

# **CHAPTER 2**

## **URBAN COMMUNITIES**

The Urban Communities chapter brings together the major elements that combine to make a healthy and vibrant urban community whole: housing, culture, recreation, business centers, jobs, sustainability and human services. By merging these elements of urban life into one chapter, King County emphasizes the importance each plays as part of a livable community.

The chapter first defines the Urban Growth Area, where most growth has, will, and should continue to occur, and major land uses within it. The chapter then provides the framework to guide the development of new urban communities and redevelopment of existing communities within the unincorporated portion of the Urban Growth Area.

It is the goal of King County to work toward a model sustainable community to balance growth with natural resource protection while addressing climate change. Sustainable development creates a balance between people, economy, and environment; balancing using resources to meet current needs while ensuring future generations can benefit from equivalent resources. Sustainable development seeks to achieve this goal by addressing the impacts of the built environment in which the residents of King County live and work. To highlight the importance of sustainable development and consolidate policies applicable to both rural and urban communities, text and policies regarding sustainable development for public projects have been moved to Chapter 8 Section II (Facilities and Services), subpart D (Capital Facility Planning). Text and policies regarding sustainable development in the private sector have been moved to move to Chapter 9 Section V (Sustainable Development in the Private Sector).

# Urban Land Use

## I. Urban Communities

A critical challenge for King County and its residents is to create urban communities that provide the sense of place and the range of choices people want for a quality urban life and experience, as well as respond to the cultural and economic needs of a diverse urban communities. Urban areas need more than physical infrastructure. They also need a broad range of amenities and human services that make them attractive and safe places to work and live, while protecting our physical environment and maintaining the quality of life we all value. In short, they need to become and be sustained as "healthy communities." The design goals of healthy communities including making it easier for people to live healthy lives by: encouraging mixed land use and greater land density to shorten distances between housing, workplaces, schools and recreation so people can choose to walk or bike more easily to them. Incorporating good pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure, including sidewalks and bike paths that are safely removed from automobile traffic, fosters the use of non-motorized travel. People are more likely to walk to their destination if the distance is less than one-half mile ("walking distance") or to bike if the distance is less than three miles ("biking distance"). Healthy communities provide opportunities for people to be physically active and socially engaged as part of their daily routine and include access to open space and parks. Allowing people, if they choose, to age in place and remain in their community as their lifestyle changes or as they face changing physical capabilities contributes to a healthy community, as does ensuring access to affordable and healthy food, especially fruits and vegetables. An integral part of a healthy community is "healthy housing," which protects residents from exposure to harmful substances and environments, and reduces the risk of injury. These goals can be achieved, in part, through implementing building practices that promote indoor health.

**U-101                      Development within the Urban Growth Area should create and maintain safe, healthy and diverse communities. These communities should contain a range of affordable, healthy housing and employment opportunities, as well as school and recreational facilities, and should be designed to protect the natural environment and significant cultural resources.**

## The Urban Growth Area

The Growth Management Act requires the county to designate an Urban Growth Area where most growth and development forecasted for King County will be accommodated. By designating an Urban Growth Area, King County and other counties in the state will:

- Limit sprawling development;
- Reduce costs by encouraging concentrated development;
- Improve the efficiency of transportation, human services and utilities;
- Protect the Rural Area and Resource Lands;
- Enhance open space; and
- Mitigate the impacts of climate change and adapt its effects.

The Urban Growth Area (UGA) for King County is designated on the official Land Use Map adopted with this plan. The original Countywide Planning Policies (CPP) provided the framework that the Metropolitan King County Council used when adopting the UGA as part of the 1994 Comprehensive Plan.<sup>1</sup>

The UGA includes all cities within the county including the cities in the Rural City Urban Growth Area, the cities' annexation areas, and land within the unincorporated part of the county characterized by urban-type growth. The UGA also includes the Bear Creek Urban Planned Developments east of Redmond. See Chapter 3, Rural Area and Natural Resource Lands, for additional policy guidance on growth within the rural cities' annexation areas.

King County's total UGA covers 461 square miles, less than one-quarter of the county's total land area of 2,134 square miles. Cities comprise most of the land mass of the UGA, at 404 square miles; the unincorporated portion of the UGA is now about 57 square miles, according to the King County Annual Growth Report online. A general representation of the official Land Use Map is located at the end of Chapter 1.

**U-102                    The Urban Growth Area designations shown on the official Land Use Map include enough land to provide the capacity to accommodate growth expected over the period 2006-2031. These lands should include only those lands that meet the following criteria:**

- a.            Are characterized by urban development that can be efficiently and cost effectively served by roads, water, sanitary sewer and storm drainage, schools and other urban governmental services within the next 20 years;**

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<sup>1</sup> As amended by Ordinance 17687.

- b. Do not extend beyond natural boundaries, such as watersheds, which impede provision of urban services;
- c. Respect topographical features that form a natural edge, such as rivers and ridge lines;
- d. Are sufficiently free of environmental constraints to be able to support urban growth without major environmental impacts, unless such areas are designated as an urban separator by interlocal agreement between jurisdictions;
- e. Are included within the Bear Creek Urban Planned Development sites; and
- f. Are not rural land or unincorporated agricultural or forestry lands designated through the Countywide Planning Policies Plan process.

**U-103**                    **Parcels that are split by the Urban Growth Area boundary line should be reviewed for possible redesignation to either all urban or all rural taking into consideration:**

- a. Whether the parcel is split to recognize environmentally sensitive features;
- b. The parcel's geographic features;
- c. Whether the parcel will be added to an adjoining city's Potential Annexation Area; and
- d. The requirements of interlocal agreements, or the requirements of King County plans.

Some cities that border the Urban Growth Area operate parks in the Rural Area. These parks may have been acquired by the city through a direct purchase or through a transfer agreement with King County. Cities can continue to operate parks in the Rural Area consistent with rural development standards. In specific circumstances, cities can request that these parks be redesignated to urban to allow future annexation by the city.

**U-104**                    **Rural properties that are immediately adjacent to a city and are planned or designated for park purposes by that city may be redesignated to urban when the city has committed to designate the property in perpetuity in a form satisfactory to the King County Council for park purposes and:**

- a. The property is no more than 30 acres in size and was acquired by the city prior to 1994;

- b. The property is no more than 30 acres in size and receives county support through a park or recreation facility transfer agreement between King County and a city; or
- c. The property is or was formerly a King County park and is being or has been transferred to a city.

**U-105** Existing or proposed churches in the Rural Area may be included within the Urban Growth Area when all of the following criteria are met:

- a. The church property must have an interior lot line as defined by 21A.06.730 that is adjacent to the original Urban Growth Area boundary as established by the 1994 King County Comprehensive Plan, excluding the Rural City Urban Growth Areas and excluding UGA boundaries established through the Four-to-One Program;
- b. The church property shall not be adjacent to an Agricultural Production District or the Forest Production District;
- c. Sewer service is required once the property is included in the UGA;
- d. Direct vehicular access to a principal arterial road is required; and
- e. The church property shall be included in the Potential Annexation Area of the appropriate city at the same time it is included in the UGA.

## **1. Growth in Urban Centers and the Promotion of Public Health for All**

The Countywide Planning Policies guide the development of urban centers, which are principally located in cities, and should accommodate concentrations of housing and employment. However, in its unincorporated urban area, King County has a small number of urban centers, which includes an unincorporated activity center, community business centers and neighborhood business centers. These are represented on the Urban Centers map at the end of this chapter.

Focusing development in urban areas can have a positive effect on public health while also addressing climate change. The percentage of King County residents who are overweight or obese has risen rapidly since the late 1980s. With obesity comes increased risk for diabetes, hypertension and heart disease. Evidence suggests one major reason for rising obesity is the lack of physical activity. Growth patterns in suburban areas, which discourage active transportation modes such as walking and bicycling and promote a reliance on private auto use, have contributed to this public health problem. To help combat this obesity crisis, healthy communities, which feature a variety of land uses, access to healthy foods, higher housing density, sidewalks, bicycle infrastructure, and street connections to nearby services, encourage physical activity such as walking and bicycling.

While creating communities that have a positive effect on public health we are also creating communities that will have a positive effect on climate change. When people replace their auto trips with walking or biking, they are improving their health and reducing their carbon footprint at the same time. Communities that have integrated street networks, a mix of uses, and residential densities supportive of public transportation can reduce vehicle miles traveled because auto trips are being replaced with more walking, biking and transit use.

**U-106**                    **Most population and employment growth should locate in the contiguous Urban Growth Area in western King County, especially in cities and their Potential Annexation Areas. Cities in the rural area should accommodate growth in accordance with adopted growth targets.**

**U-107**                    **King County should support land use and zoning actions that promote public health by increasing opportunities for every resident to be more physically active. Land use and zoning actions include: concentrating growth into the Urban Area, promoting urban centers, allowing mixed-use developments, and adding pedestrian and bicycle linkages.**

**U-108**                    **King County should support the development of Urban Centers to meet the region's needs for housing, jobs, services, culture and recreation and to promote healthy communities. Strategies may include exploring opportunities for joint development or transit-oriented development, siting civic uses in mixed-use areas, and leveraging or utilizing existing county assets in urban centers.**

**U-109**                    **King County should concentrate facilities and services within the Urban Growth Area to make it a desirable place to live and work, to increase the opportunities for walking and biking within the community, to more efficiently use existing infrastructure capacity and to reduce the long-term costs of infrastructure maintenance.**

**U-110**                    **King County shall work with cities, especially those designated as Urban Centers, in collaborative efforts that result in transfers of development rights from the Rural Area.**

**U-111**                    **Development standards for urban areas should emphasize ways to allow maximum permitted densities and uses of urban land while not compromising**

**the function of critical environmental areas. Mitigating measures should serve multiple purposes, such as drainage control, groundwater recharge, stream protection, air quality improvement, open space preservation, cultural and historic resource protection and landscaping preservation. When technically feasible, standards should be simple and measurable, so they can be implemented without lengthy review processes.**

An impact of climate change is a greater likelihood that the frequency of hazardous heat islands in urban areas will increase. The term “heat island” refers to urban air and surface temperatures that are higher than the nearby Rural Areas. Heat islands form as cities replace natural land cover with pavement, buildings, and other infrastructure. The heat island effect can be reduced by requiring cool roofs, cool pavements, and vegetation.

**U-112                    King County will work with cities, residents, and developers to design communities and development projects that employ techniques that reduce heat absorption throughout the community and the region.**

King County is successfully promoting and supporting policies and programs that focus on the health of students at school. However, the school environment is only one aspect of the overall health of the student. The environment surrounding a school and the routes a typical student travels to school or nearby school-related destinations also must be considered, including managing density of retail uses that primarily sell alcohol, tobacco, and low-nutrition products; enhancing green space sites; creating safe areas to walk and bicycle to school; providing for transit and related facilities; and, reducing exposure to environmental toxins and other types of unsafe environments

**U-113                    King County should promote children’s health by encouraging and supporting land uses in the environment surrounding a school and on travel routes to schools that complement and strengthen other formal programs, such as Safe Routes to School.**

## **2.            Urban Growth Area Targets**

The Countywide Planning Policies (CPPs) require the county and its cities to plan for future housing and employment growth target ranges for each jurisdiction. In 1994, the Growth Management Planning Council adopted household and job targets for each jurisdiction to distribute the expected growth.

