



KING COUNTY

1200 King County Courthouse
516 Third Avenue
Seattle, WA 98104

Signature Report

Ordinance 19458

Proposed No. 2022-0199.2

Sponsors Dembowski and Kohl-Welles

1 AN ORDINANCE providing for the submission to the
 2 qualified electors of King County at the general election to
 3 be held in King County on November 8, 2022, of a
 4 proposition to restore King County's conservation futures
 5 property tax levy authorized under RCW 84.34.230 to a
 6 rate of \$0.0625 per one thousand dollars of assessed
 7 valuation for collection in 2023 and use the dollar amount
 8 of the 2023 levy for the purpose of computing limitations
 9 for subsequent levies under chapter 84.55 RCW to provide
 10 funding for conservation futures as permitted under chapter
 11 84.34 RCW, including, but not limited to, to pay, finance
 12 and refinance costs of the acquisition and preservation, of:
 13 urban green spaces, natural areas, wildlife and salmon
 14 habitat, trails, river corridors, farmlands and forests; and
 15 providing for conservation futures advisory committee
 16 recommendations.

17 BE IT ORDAINED BY THE COUNCIL OF KING COUNTY:

18 **SECTION 1. Findings:**

19 A. Natural lands support wildlife, provide clean air, enhance recreation
 20 opportunities, protect clean water, improve health and promote climate resilience.

Ordinance 19458

21 Farmlands promote sustainable local agriculture and a thriving agricultural
22 economy. Forests protect wildlife, provide recreation opportunities, enhance
23 water quality and promote a sustainable local timber industry. Protected river
24 corridors provide salmon habitat, flood protection and recreation opportunities
25 and promote the health of Puget Sound. Trail corridors provide access to
26 recreation opportunities, increase nonmotorized mobility and improve air quality.
27 Urban green spaces protect key lands in population centers to enhance public
28 health and well-being, build community and expand recreation opportunities.
29 Those are the open space lands that the county's conservation futures program,
30 codified in K.C.C. chapter 26.12, has been protecting for years.

31 B. Protection and stewardship of urban green spaces, forests and
32 farmlands anchor numerous determinants of equity that inform the county's equity
33 and social justice initiative.

34 C. King County recognizes the disproportionate impacts on many King
35 County communities due to existing and historical racial, social, environmental
36 and economic inequities. The communities are particularly vulnerable to
37 excessive heat, poor air and water quality and flooding episodes. Protecting and
38 stewarding land in these communities can help to improve: individual,
39 community and environmental health; food access; and community economic
40 development.

41 D. For decades, King County has demonstrated leadership in protecting
42 natural lands. In 1968, King County voters approved the Forward Thrust

Ordinance 19458

43 initiative, which provided funding to preserve four thousand acres of park land as
44 well as fifty-three miles of waterfront and riparian corridors.

45 E. In 1982, King County initiated its Conservation Futures program,
46 which has successfully protected more than one hundred thousand acres of
47 valuable resource lands and farmlands.

48 F. In 1989, King County voters approved the Open Space bond measure,
49 which provided funding for preserving high-conservation-value open-space land.

50 G. In 2003, 2007, 2013 and 2019, King County voters approved tax levies
51 to support parks, trails and open space.

52 H. In 2009, the voters of King County approved a charter amendment,
53 known as the Open Space Protection Amendment, to enhance conservation
54 protections for key county-owned natural lands.

55 I. That long legacy of preserving natural lands has made King County one
56 of the most livable areas in the country and a sought-after place to live, work and
57 do business.

58 J. In 2015, Motion 14458 set forth King County's policy to remain one of
59 the greenest metropolitan areas in the world by protecting and conserving land
60 and water resources that will: enhance quality of life; strengthen the region's
61 economy; enhance biodiversity; provide recreational opportunities; and promote
62 sustainable forestry, farming and locally grown food.

63 K. In September 2016, the King County executive convened the land
64 conservation initiative advisory group to advise the council and the executive on
65 ways to preserve remaining conservation lands within a generation, including

Ordinance 19458

66 benefits and challenges, a preferred timeline and public and private funding
67 options.

