

# Planning in King County



## What does the Plan Do?

Prompted by residents' concerns about sprawl, King County adopted its first **comprehensive land use plan** in 1964 and, in 1985, established an urban growth area to focus growth and investments. The 1985 plan also established policies to preserve the rural area, conserve the natural environment and designate resource lands for long-term agriculture and forest production.

Counties play multiple roles – they are a local government in unincorporated urban, rural and natural resource areas as well as a regional service provider for the entire county geography. In this context, the Comprehensive Plan guides local land use decisions such as subdivision, permitting and zoning, and land use designation. It also guides the provision of regional services such as transit, parks, solid waste and the establishment of the urban growth area boundary.

These strategies continue to guide the comprehensive plan, which now responds to requirements in the **Growth Management Act (GMA)**. The Plan has been updated multiple times since to address issues such as climate change, social equity and public health, as well as expectations in countywide and multicounty policies.

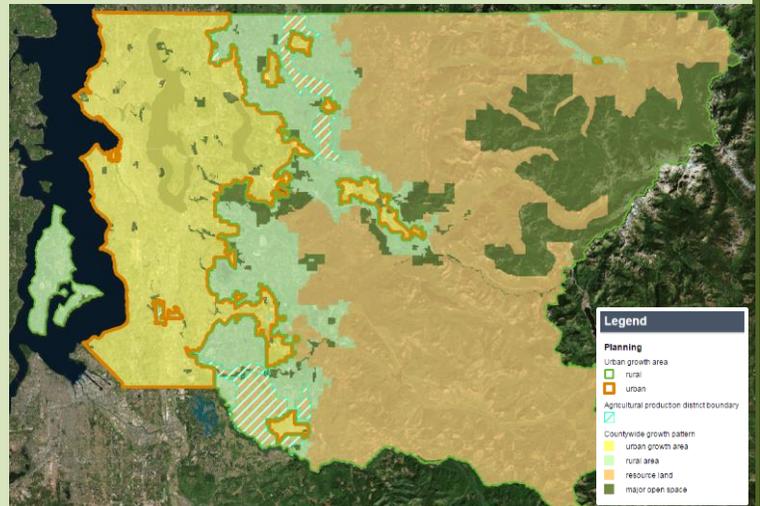
The GMA encourages annexation and incorporation so that, long-term, cities provide urban services and counties provide rural and regional services. For regional services, the Plan seeks efficiencies by concentrating investments and services to support focusing growth in and near cities where local services are located or can more efficiently be made available.

## Guiding Principles in 2016 Plan

The current Plan focuses on creating a sustainable King County and contains text, maps and policies that are organized around the following major themes:

- Creating Sustainable Neighborhoods
- Preserving and Maintaining Open Space and Natural Resource Lands
- Directing Development Towards Existing Communities
- Providing a Variety of Transportation Choices
- Addressing Health, Equity, and Social and Environmental Justice
- Achieving Environmental Sustainability

## Major Land Use Categories



These themes seek to ensure that King County will manage growth in ways that improve the quality of life and the natural environment for **future generations**. These themes align with the county's Strategic Plan, the Growth Management Act, and countywide and multicounty policies.

## GMA Requirements for Comprehensive Plans

❖ **Plan Components:** The GMA requires most counties and cities in the state to prepare comprehensive plans to manage future growth. The GMA requires each plan to include chapters on land use, transportation, rural and resource lands, housing, capital facilities and utilities that show where future population growth will occur and the types of infrastructure needed to serve that growth. Plans often contain optional chapters related to the environment, the economy and parks.

❖ **Planning Goals:** Comprehensive Plans respond to fourteen broad land use planning goals in the GMA.

- Reducing low-density sprawling development
- Encouraging development in urban areas where facilities and services exist or can be provided
- Maintaining transportation, housing and open space
- Protecting property rights
- Protecting shorelines and other features in the natural environment

## Plan Update Cycle

Comprehensive plans include a 20-year planning horizon and major periodic reviews are required by GMA every 8 years. King County met this requirement in 2012 and will conduct a statutory update again in 2020. To keep the plan current and relevant, the King County code requires a review every four years and the County completed the major four-year review in December 2016. The following diagram provides a general overview of the Plan update cycle.



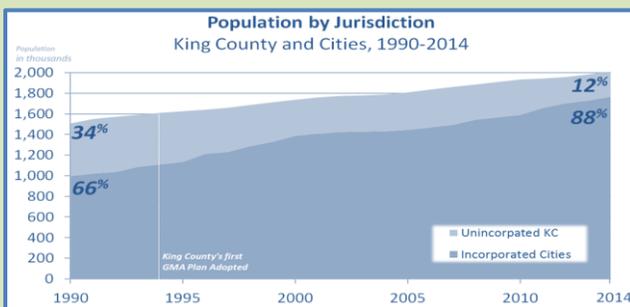
	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
<b>Annual Amendment Cycle</b> <i>Technical changes, 4:1 UGA changes, responses to court cases Typically March 1 to late fall</i>	Annual	*	*	Annual	Annual	*	*	Annual	Annual	*	*
<b>Docket Requests</b> <i>Citizen initiated requests, June 30 to December 1</i>	Docket	*	Docket	Docket	Docket	Docket	*	Docket	Docket	Docket	*
<b>Four Year Update Cycle</b> <i>Full review; some serve as state-mandated statutory updates Two-year process, starts October, ends Fall two years later</i>		Four Year				Four Year/Statutory				Four Year	

\* While Annual Amendments and Docket Requests are allowed during these years, the issues are typically folded into the Four Year Cycle

## Accommodating Growth in King County

The primary duty of a Comprehensive Plan is establish a vision and implementing regulations for how growth will be accommodated over the 20-year planning horizon. The charts below show past trends and future plans.

❖ **Where We Have Been:** King County has grown, and it has shifted a significant portion of unincorporated urban population into cities.



❖ **Where We Are Going:** Planning assumptions guiding future city and county plan updates target cities to accommodate 93% of new housing and 98% of new jobs.

Adopted 2011-31 Targets	New Housing	New Jobs
12 Cities with Urban Centers	178,255	366,950
20 Other Cities in UGA	31,887	4,573
7 Rural Cities	7,085	5,095
Unincorporated UGA	15,850	10,150
<b>KC Total</b>	<b>233,077</b>	<b>428,068</b>

To [learn more](#) about the Comprehensive Plan, or join the [mailing list](#) for updates, please visit <http://www.kingcounty.gov/compplan/>