Growth target ranges represent jurisdictions' policy choices regarding the amount of growth they intend to accommodate. King County and its cities have also developed targets for employment to foster a local

balance between population and employment. The countywide and unincorporated King County's housing growth target and employment targets are contained in the CPPs.

In November 2009, a new set of housing and job growth targets were established to guide growth for the period 2006-2031. Each urban jurisdiction including unincorporated King County was assigned a growth target based on land capacity and other factors. The complete table of city growth targets approved in December 2010 is included in this chapter to provide the regional context for the unincorporated area targets.

- U-114**            **Land use policies and regulations shall accommodate a growth target of approximately 12,470 housing units and approximately 9,060 jobs by 2031, established in the Countywide Planning Policies for the unincorporated portion of the Urban Growth Area.**
  
- U-115**            **King County shall provide adequate land capacity for residential, commercial, industrial and other non-residential growth in the urban unincorporated area. This land capacity shall include both redevelopment opportunities as well as opportunities for development on vacant lands.<sup>2</sup>**
  
- U-116**            **King County shall use housing and employment targets to implement the comprehensive plan in urban communities. The targets allocated to subareas of unincorporated King County will be monitored and may be refined through future planning that includes communities, affected cities and service providers.**
  
- U-117**            **King County should work the Growth Management Planning Council to adopt Countywide Planning Policies that support annual ratifications to allocated housing and employment growth targets for cities and the county.**

The following table, "King County Growth Targets Update", establishes a breakdown by jurisdiction and subarea of the new King County household targets for the Urban Growth Area. The targets in this table reflect annexations and incorporations that have occurred since the adoption of this plan in 1994, up through annexations in 2010 and 2011. The table further provides guidance, in the PAA columns, for transfer of portions of growth targets into cities when annexation takes place in the future. Although they may be refined through future planning with affected communities and adjacent cities, these ranges are intended to be used as a guide for future planning of land uses and decisions on services and

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<sup>2</sup> As amended by Ordinance 17687.

infrastructure.

**King County Growth Targets Update (2006-2031)\***

Regional Geography City / Subarea	Housing Target	PAA Housing Target	Employment Target	PAA Emp. Target
	Net New Units	Net New Units	Net New Jobs	Net New Jobs
	2006-2031	2006-2031	2006-2031	2006-2031
<b>Metropolitan Cities</b>				
Bellevue	17,000	290	53,000	
Seattle	86,000		146,700	
<b>Total</b>	<b>103,000</b>		<b>199,700</b>	
<b>Core Cities</b>				
Auburn	9,620		19,350	-
Bothell	3,000	810	4,800	200
Burien	3,900		4,600	
Federal Way	8,100	2,390	12,300	290
Kent	7,800	1,560	13,200	290
Kirkland	7,200	1,370	20,200	650
Redmond	10,200	640	23,000	
Renton	14,835	3,895	29,000	470
SeaTac	5,800		25,300	
Tukwila	4,800	50	15,500	2,050
<b>Total</b>	<b>75,255</b>		<b>167,250</b>	
<b>Larger Cities</b>				
Des Moines	3,000		5,000	
Issaquah	5,750	290	20,000	
Kenmore	3,500		3,000	
Maple Valley**	1,800	1,060	2,000	
Mercer Island	2,000		1,000	
Sammamish	4,000	350	1,800	
Shoreline	5,000		5,000	
Woodinville	3,000		5,000	
<b>Total</b>	<b>28,050</b>		<b>42,800</b>	
<b>Small Cities</b>				
Algona	190		210	
Beaux Arts	3		3	
Black Diamond	1,900		1,050	
Carnation	330		370	
Clyde Hill	10		-	
Covington	1,470		1,320	
Duvall	1,140		840	
Enumclaw	1,425		735	
Hunts Point	1		-	
Lake Forest Park	475		210	
Medina	19		-	
Milton	50	90	160	
Newcastle	1,200		735	
Normandy Park	120		65	
North Bend	665		1,050	
Pacific	285	135	370	
Skykomish	10		-	
Snoqualmie	1,615		1,050	
Yarrow Point	14		-	
<b>Total</b>	<b>10,922</b>		<b>8,168</b>	
<b>Urban Unincorporated</b>				
Potential Annexation Areas	12,930		3,950	
North Highline	1,360		2,530	
Bear Creek UrbanPlannedDev	910		3,580	
Unclaimed Urban Unincorp.	650		90	
<b>Total</b>	<b>15,850</b>		<b>10,150</b>	
<b>King County UGA Total</b>	<b>233,077</b>		<b>428,068</b>	

\*Growth Management Planning Council adopted Oct 2009 and ratified by cities in 2010.  
Targets base year is 2006. PAA / city targets have been adjusted to reflect annexations through 2008.

\*\* Target for Maple Valley PAA is contingent on approval of city-county joint plan for Summit Place.

## **Residential Land Use**

Housing is the major use of urban land in King County, occupying well over half of the county's developed land area. This plan supports the creation of a full range of housing choices for county residents.

**U-118**                    **New residential development in the Urban Growth Area should occur where facilities and services can be provided at the lowest public cost and in a timely fashion. The Urban Growth Area should have a variety of housing types and prices, including mobile home parks, multifamily development, townhouses and small-lot, single-family development.**

### **1. Residential Densities**

The density of eight homes per acre expressed below is a long-term goal and would be an average density of single-family and multifamily developments. Single-family homes will continue to account for most of the land area used for new development in the county. This plan proposes ways to develop single-family homes and densities so that urban land is used more efficiently, homes are more affordable, more housing choices are available and densities are adequate to support effective and efficient transit services. Housing at higher densities can promote public health by creating urban communities that support public transportation and nearby services and thereby increase opportunities for walking or biking.

**U-119**                    **King County shall seek to achieve through future planning efforts over the next twenty years, an average zoning density of at least eight homes per acre in the Urban Growth Area through a mix of densities and housing types. A lower density zone may be used to recognize existing subdivisions with little or no opportunity for infill or redevelopment.**

**U-120**                    **King County should limit the application of the urban residential, low land use designation to protect: floodplains, critical aquifer recharge areas, high function wetlands and unstable slopes from degradation, and the link these environmental features have to a network of open space, fish and wildlife habitat and urban separators. The residential density for land so designated should be maintained at one unit per acre, and lands that are sending sites under the Transfer of Development Rights Program may transfer density at a rate of at least four units per acre.**

- U-121**                    **Multifamily housing in the Urban Growth Area should be sited as follows:**
- a.**        **In or next to unincorporated activity centers or next to community or neighborhood business centers;**
  - b.**        **In mixed-use developments in centers and activity areas; and**
  - c.**        **On small, scattered parcels integrated into existing urban residential areas. New multifamily housing should be built to the scale and design of the existing community or neighborhood, while contributing to an area-wide density and development pattern that supports transit and allows for a range of housing choices. Over time, zoning should encourage a larger proportion of multifamily housing to be located on small scattered sites rather than on larger sites.**

**U-122**                    **Land zoned for multifamily uses should be converted to nonresidential zone categories only after new multifamily sites are identified and rezoned to replace the multifamily housing capacity lost due to the conversion.**

## **2.        Minimum Density**

In accordance with Countywide Planning Policy, King County has included a minimum density requirement in its zoning regulations for all new urban residential development with a zoned density of four or more homes per acre.

- U-123**                    **King County should apply minimum density requirements to all urban residential zones of four or more homes per acre, except under limited circumstances such as the:**
- a.**        **Presence of significant physical constraints, or**
  - b.**        **Implementation of standards applied to a property through a property-specific development condition, special district overlay, or subarea plan.**

## **3.        Increases of Zoning Density**

While King County supports higher densities in the urban areas, increased densities that would be incompatible with existing neighborhoods or cause significant impacts on roads, services and the environment are discouraged. The following policies will guide decisions on application of densities and proposed rezones.

**U-124**                    **Requests for increases in density of urban residential property zoned for one dwelling unit per acre shall be considered unless the property meets the criteria low land use designation in set forth in Policy U-120.**

**U-125**                    **King County should support proposed zoning changes to increase density within the Urban Area when consistent with the King County Comprehensive Plan Land Use Map and when the following conditions are present:**

- a.        The development will be compatible with the character and scale of the surrounding neighborhood;**
- b.        Urban public facilities and services are adequate, consistent with adopted levels of service and meet GMA concurrency requirements, including King County transportation concurrency standards;**
- c.        The proposed density change will not increase unmitigated adverse impacts on environmentally critical areas, either on site or in the vicinity of the proposed development;**
- d.        The proposed density increase will be consistent with or contribute to achieving the goals and policies of this comprehensive plan, and subarea plan, if applicable; or**
- e.        The development is within walking distance of transit corridors or transit activity centers, retail and commercial activities, and is accessible to parks and other recreation opportunities.**

**U-126**                    **King County, when evaluating rezone requests for increases in density, shall work with the city whose PAA includes the property under review to ensure compatibility with the city’s pre-annexation zoning for the area. King County shall also notify special purpose districts and local providers of urban utility services and should work with these service providers on issues raised by the proposal.**

As part of its voluntary program with the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) to reduce aircraft noise inside single-family residences surrounding the King County International Airport, the County completed a study of noise levels resulting from airport use. As part of that study, noise contours were developed and plotted as part of a Noise Mitigation Boundary. Over the course of several years and with available FAA funding, the County will oversee a program to sound-insulate homes within the various identified contours, with the homes located in the highest noise contour first.

**U-127**                    **King County shall not support requests for residential density increases or conversion of non-residential property to residential uses on lands located within the outer boundaries of the Federal Aviation Administration approved**

**Noise Mitigation Boundary as identified by Seattle-Tacoma International Airport and King County International Airport.**

Development in the Urban Growth Area at a greater density than permitted by the minimum zoning density, but equal to or less than the maximum zoning density, will be allowed in exchange for public amenities such as low-income housing, preservation of designated historic features or extra energy conservation measures, or through the transfer of development rights from other parts of the county.

**U-128**                    **Density incentives should encourage private developers to: provide innovative affordable housing, significant open space, trails and parks; use the Transfer of Development Rights Program; locate development close to transit; participate in historic preservation; and include energy conservation measures exceeding state requirements.**

#### **4. Mixed-Used Development**

Mixed-use development combines higher density residential units with retail or office uses in the same building or within an integrated development on the same lot. Quality mixed-use developments can provide convenient shopping and services to both residents of the development and those who live nearby. They can help to build a sense of community, as neighboring merchants and residents get to know each other. Mixed-use is traditional in older downtowns and commercial areas, where offices and retail typically occupy the first floor and residences are upstairs. Mixed-use developments can promote public health and help provide mitigation for climate change by providing opportunities for people to walk or bicycle to retail shopping, such as grocery stores with fresh fruits and vegetables and locally produced value-added food products, such as cheese, meats, and preserves, and public services. If people can replace some of their driving trips with walking, biking or transit, then vehicle miles traveled will decrease. Further, by placing shopping and services close to where people live, even if some of the trips are made by auto they will be shorter than if the uses had been separated.