68 L. The land conservation initiative advisory group included twenty-seven
69 county residents with wide-ranging expertise, including professionals from cities,
70 environmental organizations, local businesses, real estate firms, investment firms
71 and philanthropic organizations.

72 M. Working with the advisory group, cities, federal and state agencies,
73 tribes and other partners, the department of natural resources and parks undertook
74 a parcel-by-parcel review of remaining open space lands and other conservation
75 opportunities in King County to determine the most important parcels to protect in
76 perpetuity.

77 N. In 2018, Ordinance 18774 set forth King County's policy to:
78 accelerate the protection of vital open space lands, including urban green spaces,
79 natural areas, wildlife and salmon habitat, trails, river corridors, farmlands and
80 forests; to address equity and social justice issues by increasing the availability of
81 open space lands in historically underserved areas; and address generational
82 equity by spreading costs of protecting vital open space lands over time.

83 O. Key funding goals of Ordinance 18774 include accelerating the pace
84 of acquisitions and thereby reducing their ultimate cost, spreading costs to future
85 taxpayers who will benefit from open space lands protected in perpetuity,
86 maximizing the use of available moneys, prioritizing acquisitions in equity areas
87 and parcels that are at high risk of development, geographic equity over time and

Ordinance 19458

88 ensuring that sufficient reserves remain available to pursue emerging conservation
89 opportunities.

90 P. Following recommendations of the advisory group, the open space
91 equity cabinet was convened in 2018 and included twenty-one county residents
92 representing twelve different community-based organizations. In collaboration
93 with the conservation futures advisory committee, the cabinet updated the
94 conservation futures process that prioritizes acquisition of land conservation
95 initiative targets in communities experiencing the greatest need.

96 Q. After reviewing a variety of potential funding mechanisms, the
97 advisory group recommended that the county restore its existing conservation
98 futures property tax levy to the rate authorized by RCW 84.34.230 of \$0.0625 per
99 one thousand dollars of assessed valuation to provide moneys to implement the
100 land conservation plan.

101 R. Conserving open space lands through conservation futures funding has
102 a decades-long track record of success in King County.

103 S. The conservation futures advisory committee process is a respected and
104 trusted means of ensuring that public moneys are optimized in preserving our
105 natural areas and ecosystems.

106 T. Issuing bonds can help accelerate the pace of acquisitions, lower the
107 ultimate cost of acquisitions and spread the acquisition costs to include future
108 taxpayers who will also benefit from open space lands protected in perpetuity.

109 U. The King County department of natural resources and parks has
110 engaged in extensive outreach to receive additional input, including from the

Ordinance 19458

111 public, cities, businesses, environmental organizations, historically underserved
112 communities and area tribes.

113 V. There is a window of opportunity to conserve the region's last best
114 places, but the county must act now to increase the pace and scale of preservation
115 before the remaining high conservation value open space lands are lost.

116 **SECTION 2. Definitions.** The definitions in this section apply throughout this
117 ordinance unless the context clearly requires otherwise.

118 A. "Conservation futures purposes" means all activities and expenditures
119 authorized by chapter 84.34 RCW, as may be amended from time to time, including but
120 not limited to paying, financing and refinancing costs of acquisition and preservation of
121 urban green spaces, natural areas, wildlife and salmon habitat, trails, river corridors,
122 farmlands and forests within King County.

123 B. "Levy" means the levy of regular property taxes for the statutory conservation
124 futures purposes as provided in this ordinance and authorized by the electorate in
125 accordance with state law.

126 C. "Levy proceeds" means the principal amount of moneys raised by the levy,
127 any interest earnings on the moneys, and the proceeds of any interim or other financing
128 following authorization of the levy.

129 **SECTION 3. Levy submittal to voters.** To provide necessary proceeds for the
130 statutory conservation futures purposes identified in section 5 of this ordinance, the King
131 County council shall submit to the qualified electors of the county a proposition
132 authorizing restoration of King County's conservation futures property tax levy to the rate
133 authorized by RCW 84.34.230 of \$0.0625 per one thousand dollars of assessed valuation

Ordinance 19458

134 for collection in 2023 and use of the dollar amount of the 2023 levy for the purpose of
135 computing limitations for subsequent levies, consistent with chapter 84.55 RCW, as it
136 may be amended from time to time.

