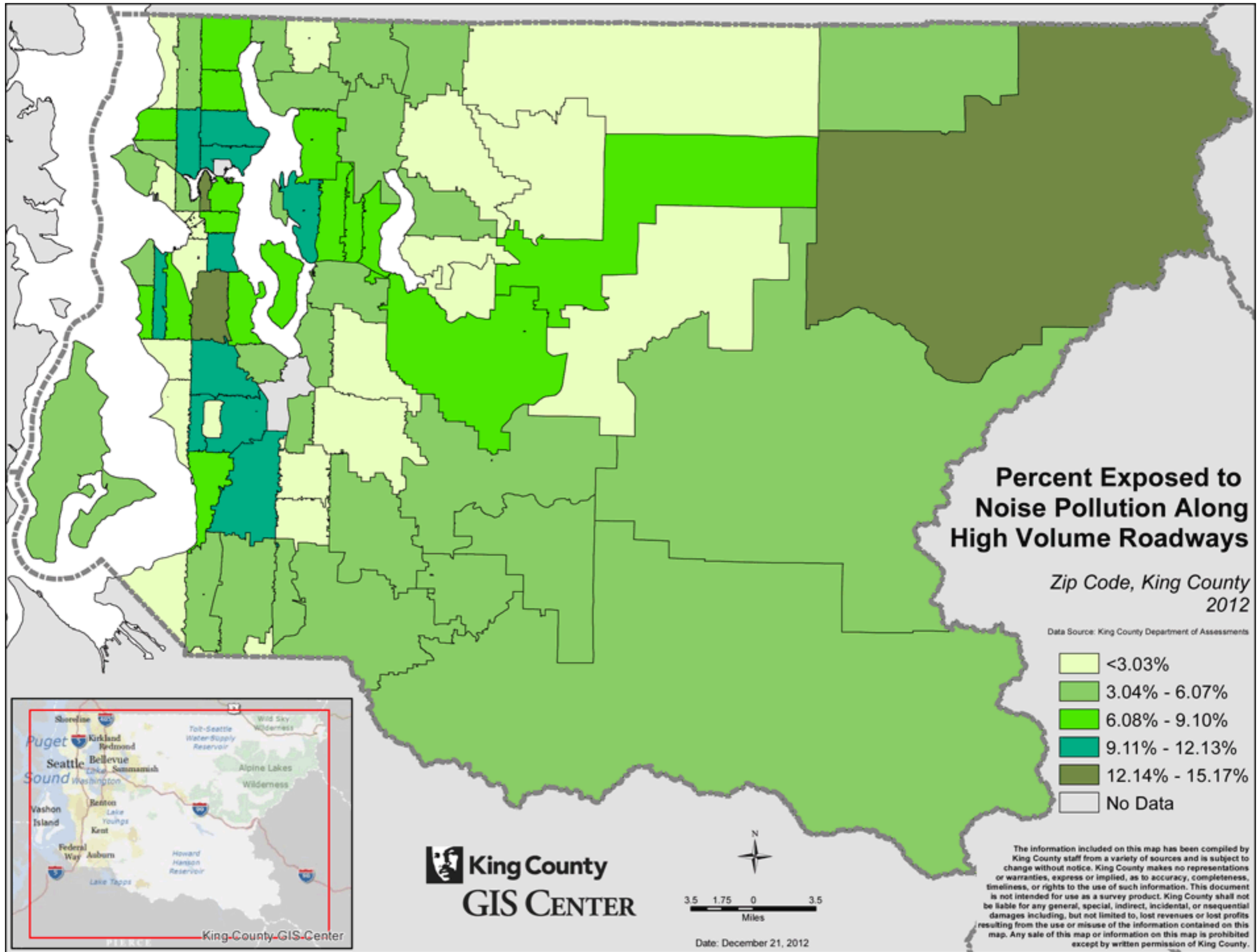
Date: December 20, 2012

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King County GIS Center

Percent Exposed to Noise Pollution Along High Volume Roadways



Areas Without Access to Healthy Food

Areas Without Access to Healthy Food

King County, Census Tract
2010

Data Source: USDA

- No
- Yes

1.5 0.75 0 1.5
Miles



King County
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Date: December 20, 2012

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