**U-129**                    **King County supports mixed-use developments in community and neighborhood business centers, the White Center Unincorporated Activity Center, and in areas designated commercial outside of centers.**

**U-130**                    **Design features of mixed-use developments should include the following:**

- a. Integration of the retail and/or office uses and residential units within the same building or on the same parcel;**
- b. Ground level spaces built to accommodate retail and office uses;**

- c. **Off-street parking behind or to the side of the buildings, or enclosed within buildings; and**
- d. **Opportunities to have safe, accessible pedestrian connections and bicycle facilities within the development and to adjacent residential developments.**

**U-131**            **In a mixed-use development where residential and nonresidential uses are proposed in separate structures and the residential uses are proposed to be constructed prior to the nonresidential uses, the initial review of the development should be through a process that ensures an integrated design.**

**U-132**            **In a mixed-use development, incentives such as increases in residential density or floor area ratio should be used to encourage the inclusion of public gathering spaces in the site design.**

## **5.        Urban Residential Neighborhood Design and Infill/Redevelopment**

King County residents can enjoy their urban neighborhoods both for their unique character and for the amenities they provide. Outdoor spaces need to be usable, attractive, comfortable, and enjoyable. The design of urban streets, including features such as parking strips, street trees, alleys and off-street parking all contribute to the character of urban neighborhoods. Careful site planning can incorporate neighborhood features, contribute to aesthetic value, minimize site disturbance, conserve energy and, in some cases, reduce development costs. Neighborhood shopping, grocery stores with fresh fruits and vegetables, libraries, larger parks, high schools and public golf courses are examples of uses that provide amenities for nearby residents. Small retail establishments integrated into residential development (e.g., a laundromat) can provide convenient services and help residents reduce automobile trips. Urban areas that are interesting and safe for pedestrians and bicyclists, and that provide many necessary services close to residential developments, can promote public health by increasing opportunities for physical activity during a normal day's activities.

**U-133**            **King County encourages innovative, quality infill development and redevelopment in existing urban areas. A variety of regulatory, incentive and program strategies could be considered, including:**

- a.        **Special development standards for infill sites;**
- b.        **Assembly and resale of sites to providers of affordable and healthy housing;**
- c.        **Impact mitigation fee structures that favor infill developments;**

- d. **Greater regulatory flexibility in allowing standards to be met using innovative techniques; and**
- e. **Joint public/private loan guarantee pools.**

**U-134 Single-family detached homes, townhomes, duplexes and apartments shall be allowed in all urban residential zones, provided that:**

- a. **Apartments shall not be allowed in the R-1 zone unless fifty percent or more of the site is environmentally constrained; and**
- b. **Apartments in R-1, R-4, R-6 and R-8 shall not be developed at densities in excess of 18 units per acre in the net buildable area.**

**U-135 Urban residential neighborhood design should preserve historic and natural characteristics and neighborhood identity, while providing privacy, community space, and safety and mobility for pedestrians and bicyclists.**

**U-136 Site planning tools, such as clustering, shall be permitted in order to allow preservation or utilization of unique natural features within a development.**

**U-137 New urban residential developments should provide recreational space, community facilities and neighborhood circulation for pedestrians and bicyclists to increase opportunities for physical activity.**

**U-138 Residential developments should provide a variety of housing types and lot patterns through lot clustering, flexible setback requirements and mixed attached and detached housing.**

**U-139 Nonresidential uses, such as schools, religious facilities, libraries and small-scale retail and personal services, should be integrated into urban residential neighborhoods to create viable neighborhoods with reduced dependence on the automobile. These uses should be sited, designed and scaled to be compatible with existing residential character and should provide convenient and safe walking and bicycling connections to neighboring residences.**

Multifamily residential development is important to King County's housing supply because it uses land and energy efficiently and provides opportunities for affordable rental and ownership housing. Multifamily development is defined as one building that contains two or more separate dwelling units. Multifamily developments can be apartments, duplexes, or townhouses.

**U-140**                    **Multifamily residential development should provide common and private open space; variation in facades and other building design features that may include varying window treatments, building colors and materials; and light fixtures that will give a residential scale and identity to multifamily development.**

Generally, larger parcels of buildable vacant land in the Urban Growth Area have been preferred for development. Development of these large parcels, especially for attached units at higher densities, often provoked concerns about compatibility due to their scale and design.

As larger vacant lots become increasingly scarce, attention will turn more and more towards smaller vacant lots often located within built neighborhoods (i.e., infill) and to redevelopment. Residential development proposals on small lots and redevelopment often can be an unobtrusive and desirable means of increasing density within existing neighborhoods. Infill development and redevelopment are necessary to achieve growth management objectives such as maximizing the efficient use of land and increasing the variety of housing choices and prices.

**U-141**                    **King County should support infill and redevelopment proposals that serve to improve the overall character of existing communities or neighborhoods.**

## **6. Residential Site Improvement Standards and Public Services**

The following policies govern King County land use regulations and functional plans that contain improvement standards for the review of proposed rezones, residential subdivisions, short subdivisions, multifamily buildings and construction permits.

**U-142**                    **Residential developments within the Urban Growth Area, including mobile home parks, shall provide the following improvements:**

- a. Paved streets (and alleys if appropriate), curbs and sidewalks, and internal walkways when appropriate;**
- b. Adequate parking and consideration of access to transit activity centers and transit corridors;**
- c. Street lighting and street trees;**
- d. Stormwater treatment and control;**
- e. Public water supply;**
- f. Public sewers; and**
- g. Landscaping around the perimeter and parking areas of multifamily developments.**

**U-143 Common facilities such as recreation space, internal walkways that provide convenient and safe inter- and intra-connectivity, roads, parking, and solid waste and recycling areas should be included in multifamily developments.**

Neighborhood recreation space and parks are important amenities for residents. The higher the density, the more essential such amenities become to a desirable living environment. If the site of a proposed development is large enough, a park site dedication or private park site can be required as a condition of a rezone, subdivision or site plan approval.

**U-144 Recreation space based on the size of the developments shall be provided on site, except that in limited cases, fee payments for local level park and outdoor recreation needs may be accepted by King County.**

**U-145 Recreation spaces located within a residential development, except those for elderly or other special needs populations, shall include a child's play area.**

**U-146 Recreation spaces located in residential developments in the Urban Area should include amenities such as play equipment, open grassy areas, barbecues, benches, trails and picnic tables.**

## **Commercial Land Use**

The Countywide Planning Policies call for a significant share of new jobs and housing to occur within cities and in urban centers, which are areas of concentrated employment and housing. The designated urban centers are to accommodate 15,000 jobs within a one-half-mile radius of a major transit stop, an average employment density of 50 jobs per gross acre and an average of 15 housing units per gross acre. All of the urban centers are in cities.

In addition to the urban centers, cities and unincorporated urban King County have existing intensive industrial, commercial and residential areas that will continue to grow and provide employment, services, shopping and housing opportunities, but not at the same level as urban centers. Three categories of centers are established for urban unincorporated areas of King County. Higher density, more-concentrated developed industrial and commercial areas are classified as unincorporated activity centers. Midrange centers are called community business centers and smaller, local centers are called neighborhood business centers. The locations of these centers are shown on the Urban Centers map at the end of this chapter. This plan also recognizes existing commercial and industrial development that is

outside of unincorporated activity centers, community business centers and neighborhood business centers.

**U-147**                    **Business/office park developments should be located in or adjacent to an unincorporated activity center. They may serve as a transition between office/retail areas and residential areas. They should be designed to take advantage of on-site or nearby structured parking and/or bus service and passenger facilities should be compatible with the objective of higher employment densities.**

**U-148**                    **New commercial and office development shall locate in designated unincorporated activity centers, community and neighborhood business centers, and in areas designated commercial outside of centers.**

Warehouse-style retail businesses, large retail complexes, stadiums, large churches and colleges are examples of land uses that serve as destinations from throughout the region. Such uses require a full range of urban services including transit, substantial parking, and access to arterials and freeways, and therefore should locate in the urban area where these services are available. In addition, these land uses have traffic and impervious surface impacts that are inappropriate for the Rural Area.

**U-149**                    **New facilities and businesses that draw from throughout the region, such as large retail uses, large public assembly facilities and institutions of higher education should locate in the Urban Area.**

## **1. Unincorporated Activity Centers**

Unincorporated activity centers are the primary locations for commercial and industrial development in urban unincorporated King County. Currently, White Center is the only designated unincorporated activity center, as other such centers are now parts of cities. The *White Center Community Action Plan* establishes the size and mix of uses allowed in the White Center Unincorporated Activity Center.

**U-150**                    **Unincorporated activity centers in urban areas should provide employment, housing, shopping, services and leisure-time amenities to meet the needs of the regional economy. The mix of uses may include:**

- a. Health, human service and public safety facilities;**
- b. Retail stores and services;**
- c. Professional offices;**
- d. Business/office parks;**

- e. **Multifamily housing and mixed-use developments;**
- f. **Heavy commercial and industrial uses, when there is direct freeway or rail access;**
- g. **Light manufacturing;**
- h. **Parks and open space; and**
- i. **Farmers' Markets.**

**U-151**            **Within unincorporated activity centers, the following zoning is appropriate: Urban Residential, with a density of twelve to forty-eight dwelling units per acre; Community Business; Neighborhood Business; Office and Industrial.**

**U-152**            **King County may designate new unincorporated activity centers or expand existing unincorporated activity centers only through a subarea planning process that should address:**

- a. **The relationship of the entire center to its surrounding uses;**
- b. **Availability of supporting public services;**
- c. **The function of the center to other centers in the sub-region;**
- d. **The need for additional commercial and industrial development;**
- e. **The size and boundaries of the center; and**
- f. **Zoning.**

**U-153**            **The size, uses and boundaries of unincorporated activity centers should be consistent with the following criteria:**

- a. **More than forty acres in size, excluding land needed for surface water management or protection of environmentally critical areas;**
- b. **Retail space based on the amount of residential development planned for the surrounding area to provide for community and regional shopping needs; and**
- c. **Retail space should not exceed sixty acres and 600,000 square feet unless it is served by direct freeway access by a principal or minor arterial and is well served by transit.**

**U-154**            **Design features of unincorporated activity centers should include the following:**

- a. **Safe and attractive walkways and bicycle lanes with access to each major destination including schools, community centers and commercial areas;**
- b. **Buildings close to sidewalks to promote walking and access to transit;**

- c. **Compact design with close grouping of compatible uses;**
- d. **Off-street parking in multistory structures located to the side or rear of buildings or underground;**
- e. **Public art;**
- f. **Public spaces, such as plazas and building atriums;**
- g. **Retention of attractive natural features, historic buildings and established character;**
- h. **Aesthetic design and compatibility with adjacent uses through setbacks, building orientation, landscaping and traffic control;**
- i. **Screening of unsightly views, such as heavy machinery, outdoor storage areas, loading docks and parking areas from the view of adjacent uses and from arterials; and**
- j. **Signs should be regulated to reduce glare and other adverse visual impacts on nearby residences, without limiting their potential contribution to the color and character of the center.**

**U-155**                    **Development within the designated White Center Unincorporated Activity Center, as shown on the Comprehensive Plan Land Use Map, shall be in accordance with the White Center Community Action Plan.**

**U-156**                    **The White Center Community Action Plan establishes the following zoning as appropriate within the White Center Unincorporated Activity Center: Urban Residential, with a density of twelve to forty-eight dwelling units per acre, Neighborhood Business, Community Business, Office and Industrial.**

**U-157**                    **In the White Center Unincorporated Activity Center, existing Industrial uses should be zoned and regulated to preserve their use into the future. Conversion of industrial properties to other uses shall be strictly limited.**

White Center was selected as one of three case study areas for further study as part of the King County Land Use Transportation Air Quality and Health project, now known as HealthScape. Information from the study showed the types of changes in the urban form of the area and in the transportation system that can lead to an increase in public health. These results have been used to guide development in the White Center area and to prioritize capital expenditures such as the construction of the 98<sup>th</sup> Street Connector, which is a pedestrian walkway between Greenbridge and the commercial area of White Center.