137 **SECTION 4. Deposit of levy proceeds.** All levy proceeds collected as
138 authorized in this ordinance shall be deposited into a dedicated conservation futures fund
139 established by ordinance and used only for the eligible expenditures described in section
140 5 of this ordinance.

141 **SECTION 5. Eligible expenditures.** If approved by the qualified electors of the
142 county, proceeds of the levy authorized by this ordinance shall be used for conservation
143 futures purposes in accordance with chapter 84.34 RCW, as it may be amended from time
144 to time, and for the costs and charges incurred by the county that are attributable to the
145 election.

146 **SECTION 6. Call for special election.** In accordance with RCW 29A.04.321,
147 the King County council hereby calls for a special election to be held in conjunction with
148 the general election on November 8, 2022. The King County director of elections shall
149 cause notice to be given of this ordinance in accordance with the state constitution and
150 general law and to submit to the qualified electors of the county, at said special election,
151 the proposition hereinafter set forth. The clerk of the council shall certify that
152 proposition to the King County director of elections in substantially the following form,
153 with such modifications as may be required by the prosecuting attorney:

154 The King County council passed Ordinance ___ concerning funding to
155 protect open space lands in King County. This proposition would provide
156 funding to pay, finance, or refinance acquisition and preservation of: urban

Ordinance 19458

157 green spaces, natural areas, wildlife and salmon habitat, trails, river
158 corridors, farmlands and forests. It would authorize restoration of the
159 county's RCW 84.34.230 conservation futures property tax levy to a rate
160 of \$0.0625 per \$1,000 of assessed valuation for collection in 2023 and use
161 the dollar amount of the 2023 levy for the purpose of computing
162 subsequent levy limitations under chapter 84.55 RCW.

163 Should this proposition be:

164 Approved []

165 Rejected []

166 **SECTION 7. Advisory committee.** If the levy is approved by the voters in
167 accordance with section 6 of this ordinance, the conservation futures advisory committee
168 established under K.C.C. 2.36.070 will make acquisition recommendations and
169 recommend funding allocations, consistent with K.C.C. chapter 26.12, as it may be
170 amended from time to time.

171 **SECTION 8. Implementation.** Contingent upon voter approval of the ballot
172 proposition described in section 3 of this ordinance, King County will accelerate
173 protection of open space consistent with K.C.C. chapter 26.12, as it may be amended
174 from time to time.

175 **SECTION 9. Exemption.** The additional regular property taxes authorized by
176 this ordinance shall be included in any real property tax exemption authorized by RCW
177 84.36.381, including any amendment that is adopted by the legislature during the term of
178 this levy.

Ordinance 19458

179 **SECTION 10. Ratification and confirmation.** Certification of the proposition
180 by the clerk of the King County council to the director of elections in accordance with
181 law before the general election on November 8, 2022, and any other act consistent with
182 the authority and before the effective date of this ordinance are hereby ratified and
183 confirmed.

184 **SECTION 11. Severability.** If any provision of this ordinance or its application

Ordinance 19458

185 to any person or circumstance is held invalid, the remainder of the ordinance or the
186 application of the provision to other persons or circumstances is not affected.

Ordinance 19458 was introduced on 5/24/2022 and passed by the Metropolitan King County Council on 6/21/2022, by the following vote:

Yes: 8 - Balducci, Dembowski, Kohl-Welles, Perry, McDermott, Upthegrove, von Reichbauer and Zahilay
No: 1 - Dunn

KING COUNTY COUNCIL
KING COUNTY, WASHINGTON

DocuSigned by:
Claudia Balducci
7E1C273CE9994B6...
Claudia Balducci, Chair

ATTEST:

DocuSigned by:
Melani Pedroza
8DE1BB375AD3422...
Melani Pedroza, Clerk of the Council

APPROVED this ____ day of 7/7/2022, _____.

DocuSigned by:
Dow Constantine
4FBCAB8196AE4C6...
Dow Constantine, County Executive

Attachments: None