

Planning in King County



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

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

Guiding Principles in 2016 Plan

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

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

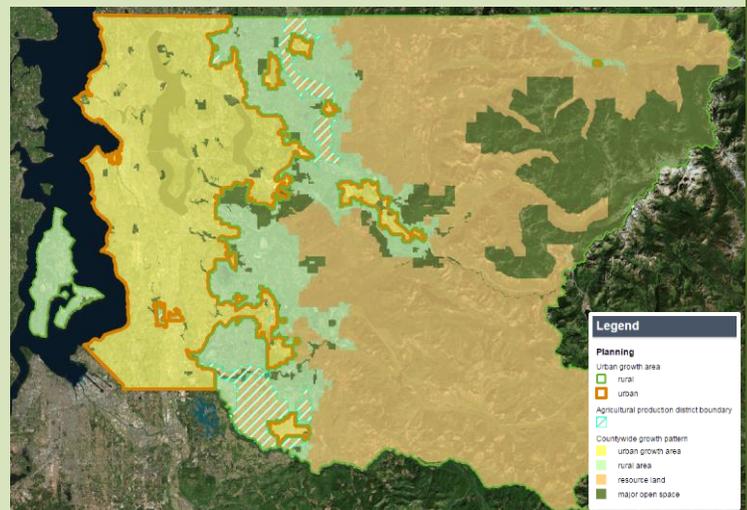
These themes seek to ensure that King County will manage growth in ways that improve the quality of life and the natural environment for **future generations**. These themes align with the county's Strategic Plan, the Growth Management Act, and countywide and multicounty policies.

What does the Plan Do?

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

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

Major Land Use Categories



GMA Requirements for Comprehensive Plans

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

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

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

Plan Update Cycle

Comprehensive plans include a 20-year planning horizon and major periodic reviews are required by GMA every 8 years, and King County will conduct a statutory update again in 2023. To keep the plan current and relevant, the King County Code allows for narrow and technical annual updates, substantive updates on a four-year cycle, and full reviews on an eight-year cycle. The following diagram provides a general overview of the Plan update cycle, but it is subject to change.



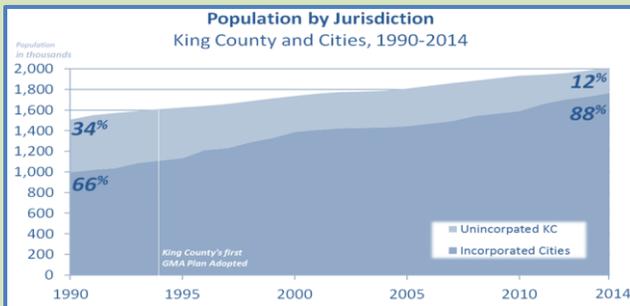
	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028
Annual Updates <i>Technical changes, 4:1 changes, responses to court cases, new laws</i>	Annual	*	*	2021	*	*	2024	2025	*	*	2028
Four Year Midpoint Updates <i>Substantive land use, policy and UGA changes</i>		2020 Midpoint							2027 Midpoint		
Eight Year Updates <i>Statutory review; all changes allowed</i>				2023 Statutory							

**while Annual Amendments are allowed during these years, the issues are typically foisted in the larger update process*

Accommodating Growth in King County

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

❖ **Where We Have Been:** King County has grown, and it has shifted a significant portion of unincorporated urban population into cities. Changes since 2014 include annexations such as Klahanie in Sammamish.



❖ **Where We Are Going:** Planning assumptions guiding future city and county plan updates target cities to accommodate 93% of new housing and 98% of new jobs. These targets will be updated in 2020.

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

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