**U-158** In the White Center Unincorporated Activity Center, new major residential developments should include low-impact design features and should promote public health by increasing opportunities for physical activity in daily life. The development should include: safe walkways and bicycle facilities with access to commercial areas, schools, and community facilities; trails; and pocket parks.

## **2. Community Business Centers**

Community business centers are primarily retail developments designed to serve a nearby market area of 15,000 to 40,000 people. Community business centers should be sited so they do not adversely affect other centers and are easily accessible by motor vehicles or public transportation, walking or bicycling. Community business centers should be designed to be compatible with adjacent residential uses, and should promote pedestrian and bicycle access.

**U-159** Community business centers in the urban areas should provide primarily shopping and personal services for nearby residents. Offices and multifamily housing are also encouraged. Industrial and heavy commercial uses should be excluded. Community business centers should include the following mix of uses:

- a. Retail stores and services;
- b. Professional offices;
- c. Community and human services;
- d. Multifamily housing as part of a mixed-use development, with residential densities of at least 12 units per acre when well served by transit; and
- e. Stands or small outlets that offer fresh fruit and produce and locally produced value-added food products.

**U-160** Designated community business centers are shown on the Comprehensive Plan Land Use Map. Expansion of existing or designation of new community business centers shall be permitted only through a subarea planning process. Redevelopment of existing community business centers is encouraged.

**U-161** Within community business centers, the following zoning is appropriate: Neighborhood Business, Community Business and Office.

**U-162** The specific size and boundaries of community business centers should be consistent with the criteria listed below.

- a. **More than ten acres and up to 40 acres in size, excluding land needed for surface water management or protection of environmentally critical areas;**
- b. **Designed to provide shopping and services for a market population of 15,000 to 40,000 people;**
- c. **Located one to three miles from an unincorporated activity center or from another community business center. May be located less than two miles from a neighborhood business center when it is demonstrated the neighborhood business center will not be adversely affected; and**
- d. **Must be located at the intersection of two principal or minor arterials.**

**U-163 Design features of community business centers should include the following:**

- a. **Safe and attractive walkways and bicycle lanes;**
- b. **Close grouping of stores;**
- c. **Off-street parking behind or to the side of buildings, or enclosed within buildings;**
- d. **Public art;**
- e. **Retention of attractive natural features, historic buildings and established character;**
- f. **Landscaping, which may include planters and street trees;**
- g. **Appropriate signage;**
- h. **Public seating areas; and**
- i. **Architectural features that provide variation between buildings or contiguous storefronts.**

### **3. Neighborhood Business Centers**

Neighborhood business centers are shopping areas offering convenience goods and services to local residents. Neighborhood business centers are intended to be small and compatible with adjacent residential areas and often are used on the way to another destination (for example, a fuel stop before or after commuting). Sometimes they consist of only one use or business. Neighborhood business centers should be designed to promote pedestrian and bicycle access.

**U-164 Neighborhood business centers in urban areas should include primarily retail stores and offices designed to provide convenient shopping and other services for nearby residents. Industrial and heavy commercial uses should be excluded. Neighborhood business centers should include the following mix of uses:**

- a. **Retail stores and services;**
- b. **Professional offices;**
- c. **Multifamily housing as part of a mixed-use development with residential densities up to 12 units per acre when convenient to a minor arterial. Higher densities are appropriate when the center is a walkable community, convenient to a principal arterial or well-served by transit; and**
- d. **Farmers' Markets.**

**U-165** Designated neighborhood business centers are shown on the Comprehensive Plan Land Use Map. Expansion of existing or the designation of new neighborhood business centers shall only be permitted through a subarea planning process. Redevelopment of existing neighborhood business centers is encouraged.

**U-166** Within neighborhood business centers, the following zoning is appropriate: **Neighborhood Business and Office.**

**U-167** The specific size and boundaries of neighborhood business centers should be consistent with the criteria listed below.

- a. **Ten acres or less in size, excluding land needed for surface water management or protection of environmentally sensitive features;**
- b. **Designed to provide convenience shopping for a market population of 8,000 to 15,000 people;**
- c. **Located within walking distance of transit corridors or transit activity centers; and**
- d. **Located one to three miles from another neighborhood business center.**

**U-168** Design features of neighborhood business centers should include the following:

- a. **Safe and attractive walkways and bicycle facilities;**
- b. **Close grouping of stores;**
- c. **Off-street parking behind or to the side of buildings, or enclosed within buildings;**
- d. **Public art;**
- e. **Retention of attractive natural features, historic buildings or established character;**

- f. Landscaping, which may include planters and street trees;
- g. Appropriate signage;
- h. Public seating areas; and
- i. Architectural features that provide variation between buildings or contiguous storefronts.

#### **4. Commercial Development Outside of Centers**

The Commercial Outside of Center (CO) Land Use designation recognizes commercial uses predating the adoption of the county's first GMA-mandated comprehensive plan. These isolated areas were and remain located outside a designated urban center (unincorporated activity center, community business center or neighborhood business center). The CO designation is also appropriate as a transitional designation within certain potential annexation areas. In these areas, the county will utilize the memorandum of understanding and applicable comprehensive plan policies to determine the appropriate zoning to implement this transitional designation.

**U-169 Stand-alone commercial developments legally established outside designated centers in the Urban Growth Area may be recognized with the CO designation and appropriate commercial zoning, including any identified potential zoning classification. An action to implement a potential zoning classification shall not require a detailed subarea plan, if the current CO designation is to remain unchanged. When more detailed subarea plans are prepared, these developments may be designated as centers and allowed to grow if appropriate, or may be encouraged to redevelop consistent with the residential density and design policies of the comprehensive plan.**

**U-170 The CO designation may be applied as a transitional designation in Potential Annexation Areas identified in a signed memorandum of understanding between a city and the county for areas with a mix of urban uses and zoning in order to facilitate the joint planning effort directed by the memorandum of understanding. Zoning to implement this transitional designation should recognize the mix of existing and planned uses. No zone changes to these properties to allow other nonresidential uses, or zone changes to allow expansion of existing nonresidential uses onto other properties, should occur unless or until a subarea planning process with the city is completed.**

#### **5. Commercial Site Improvement Standards and Public Services**

The following policy governs King County land use regulations and functional plans that contain improvement standards for the review of proposed rezones and commercial construction permits.

- U-171**                    **Commercial, retail and industrial developments should foster community, create enjoyable outdoor areas and balance needs of automobile movement with pedestrian and bicycle mobility and safety. Commercial and industrial developments shall provide the following improvements:**
- a.        Paved streets;**
  - b.        Sidewalks and bicycle lanes in commercial and retail areas;**
  - c.        Adequate parking for employees and business users;**
  - d.        Landscaping along or within streets, sidewalks and parking areas to provide an attractive appearance;**
  - e.        Adequate stormwater control, including curbs, gutters and stormwater retention facilities;**
  - f.        Public water supply;**
  - g.        Public sewers; and**
  - h.        Controlled traffic access to arterials and intersections.**

## **6.        Industrial Development**

Maintaining a strong industrial land supply is an important factor in maintaining the county's economic base and providing family-wage jobs. The following policies assure that industrial development is compatible with adjacent land uses while providing appropriate services for employees. In addition, King County is committed to helping return contaminated sites to productive use.

- U-172**                    **Within the UGA, but outside unincorporated activity centers, properties with existing industrial uses shall be protected. The county may use tools such as special district overlays to identify them for property owners and residents of surrounding neighborhoods.**
- U-173**                    **Industrial development should have direct access from arterials or freeways. Access points should be combined and limited in number to allow smooth traffic flow on arterials. Access through residential areas should be avoided.**
- U-174**                    **Small amounts of retail and service uses in industrial areas may be allowed for convenience to employees and users.**

**U-175** King County, in collaboration with cities and the development community, should create and fund a process to clean up and reclaim polluted industrial areas in order to expand the land available for industrial development.

## **Urban Planned Developments and Fully Contained Communities**

Within the designated UGA, development of large land ownerships may offer the public and the property owner opportunities to realize mutual benefits when such development is coordinated through the review process as an Urban Planned Development (UPD). Possible public benefits include greater preservation of public open space, proponent contributions to major capital improvement needs, diversity in housing types and affordability, and the establishment of the specific range and intensity of uses for the entire Urban Planned Development. A property owner and the public could benefit from the efficiency of combined hearings and land use decision making, as well as the establishment of comprehensive and consistently applied project-wide mitigations guiding the review of subsequent land use approvals.

**U-176** Sites for potential Urban Planned Developments (UPDs) may be designated within the established Urban Growth Area to realize mutual benefits for the public and the property owner. Two UPD areas have been designated by the county: the Bear Creek UPD area, comprised of the Redmond Ridge (formerly known as Northridge) UPD, the Trilogy at Redmond Ridge (formerly known as Blakely Ridge) UPD, and the proposed Redmond Ridge East UPD; and Cougar Mountain Village UPD. Future UPD sites in the Urban Growth Area shall be designated through a subarea planning process, or through a comprehensive plan amendment initiated by the property owner.

**U-177** The creation of Urban Planned Developments is intended to serve as a model for achieving a mix of uses, appropriate development patterns, and high quality design, as well as providing for public benefits that shall include:

- a. Open space and critical areas protection;**
- b. Diversity in housing types and affordability;**
- c. Quality site design; and**
- d. Transit and nonmotorized transportation opportunities.**

The Bear Creek UPD area was first designated for urban development in 1989 in the Bear Creek Community Plan. The urban designation of this area under the GMA was established in the Countywide Planning Policies in 1992 and affirmed in 1994. The Bear Creek UPD area was included in the Urban Growth Area designated in the 1994 King County Comprehensive Plan. Since the adoption of the 1994

Comprehensive Plan, both Redmond Ridge and Trilogy have been approved as Urban Planned Developments and King County has entered into development agreements governing the development of these sites. The legality of these development approvals was challenged and these legal challenges have been rejected. Therefore, these sites will be, and are being, developed at urban densities.

Through the adoption of the King County Comprehensive Plan 2000 Update, King County reaffirmed its urban designation of the Bear Creek UPD area. In addition to the reasons that led the county (and the region) to originally include this area within the county's UGA, when the county adopted the 2000 update, it noted that: two sites within this area had been approved for urban development after the adoption of the original GMA comprehensive plan; significant infrastructure improvements had been made at these sites; and the ultimate development of these sites was proceeding in accordance with issued permit approvals. The existence of these urban improvements further supported a conclusion that this area is characterized by urban growth within the meaning of the GMA and was therefore appropriately included within the county's UGA.

Since the county considered and adopted the 2000 update, significant development within the Bear Creek UPD area has taken place. The UPD permits approved by the county required the construction of infrastructure needed to support urban development of the Bear Creek UPD area. Those infrastructure improvements have now been completed or are under construction. This includes sanitary sewer trunk lines and pump stations; water trunk lines, pump stations, and storage facilities; stormwater collection, detention, treatment and discharge facilities; other utilities; a park and open space system linked by trails; and required road improvements. In addition, King County has granted final plat approval for lots for more than 2,100 of the dwelling units approved by the Redmond Ridge and Trilogy UPD permits and more than 1,600 of those dwelling units have been built, are under construction, or have been permitted. Furthermore, major community facilities and services such as the 18-hole golf course and clubhouse, the Redmond Ridge Community Center, and the retail center and grocery store have been completed or are under construction. All of these developments support the conclusion that the Redmond Ridge and Trilogy UPD sites are now fully characterized by and irrevocably committed to urban growth, and the county therefore reaffirms its urban designation of the Bear Creek UPD area.

The urban designation of the Bear Creek area includes one portion of the original urban area that has not yet been approved for development. However, this area, now referred to as Redmond Ridge East, is the subject of pending applications for approval of a UPD permit and an FCC permit. Those permits would authorize the urban development of Redmond Ridge East. Redmond Ridge East would be served by the urban infrastructure that has already been constructed to serve the Redmond Ridge and Trilogy UPD sites. The county reaffirms its urban designation of the Redmond Ridge East for the following reasons: this site has always been treated by King County as part of the Bear Creek UPD urban area; this site is

adjacent to the urban development that has already occurred and that will continue to occur at Trilogy and Redmond Ridge; this site is located in relationship to the rest of the Bear Creek UPD area so as to be appropriate for urban growth; and this site is an area that will be served by existing urban public facilities and services that have been provided in accordance with Trilogy and Redmond Ridge UPD permit requirements.

The Growth Management Act allows counties to establish a process, as part of the UGA designation, for reviewing proposals to authorize new Fully Contained Communities (FCC). Criteria for approval of FCCs are contained in RCW 36.70A.350. If a county establishes in its comprehensive plan a process for authorizing FCCs, it must adopt procedures for approving FCCs in its development regulations. King County has established a new FCC consisting of the Bear Creek UPD area.

- U-178**                    **King County has established a Fully Contained Community. This one area is designated through this plan and is shown on the Land Use Map as the urban planned community of the Bear Creek UPD area comprised of Trilogy at Redmond Ridge, Redmond Ridge, and Redmond Ridge East Urban Planned Development sites. Nothing in these policies shall affect the continued validity of the approved Urban Planned Development permits for these sites. This FCC designation may be implemented by separate or coordinated FCC permits.**
- U-179**                    **The population, household, and employment growth targets and allocations for the county's UGA in this plan include the Bear Creek UPD area. Accordingly, the requirements in RCW 36.70A.350(2) that the county reserve a portion of the 20-year population projection for allocation to new Fully Contained Communities has been satisfied.**
- U-180**                    **The review and approval process for a Fully Contained Community (FCC) permit shall be the same as that for an Urban Planned Development (UPD) permit, except the following additional criteria shall be met, pursuant to the provisions of RCW 36.70A.350:**
- a.        New infrastructure (including transportation and utilities infrastructure) is provided for and impact fees are established and imposed on the FCC consistent with the requirements of RCW 82.02.050;**
  - b.        Transit-oriented site planning and traffic demand management programs are implemented in the FCC. Pedestrian, bicycle, and high occupancy vehicle facilities are given high priority in design and management of the FCC;**

- c. **Buffers are provided between the FCC and adjacent non-FCC areas. Perimeter buffers located within the perimeter boundaries of the FCC delineated boundaries, consisting of either landscaped areas with native vegetation or natural areas, shall be provided and maintained to reduce impacts on adjacent lands;**
- d. **A mix of uses is provided to offer jobs, housing, and services to the residents of the new FCC. No particular percentage formula for the mix of uses should be required. Instead, the mix of uses for a FCC should be evaluated on a case-by-case basis, in light of the geography, market demand area, demographics, transportation patterns, and other relevant factors affecting the proposed FCC. Service uses in the FCC may also serve residents outside the FCC, where appropriate;**
- e. **Affordable housing is provided within the new FCC for a broad range of income levels, including housing affordable by households with income levels below and near the median income for King County;**
- f. **Environmental protection has been addressed and provided for in the new FCC, at levels at least equivalent to those imposed by adopted King County environmental regulations;**
- g. **Development regulations are established to ensure urban growth will not occur in adjacent nonurban areas. Such regulations shall include but are not limited to: rural zoning of adjacent Rural Areas; FCC permit conditions requiring sizing of FCC water and sewer systems so as to ensure urban growth will not occur in adjacent nonurban areas; and/or FCC permit conditions prohibiting connection by property owners in the adjacent Rural Area (except public school sites) to the FCC sewer and water mains or lines;**
- h. **Provision is made to mitigate impacts of the FCC on designated agricultural lands, forest lands, and mineral resource lands; and**
- i. **The plan for the new FCC is consistent with the development regulations established for the protection of critical areas by King County pursuant to RCW 36.70A.170.**

**For purposes of evaluating a FCC permit the following direction is provided: The term "fully contained" is not intended to prohibit all interaction between a FCC and adjacent lands but to limit impacts on adjacent lands and contain them within the development site as much as possible. "Fully contained" should be achieved through the**

**imposition of development conditions that limit impacts on adjacent and nearby lands and do not increase pressures on adjacent lands for urban development. "Fully contained" is not intended to mandate that all utilities and public services needed by an urban population both start and end within the property (since sewer, water, power, and roads, are of such a nature that the origin and/or outfall cannot reasonably exist within the property boundaries), but that the costs and provisions for those utilities and public services that are generated primarily by the FCC (schools, police, parks, employment, retail needs) be reasonably accommodated within its boundaries and not increase pressure for more urban development on adjacent properties.**

**U-181**                    **Except for existing Fully Contained Community designations, no new Fully Contained Communities shall be approved in King County.**

## **Urban Separators and the Four-to-One Program**

The Countywide Planning Policies call for the county and cities to implement urban separators. Different from the Rural Area and Resource Lands, these are low-density areas within the Urban Growth Area that create open space corridors, provide a visual contrast to continuous development and reinforce the unique identities of communities. Urban separators can play a significant role in preserving environmentally critical areas and in providing habitat for fish and wildlife. They also provide recreational benefits, such as parks and trails, and meet the Growth Management Act's requirement for greenbelts and open space in the Urban Growth Area. Urban Separators are mapped on the Land Use 2008 map in Chapter 1.

**U-182**                    **Urban separators are corridors of land that define community or municipal identities and boundaries, provide visual breaks in the urban landscape, and link parks and open space within and outside the Urban Growth Area. These urban corridors should include and link parks and other lands that contain significant environmentally sensitive features, provide wildlife habitat or critical resource protection, contain defining physical features, or contain historic resources. The residential density for land so designated should be maintained at one unit per acre, and lands that are sending sites under the Transfer of Development Rights Program may transfer density at a rate of at least four units per acre.**

**U-183** King County should actively pursue designating urban separators in the unincorporated area and work with the cities to establish permanent urban separators within the unincorporated area that link with and enhance King County's urban separator corridors.

**U-184** Designated urban separators should be preserved through park, trail and open space acquisitions; incentive programs such as the Transfer of Development Rights program; the Public Benefit Rating System program; and regulatory measures.

While urban separators complement the regional open space system by helping to define urban communities, the King County Four-to-One Program provides an opportunity to add land to the regional open space system through the dedication of permanent open space. The purpose of the program is to create a contiguous band of open space, running north and south along the main Urban Growth Area Boundary. Changes to the UGA through this program are processed as Land Use Amendments to the King County Comprehensive Plan, subject to the provisions in K.C.C. chapter 20.18.

**U-185** Through the Four-to-One Program, King County shall actively pursue dedication of open space along the original Urban Growth Area line adopted in the 1994 King County Comprehensive Plan. Through this program, one acre of Rural Area land may be added to the Urban Growth Area in exchange for a dedication to King County of four acres of permanent open space. Land added to the Urban Growth Area for naturally appearing drainage facilities in support of its development does not require dedication of permanent open space.

**U-186** King County shall evaluate Four-to-One proposals for both quality of open space and feasibility of urban development. The highest-quality proposals shall be recommended for adoption as amendments to the Urban Growth Area. Lands preserved as open space shall retain their Rural Area designations and should generally be configured in such a way as to connect with open space on adjacent properties.

**U-187** King County shall use the following criteria for evaluating open space in Four-to-One proposals:

- a. Quality of fish and wildlife habitat areas;
- b. Connections to regional open space systems;

- c. Protection of wetlands, stream corridors, ground water and water bodies;
- d. Unique natural, biological, cultural, historical, or archeological features;
- e. Size of proposed open space dedication and connection to other open space dedications along the Urban Growth Area line; and
- f. The land proposed as open space shall remain undeveloped, except for those uses allowed in U-188.

**U-188**

King County shall preserve the open space acquired through this program primarily as natural areas, passive recreation sites or resource lands for farming or forestry. King County may allow the following additional uses only if located on a small portion of the open space, provided that these uses are found to be compatible with the site's natural open space values and functions such as those listed in the preceding policy:

- a. Trails;
- b. Compensatory mitigation of wetland losses on the urban designated portion of the project, consistent with the King County Comprehensive Plan and the Critical Area Ordinance; and
- c. Active recreation uses not to exceed five percent of the total open space area. Support services and facilities for the active recreation uses may locate within the active recreation area only, and shall not exceed five percent of the active recreation area. An active recreation area shall not be used to satisfy the active recreation requirements for the urban designated portion of the project as required by K.C.C. Title 21A.

**U-189**

Land added to the Urban Growth Area under the Four-to-One Program shall have a minimum density of four dwellings per acre and shall be physically contiguous to the original Urban Growth Area, unless there are limitations due to the presence of critical areas, and shall be able to be served by sewers and other efficient urban services and facilities; provided that such sewer and other urban services and facilities shall be provided directly from the urban area and shall not cross the open space or rural area. Drainage facilities to support the urban development shall be located within the urban portion of the development. In some cases, lands must meet affordable housing requirements under this program. The total area added to the Urban Growth Area as a result of this policy shall not exceed 4,000 acres.

**U-190**

**King County shall amend the Urban Growth Area to add rural lands to the UGA consistent with Policy U-185 during the annual comprehensive plan amendment process. Open space dedication shall occur at final formal plat recording. If the applicant decides not to pursue urban development or fails to record the final plat prior to expiration of preliminary plat approval, the urban properties shall be restored to a rural designation during the next annual review of the King County Comprehensive Plan.**

## II. Potential Annexation Areas

The annexation of urban unincorporated areas is good public policy. The State Growth Management Act and the regionally adopted Countywide Planning Policies stipulate that counties are the appropriate providers of regional services and of local services to the Rural Area. For their part, cities are the appropriate providers of local urban services to all areas within the designated urban growth boundary. This logical split of government services is in part a reflection of the greater taxing authority afforded to cities by the state Legislature. County taxing authority remains similar to what was historically adopted in the state constitution. Annexation is a means to achieve the desired governmental service and land use vision set forth in regional policy and state law.

Although it is the policy of the county to support and promote annexation, its formal ability to do so is extremely limited. State laws provide the cities, county residents and property owners with the authority to initiate the annexation process. A successful annexation initiative depends on establishing a collaborative and ongoing dialogue between the three affected interest groups: residents, the county, and the affected city. However, King County has a successful history of engaging in annexation discussions with urban unincorporated area residents. Most recently, from 2008 to 2011, there have been five major annexations:

- Lea Hill and Auburn West Hill into Auburn;
- Benson Hill into Renton;
- North Highline Area X into Burien;
- Panther Lake into Kent; and
- Juanita-Finn Hill-Kingsgate into Kirkland.

As a result of these and some smaller annexations, in 2011 King County's urban unincorporated population dropped by over 100,000 persons from its 2007 level, to an estimated population of 129,900 (comparable to the population of Bellevue, the fifth largest city in the state).

The land base remaining in the county's unincorporated urban areas is primarily residential, with limited amounts of commercial and retail development. Much of the urban unincorporated area is made up of geographically isolated islands surrounded by cities or adjacent to the urban growth boundary. Because these areas are scattered across the county, the provision of local services is costly. The lack of a substantive urban unincorporated area tax base exacerbates these difficulties and covering the cost of serving these areas reduces the amount of revenue available for regional services and for local services in the Rural Area. Therefore, King County has a strong fiscal interest in seeing the remaining urban unincorporated areas annexed to cities within the next several years.

The policies in this section are intended to guide the county's decision making on annexation-related issues to ensure the needs of citizens in the urban unincorporated area are considered, and that a smooth transition from county to city government occurs.

- U-201**            **In order to meet the Growth Management Act and the regionally adopted Countywide Planning Policies goal of becoming a regional service provider for all county residents and a local service provider in the Rural Area, King County shall encourage annexation of the remaining urban unincorporated area. The county may also act as a contract service provider where mutually beneficial.**
- U-202**            **To help create an environment that is supportive of annexations, King County shall work with cities and with Unincorporated Area Councils, neighborhood groups, local business organizations, public service providers and other stakeholders on annexation-related activities. King County will also seek changes at the state level that would facilitate annexation of urban unincorporated areas.**
- U-203**            **The Potential Annexation Areas Map adopted by the Growth Management Planning Council illustrates city-designated potential annexation areas (PAAs), contested areas (where more than one city claims a PAA), and those few areas that are unclaimed by any city. For contested areas, the county should attempt to help resolve the matter, or to enter into an interlocal agreement with each city for the purpose of bringing the question of annexation before voters. For unclaimed areas, King County should work with adjacent cities and service providers to develop a mutually agreeable strategy and time frame for annexation.**
- U-204**            **King County shall support annexation proposals that are consistent with the Countywide Planning Policies and the Washington State Growth Management Act, when the area proposed for annexation is wholly within the annexing city's officially adopted PAA, and when the area is not part of a contested area.**
- U-205**            **King County shall not support annexation proposals that would:**
- a.        Result in illogical service areas;**
  - b.        Create unincorporated islands, unless the annexation is preceded by an interlocal agreement in which the city agrees to pursue annexation of the remaining island area in a timely manner;**

- c. **Focus solely on areas that would provide a distinct economic gain for the annexing city at the exclusion of other proximate areas that should logically be included;**
- d. **Move designated Agricultural and/or Forest Production District lands into the Urban Growth Area; or**
- e. **Apply zoning to maintain or create permanent, low-density residential areas, unless such areas are part of an urban separator or are environmentally constrained, rendering higher densities inappropriate.**

**U-206 King County shall favor annexation over incorporation as the preferred method of governance transition. King County will not support incorporations when the proposed incorporation area is financially infeasible.**

**U-207 King County shall work with cities to develop pre-annexation agreements to address the transition of services from the county to the annexing cities. The development of such agreements should include a public outreach process to include but not be limited to residents and property owners in the PAAs, as well as residents and property owners in the surrounding areas. Pre-annexation agreements may address a range of considerations, including but not limited to:**

- a. **Establishing a financing partnership between the county, city and other service providers to address needed infrastructure;**
- b. **Providing reciprocal notification of development proposals in PAAs, and opportunities to identify and/or provide mitigation associated with such development;**
- c. **Supporting the city's desire, to the extent possible, to be the designated sewer or water service provider within the PAA, where this can be done without harm to the integrity of existing systems and without significantly increasing rates;**
- d. **Assessing the feasibility and/or desirability of reverse contracting in order for the city to provide local services on the county's behalf prior to annexation, as well as the feasibility and/or desirability of the county continuing to provide some local services on a contract basis after annexation;**
- e. **Exploring the feasibility of modifying development, concurrency and infrastructure design standards prior to annexation, when a specific and aggressive annexation timeline is being pursued;**

- f. **Assessing which county-owned properties and facilities should be transferred to city control, and the conditions under which such transfers should take place;**
- g. **Transitioning county employees to city employment where appropriate;**
- h. **Ensuring that land use plans for the annexation area are consistent with the Countywide Planning Policies with respect to planning for urban densities and efficient land use patterns; provision of urban services, affordable housing, and transportation; the protection of critical areas; and the long-term protection of urban separators;**
- i. **Continuing equivalent protection of cultural resources, and county landmarks and historic resources listed on the King County Historic Resource Inventory;**
- j. **Maintaining existing equestrian facilities and establishing equestrian linkages; and**
- k. **Establishing a timeline for service transitions and for the annexation.**

As part of its annexation initiative, King County will explore new options for revenue generation to make the provision of services to urban unincorporated areas financially sustainable. If annexation is not occurring at a pace consistent with the intent of these policies, the county may consider utilizing its land use authority to encourage new development that will generate higher tax revenues.

**U-208                      King County shall consider initiating new subarea planning processes for the urban unincorporated areas to assess the feasibility of allowing additional commercial, industrial and high-density residential development through the application of new zoning.**

# III. Housing

## A. Housing Choice and Opportunity Throughout King County

Establishment of vibrant, thriving, and sustainable communities is a key goal of King County's Strategic Plan. Offering adequate choices and opportunities to fully address the spectrum of housing needs for all King County residents is an essential step toward meeting this goal. The County's Strategic Plan aligns with the Washington State Growth Management Act (GMA), VISION 2040, and the King County Countywide Planning Policies (CPPs) to encourage affordable housing. The CPPs provide a framework within which all jurisdictions are called upon to plan for a range of affordable housing choices within diverse, healthy, sustainable communities that include opportunities for employment, recreation, social interaction, and education. The King County Comprehensive Plan strengthens this connection by promoting affordable housing for all county residents through support for adequate funding, zoning, and regional cooperation to create new and diverse housing choices in communities throughout the county.

Most housing is financed by and developed in the private sector. The ability of the private sector to develop affordable housing is affected by a wide range of market forces. However, local government actions such as land-use policies, development regulations and infrastructure finance also have a significant impact on housing affordability. Public funding and incentive programs are essential to addressing the housing needs of lower-income county residents, people with special needs, elderly people, people with disabilities, people who are homeless, and growing segments of the population such as immigrant and refugee communities.

The most recent demographic data<sup>3</sup> indicate that there has been an increase in both the number and percentage of the population who are poor. The percent of persons in poverty has increased from 8.4% of the population in 2000 to 9.7% of the population in 2010. In King County outside Seattle, the poverty rate is slightly lower at 9.3%. A total of 24% of all households earn less than 50% of median income compared to 21% in 2000, and a full 40% of households earn less than 80% of median income. There has been a "thinning of the middle" in income distribution since 1990. Moderate and middle income groups (50 – 180% of median income) have decreased as a percentage of the population, while the proportion of households earning less than 50% of median income and more than 180% of median income has increased. While the population of King County has grown by more than 11% since 2000, jobs have declined by 4.5% during this past decade, leaving many workers unemployed or underemployed.

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<sup>3</sup> The 2010 U.S. Census and the 2005 – 2009 American Community Survey data are the sources for the demographic data cited here, unless otherwise specified. More details on demographics and housing needs can be found in the Housing Technical Appendix.

The percentage of persons of color in King County has increased more than three-fold in two decades: from 16% of the population in 1990 to 35.2% of the population in 2010, according to the 2010 Census. In King County outside Seattle, the increase in diversity is even more pronounced. In 2010, 35.9% of the population was persons of color compared to 23.9% in 2000. Asians were nearly 15% of the population outside Seattle, and Hispanic/Latinos constituted 10% of the population of King County outside Seattle.

Of the population under the age of 18, 47% are youth of color. In most of South Urban King County, more than 50% of all youth are persons of color. Nearly 30% of King County's population lives in households that speak a language other than English at home. The growth in immigrant families and households speaking languages other than English at home calls for a sensitivity to the particular cultural norms that may influence housing needs and choice.

The population over 65 years of age will grow by about 200,000 persons by 2025, nearly doubling the current number of seniors. From 2005 to 2009, more than 61% of seniors earned 80% of median income or less, and 22% earned 30% of median income or less. Many seniors enter retirement with limited income and financial resources that may diminish in value over time. Of the population over five years of age, approximately 13% has some kind of physical, sensory, or mental disability.

An examination of the rental housing supply in 2009 indicated that even when publicly-subsidized housing was included, there was a deficit of approximately 40,000 units for the 93,000 renters earning 40% of median income or below. Those earning 40 – 60% of median income often must compete with higher income renters for the limited quantity of rental units affordable to them, particularly in certain regions of the county.

Homeowners have seen a decline in the value of their homes in the period from 2007 through 2010, resulting in many of them owing more on their mortgage than their home is worth. Partly due to this housing finance crisis, the rate of homeownership in King County has declined from 61% in 2000 to 59% in 2010. Outside Seattle, the homeownership rate is higher, at 65%, than it is inside the city, where the rate is 48%.

Throughout King County, two-thirds of all households are made up of just one or two-persons. Seattle has a much higher rate of single-person households. Outside of Seattle 44% of all households have three or more persons.

The median price of both single family and condominium homes in King County declined from approximately \$390,000 in 2008 to about \$363,500 in 2009. Despite the downturn in housing prices, the

median-priced home in King County is generally out of reach of moderate and middle income households. To afford a home that costs \$363,500 requires an annual income of approximately \$85,000, or about 120% of King County's median household income.<sup>4</sup> The median single-family house (excluding condos) cost about \$425,000, requiring an income of \$98,000 or roughly 140% of King County's median income.

The policies in this chapter address affordable housing development, preservation and assistance programs needed to ensure safe, healthy, and adequate housing for lower-income and special needs residents.

Interjurisdictional cooperation and public/private partnerships are needed to address the full range of critical housing needs.

**U-301            King County shall work with cities, the private sector, other public agencies such as the Housing Authorities, and the non-profit sector, to encourage a wide range of housing within the Urban Growth Area that:**

- a.     Provides housing choices for people of all income levels located in areas with existing or planned transportation networks including those that make it safe and convenient to walk, bicycle, and take public transportation to work and other key destinations;**
- b.     Meets the needs of our diverse population;**
- c.     Supports economic growth; and**
- d,    Ensures an equitable and rational distribution of low-income and affordable housing throughout the county.**

**U-302            Through subarea and regional planning with cities, incentive programs and funding initiatives, King County shall plan for housing to meet the needs of all economic segments of the population throughout the Urban Growth Area and within Rural Towns. King County shall plan for construction, rehabilitation, or preservation of housing units affordable to households as follows:**

- a.     13% of housing stock should be affordable to households below 30% of the King County median income, including homeless individuals and families who may face significant barriers to finding permanent housing;**
- b.     11% of housing stock should be affordable to households between 30% and 50% of the King County median income;**

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<sup>4</sup> Median household income in King County as reported by ACS 2005 – 2009 was just under \$68,000. Median income as determined by HUD for the typical household of two to three persons was \$72,000.

- c. 16% of housing stock should be affordable to households between 50% and 80% of the King County median income;
- d. 20% of housing stock should be affordable to households between 80% and 120% of the King County median income; and
- e. 40% of housing stock should be affordable to households above 120% of the King County median income.

**U-303** King County should promote the preservation, rehabilitation, and development of affordable rental housing opportunities for households earning up to 80% of the King County median income by providing a range of incentives to private sector developers, as well as incentives and subsidies to non-profit developers.

**U-304** King County should promote the preservation, rehabilitation, and development of affordable ownership housing opportunities for households earning up to 120% of the King County median income by providing a range of incentives to private sector developers, as well as incentives and subsidies to non-profit developers.

## **B. Housing and Land Use Regulation**

Meeting these objectives will entail providing sufficient land for a variety of affordable housing, such as higher-density single-family homes, multifamily properties, manufactured housing, accessory dwelling units and mixed-use developments.

**U-305** King County, in partnership with other jurisdictions, shall evaluate achievement of countywide and local goals for housing for all economic sectors of the population by analyzing housing indicators, adopted land use regulations, actions that encourage development, and the effect of market factors on housing development. The results of this evaluation shall be used to develop new or revised policies, programs, regulations, and incentives to better meet the Countywide Planning Policies' housing goals. These may include adopting appropriate land use regulations and other actions that encourage development, rehabilitation and preservation of low- and moderate-income housing.

**U-306** King County shall assure that there is sufficient land in the unincorporated urban areas zoned to accommodate King County's share of affordable housing and provide a range of affordable housing types, including higher-density single-family homes, multifamily properties, manufactured housing, cottage housing, accessory dwelling

**units and mixed-use developments. King County should work with cities to increase opportunities for affordable housing development by assuring there is sufficient land capable of being developed for this range of housing types that are more likely to be affordable to low-, moderate- and middle-income households.**

**U-307 King County shall provide opportunities for attached and detached accessory dwelling units in urban residential areas and shall encourage all jurisdictions within King County to adopt provisions to allow accessory dwelling units in their communities.**

**U-308 King County shall promote development of attached accessory dwelling units in all urban residential zones. King County shall allow detached accessory dwelling units in all urban residential zones on lots greater than 5,000 square feet in size subject to compliance with supplemental parking, safety and setback requirements that may be required of the detached accessory dwelling unit.**

**U-309 King County should encourage land use and investment strategies to stimulate mixed-use and mixed-income developments as a way to integrate neighborhoods and increase housing and transportation choices.**

Rising development costs are sometimes associated with land acquisition, construction, financing, permit processes, roads and utilities and market demand. Although some of these cost increases fall outside the control of local governments, others are directly affected by public policy decisions. Public policies should be evaluated for implications related to the cost of housing development. Cost-saving approaches should be studied. Strategies for increasing favorable zoning, regulations and infrastructure can significantly cut housing development costs. These will help curtail rising housing costs and increase the amount of new, affordable housing units.

**U-310 King County should pursue land use policies and regulations that result in lower development costs without loss of adequate public review, environmental quality or public safety and do not reduce design quality, inhibit infrastructure financing strategies, or increase maintenance costs for public facilities.**

**U-311 King County shall continue to improve development standards to allow higher densities and flexibility of housing types in all residential zones, in order to best accommodate the environmental conditions on the site and the surrounding neighborhood when planning housing developments.**

- U-312** King County shall work with other jurisdictions to eliminate barriers for affordable and special needs housing development.
- U-313** King County shall work with other jurisdictions to encourage the use of universal design in the development of affordable housing.
- U-314** King County shall seek to minimize the time necessary to process development permits to meet affordable housing and environmental goals and community and aesthetic concerns.
- U-315** King County should encourage the formation of common development codes and standards with cities, sewer and water districts and other permitting agencies to increase predictability and reduce development costs.
- U-316** King County should develop new partnerships with public and private lending institutions to find solutions that reduce housing financing costs for both builders and consumers.

In accordance with the CPPs, VISION 2040 and federal priorities, King County intends to strengthen the linkage of affordable housing to jobs and public transportation through transit-oriented development and along transit corridors. As the population of the Puget Sound region grows, King County is expected to remain the major employment center of the region. As job growth occurs, the workers for these jobs must be accommodated with adequate opportunities for housing. The workforce of King County includes households earning a wide variety of incomes, from individuals earning minimum wage at a less than full-time job to dual- or triple-income households earning well above the County's median income. If a balance of job growth, improved public transportation, and affordable housing availability is not achieved, workers at the lower end of the income scale face particular pressures when forced to live longer distances away from their jobs. This increases pressures on transportation systems, contributes to higher energy use and greenhouse gas emissions, and reduces the time workers have for family, recreation, volunteer work, or continuing education.

- U-317** King County shall support affordable housing development that is compatible with surrounding uses by:
- a. Providing information on potential development sites;

- b. Promoting land use patterns that provide convenient connections for pedestrian and bicycle travel as well as for transit and other motorized transportation;
- c. Funding services, amenities, infrastructure and access improvements within the urban area; and
- d. Developing public financing techniques that give housing development and redevelopment in designated areas a market advantage.

**U-318** King County should support transit-oriented development that expands housing opportunities at locations near frequent transit service by engaging private and non-profit entities in an investment/development partnership. Public transit funds should be used only when it is shown that the public transit benefit of such investment is equal to or greater than the cost. King County should support efforts to incorporate affordable housing in transit-oriented development.

**U-319** King County shall work with the Growth Management Planning Council or its successor and the private sector to support development of an adequate supply of housing commensurate with job growth within the county and its cities. To attain this goal, King County shall:

- a. Support job and household growth targets and policies established in the Countywide Planning Policies;
- b. Establish performance measures to gauge how jurisdictions are accommodating growth;
- c. Participate in buildable lands inventories, market analyses and other studies to evaluate if sufficient land capacity is available for residential development; and
- d. Work with cities to ensure additional actions are taken throughout the county to accommodate and promote residential development when job growth causes great demand for housing and severe shortages in the availability of housing for new workers in the county.

**U-320** King County should work with local employers to develop affordable employer-assisted housing opportunities located within commuting distance of the employment site.

- U-321** King County should encourage affordable housing through redevelopment of nonresidential buildings, such as schools and commercial buildings, in locations suitable for housing and in ways that preserve significant historic features where appropriate.
- U-322** King County should continue to expedite plan reviews for affordable housing projects in coordination with other incentive or subsidy programs.
- U-323** King County should encourage the development, rehabilitation, and preservation of residential buildings that have shared facilities, such as single-room occupancy hotels and boarding homes, to provide opportunities for lower rents.
- U-324** King County shall provide opportunities and encourage other jurisdictions to provide opportunities for housing types that provide lower-cost ownership opportunities, including manufactured housing, condominiums, townhouses and cottage-style housing.
- U-325** Housing developments in the urban unincorporated areas, consisting of not less than 100 acres, shall provide a mix of housing types and densities, including housing that is affordable to low-, moderate-, and middle-income households. This mix should include housing opportunities for households with special needs, the elderly, and persons with disabilities.
- U-326** King County should promote the incorporation of the principles of healthy communities and housing, sustainability, and greenhouse gas emissions mitigation in affordable housing development.
- U-327** King County should support the development of affordable housing that protects residents from exposure to harmful substances and environments, reduces the risk of injury, is well-maintained, and is adaptable to all ages and abilities.
- U-328** King County should support the integration of affordable housing into healthy communities.

## **C. New Housing Models**

The characteristics of people seeking housing continue to change. Today, there are more single adults living alone or in shared housing than ever before. More than two-thirds of King County households are one- or two-person households. More families are single-parent households. Many households have two parents working full-time. As the population ages, more seniors will need housing. The population of King County is increasingly comprised of diverse racial, ethnic, and language backgrounds. While these realities may not have had a direct impact on housing needs, cultural norms can affect the type, size, and location of acceptable housing, as well as the ability of households to understand and navigate the rental market and the housing finance system.

King County can assist in the development of housing types that meet the needs of these individuals and families by funding affordable housing, supporting first-time homebuyer education, revising development standards and/or expediting permit processing. Demonstration projects can provide needed housing for low-income households and test new models for housing simultaneously.

- U-329**                    **King County should assist in development of innovative, affordable demonstration projects by exploring alternative land development, flexible development standards, and construction techniques.**
  
- U-330**                    **King County shall encourage new housing models by supporting projects such as owner-built housing, land trusts for rental and ownership housing, and other innovative developments.**
  
- U-331**                    **Within the Urban Growth Area, King County shall promote the development and expansion of land trusts that provide affordable ownership opportunities.**
  
- U-332**                    **King County should explore the feasibility of allowing five-story wood frame construction as a technique that will increase the availability of multifamily housing while lowering development costs and maintaining fire safety.**
  
- U-333**                    **King County should promote cottage-style housing development that clusters a limited number of small-scale detached units around a common green space at a density level that is up to twice that allowed by base density. The general character and size of cottage-style development should be controlled in the same manner that creates compatibility with a single-family neighborhood.**

**U-334**                    **King County should encourage development of residential communities that achieve lower prices and rents through shared common houses, open spaces and community facilities.**

## **D. Affordable Housing Development**

In King County today, a substantial need exists for low-income rental housing and for moderately priced homes that can be purchased by first-time homebuyers. In the past decade, a significant number of homeowners have lost their homes due to foreclosure and have become renters again. In the short term, those households may need affordable rents, while in the longer term they may again seek to own a moderately-priced home.

While King County has seen a growth in the percentage of smaller (one- and two-person) households, there are also some large households that need affordable housing with three or more bedrooms. Existing units will provide some of the affordable housing needed for low-income households in the future. However, with the projected growth in the number of low- to moderate-income households, prospect of increasing numbers of family and senior households with limited income, and the short supply of lower-cost housing available today, new construction must include affordable housing. Efforts to provide sufficient land and infrastructure and reduced development costs will help make new units affordable. In addition, a combination of incentive programs and funding will help keep rents affordable and expand opportunities for first-time homebuyers.

The King County Consortium is a partnership that represents unincorporated areas and most cities outside of Seattle in obtaining, administering and distributing federal, state and local funds to address housing, homeless and community development needs. The King County Consortium prepares a Consolidated Housing and Community Development Plan that outlines the needs, resources available and housing and community development goals to be achieved. An Annual Action Plan details specific housing and community development project objectives.

In the economic climate of 2007- 2010, King County has faced considerable funding challenges for developing affordable housing because of cutbacks in levels of state and federal housing funds, and the elimination or reduction of some local funding sources as well. It will require concerted effort on the part of county, city, and state representatives to develop new funding sources on the local and state levels, and to re-establish or expand federal funding levels. A variety of non-fiscal incentives are currently available to support affordable housing in King County. Other innovative tools that encourage the most efficient use of scarce funding resources should be explored.

- 335** King County should initiate and actively participate in regional solutions to critical affordable housing needs. Cities, community and housing representatives should be invited to identify and implement solutions.
- 336** King County shall work with cities and community representatives to establish new, countywide funding sources for housing development, rehabilitation, preservation, and related services, such that each city and King County contribute on an equitable basis.
- U-337** King County shall work with other jurisdictions, housing developers, and service providers throughout the state to urge federal and state government to expand both capital and operating funding for low-income housing, including low-income housing for people with special needs.
- U-338** King County should encourage and support efforts by non-profit housing developers, housing agencies, and service providers to develop long-term nongovernmental funding sources, such as planned giving, endowments, and related economic development ventures.

Incentives that will help developers provide low- and moderate-income housing include reduction in development costs or an expansion of the development potential on the property.

- U-339** Density bonuses and other incentives shall be available to both single-family and multifamily developments to promote development of affordable rental or ownership.
- U-340** King County shall exempt payment of impact fees to promote development of affordable rental or ownership housing.
- U-341** King County shall explore coordination of incentive programs with cities to develop common program guidelines and reduce administrative costs.
- U-342** King County should provide expedited building permit review for all affordable housing projects that utilize affordable housing incentive programs, subsidies, tax abatement or tax credits.

**U-343                    King County should encourage affordable housing projects that utilize affordable housing incentive programs, subsidies, tax abatement or tax credits.**

Federal, state and local housing programs provide vital assistance to low-income households. King County has used federal funds for housing for more than two decades, but they are not adequate to meet all local needs. During the past five years, King County also has used local funds for development and preservation of affordable housing. As a result, residents have more housing choices. Residents who need emergency housing can stay in the community of their choice and their children can continue to attend schools. Local housing funds have also leveraged significant private and non-profit investment as well as other public funding resources.

Housing for very low-income households is usually developed by private non-profit agencies or by public housing authorities. By using federal subsidy programs administered at the state or local level, private for-profit developers and lenders also are active in low-income housing development.

**U-344                    King County shall give priority in its housing funding programs to developments that serve low-income individuals and households, secure appropriate housing options for people with special needs, prevent displacement of low-income people, or provide low-income and special needs housing along with social services.**

**U-345                    King County should explore increasing affordable housing opportunities, especially in areas with an existing or forecast shortage of affordable housing, through new programs, development incentives, and changes to funding program guidelines to facilitate new construction, rehabilitation, and acquisition to preserve affordable housing.**

**U-346                    King County should seek opportunities to fund programs and projects where county funds are matched by additional public and private loans and contributions, increasing the amount of housing that can be developed.**

**U-347                    King County should expand its use of surplus county-owned property and air rights over county-owned property for affordable housing and should explore its use for other public benefits, such as human services, and consider conveyance of properties to public or non-profit housing developers and agencies at below-market cost. Surplus county property shall be prioritized for housing**

**development that will be consistent with the King County Consortium Consolidated Plan and the Ten-Year Plan to End Homelessness.**

- U-348** King County should support the efforts of non-profit developers and housing agencies to increase the supply of housing for low-income households, through technical assistance and funding for capacity building, training, and predevelopment activities.
- U-349** King County should support programs that provide apprenticeship and employment training in the building trades through affordable housing development. King County should explore ways to partner with non-profit housing developers in offering pre-apprenticeship, apprenticeship and employment training opportunities.
- U-350** When awarding subsidies for affordable housing developments to non-profit developers and housing agencies, King County shall include in its criteria whether the proposals implement healthy housing and sustainable development principles, including universal design features.

This plan calls for more residential growth by preserving existing housing stock and developing new units on vacant parcels within established neighborhoods. These locations can offer affordable housing that is close to jobs, transportation and services. Housing development can also provide welcome improvements to communities suffering from a lack of investment. However, new development in established communities may result in the loss of existing low-cost housing. For example, when existing affordable housing stock is demolished or upgraded to create market-rate units, neighborhoods lose housing for their low-income residents. Low-cost housing is a community resource we should strive to preserve.

Redevelopment policies must be balanced with the need to preserve existing low-cost housing and neighborhoods. Retention of affordable housing can be encouraged through appropriate zoning and development regulations, financial incentives, rehabilitation programs, historic preservation, and acquisition strategies.

Additionally, preservation of affordable housing minimizes health and safety risks and provides residential stability. Historic features to existing buildings are also preserved. In combination, these efforts increase livability and help establish the character of existing neighborhoods.

- U-351** King County should develop and expand incentives and subsidy programs to preserve affordable housing threatened by market forces and expiring federal subsidies. Relocation assistance and replacement housing should be developed, where feasible, to help low-income households when displacement is unavoidable.
- U-352** King County should explore land use and financial incentives to preserve and improve existing housing in redeveloping areas through the use of programs such as transfer of development rights, tax credits and tax abatements for low-income housing and tax abatements and restoration loans for housing designated as a historic landmark.
- U-353** King County should assist owners of rental properties serving low- and moderate-income residents to acquire financing for building health and safety improvements in exchange for long-term agreements to maintain affordable rents.
- U-354** King County should work with financial institutions and other housing agencies to expand resources for housing rehabilitation through techniques such as reverse mortgage programs and loan pools.
- U-355** King County should coordinate preservation of existing affordable housing with city and county historic preservation programs and incentives, and should promote preservation and restoration of significant historic features in the rehabilitation of existing buildings and sites for housing.
- U-356** King County shall support ongoing efforts to maintain and preserve existing mobile home parks, at an appropriate level of safety and habitability, as a source of affordable housing for low-income homeowners through zoning or funding for acquisition and rehabilitation of parks and homes.
- U-357** King County should consider the constraints of rehabilitation, legalization of accessory dwelling units, and historic preservation, so usable structures are rehabilitated to an appropriate level of safety and habitability.
- U-358** Development standards should promote lower-cost infill development, such as accessory dwelling units, in a manner that allows existing housing to be retained

**through measures such as an innovative or flexible building envelope, access and infrastructure standards.**

## **E. Access to Housing**

An important goal of addressing affordable housing needs is equal access to housing and freedom from discrimination in housing for residents of King County. A related goal is the successful integration of housing for low-income households into all communities, providing access to good transportation choices, improved economic and educational opportunities, and a healthy, safe and vibrant community.

Public funding for affordable housing and other policies included in this chapter that incentivize or require a portion of affordable housing in market-rate developments contribute to increasing equal access to housing for lower-income and special needs residents through new construction of affordable housing or through acquisition and rehabilitation of existing housing that will be preserved as affordable housing.

Local, state and federal fair housing laws, including the King County Fair Housing Ordinance, have set the stage for public policy that favors community-based, integrated housing and independent living for persons with special needs, rather than institutional settings. Service-enriched housing is also best integrated into community-based settings in apartments or single family homes rehabilitated to meet the needs of the residents.

Opportunity is a situation or condition that places individuals in a position to be more likely to excel or succeed. Opportunity mapping assesses the conditions present in neighborhoods across a region (by looking at indicators of opportunity in education, economy, transportation, housing, environment, and health). This mapping provides a comprehensive analytical framework to measure opportunity in the region and to determine who has access to opportunity-rich areas. Analysis of opportunity mapping can provide valuable information about where more affordable housing needs to be located, and what needs to be remedied in areas where these types of opportunities are currently very limited.

- U-359                    King County shall promote opportunities for publicly funded housing, including housing for low-income people with special needs, by:**
- a. Adopting land use policies and regulations that treat publicly funded housing and other low-income housing the same as housing of a similar size and density;**
  - b. Adopting funding and program policies that encourage integration of assisted housing within communities and a fair distribution of publicly funded housing throughout the county. Mandatory dispersion requirements**

that limit where publicly funded housing may locate should not be applied;  
and

- c. Encouraging developers and owners of publicly funded housing units to undertake activities to establish and maintain positive relationships with neighbors.

**U-360** King County shall flexibly apply its rules, policies, practices and services when necessary to afford persons with disabilities equal opportunity to use or enjoy a dwelling, including the promotion of public funding and other incentives to create new affordable housing opportunities for persons with disabilities.

**U-361** King County should develop and adopt standards for publicly funded housing that will:

- a. Increase the ability of people with special needs to visit or have physical access to housing units regardless of their residency status;
- b. Allow household members to age in place through the inclusion of universal design principles that increase housing opportunities that are accessible and usable by all persons; and
- c. Support the ability of all people, especially the elderly and persons with disabilities and special needs, to find housing opportunities that allow them to live as independently as possible in the housing and community of their choice.

**U-362** King County shall prohibit special requirements through land use regulations, restrictive covenants and conditional or special use permits that limit the ability of persons from protected classes (as defined in the King County Fair Housing Ordinance) to live in residences of their choice.

**U-363** King County shall permit group living situations, including those where residents receive such supportive services as counseling, foster care or medical supervision, within a single-family house or apartment.

**U-364** King County should work with housing industry representatives to identify and remove barriers (such as real estate marketing, finance or insurance practices) that restrict housing choices and opportunities for low- and moderate-income people and people with special needs.

**U-365** King County should support programs that help prevent homelessness, such as emergency rental assistance, mortgage default and foreclosure counseling, and improvements to emergency services referral networks.

**U-366** King County should help in site planning that:

- a. Supports the siting of community facilities and assisted publicly funded affordable housing in locations where low- and moderate-income residents and persons with special needs have convenient access to a variety of opportunities and services;**
- b. Uses opportunity mapping; and**
- c. Promotes fair housing and diverse communities that are inclusive of residents with a range of abilities, ages, races, incomes and other diverse characteristics of the population of King County.**

## **F. Direct Assistance to Households**

In many cases, the most effective form of housing assistance is direct assistance to low- or moderate-income households. This approach is commonly used for first-time homebuyer programs, which provide reduced-rate mortgages or assistance with closing costs. These forms of assistance increase options for homebuyers and enable them to find housing they prefer. Federal programs also provide direct rental assistance to low-income households to help pay rent in public and privately owned rental housing. In the event of a moderate to major disaster in the King County region, special measures will be needed to assist households with home repair resources, help them find interim housing once shelters have closed, and connect them to resources such as short-term rental or move-in assistance.

**U-367** King County should work with local lenders to expand assistance for first-time homebuyers, including homebuyer education and counseling, mortgage default and foreclosure counseling, low-cost financing and assistance with down payments and closing costs.

**U-368** King County should provide financial assistance for housing rehabilitation to low-income home owners, including owners of mobile homes residing in parks, and through community-based repair programs, such as tool banks or painting programs.

**U-369** King County shall participate in the Ten-Year Plan to End Homelessness to sustain and support a coordinated, regional response to homelessness that

**includes access to homelessness prevention services, emergency shelter, transitional housing, permanent affordable housing, and appropriate support services for homeless families, single adults, and youth.**

- U-370** King County should work with jurisdictions and housing providers across the state to urge state and federal governments to expand funding for direct assistance services such as rental assistance and emergency services. In addition to rental assistance, King County should support programs that help prevent homelessness and that improve emergency services referral networks, including the development of a coordinated intake system for homeless families and individuals, and low-income households that are seeking permanent housing.
- U-371** King County should support programs that assist low-income renters to remain in or to gain access to private market housing, such as revolving loan funds that cover utility and damage deposits, and rental assistance programs.
- U-372** King County should support programs that provide landlord-tenant counseling, workshops and mediation in landlord-tenant disputes, as well as legislation that protects the rights of tenants and landlords, such as fair rental contracts.