



Policy Brief: Building Shared & Sustainable Prosperity

Since taking office in November 2009, King County Executive Dow Constantine has worked to build a strong foundation for the people of King County, and their government, to succeed. Upon adoption of the first King County Strategic Plan in 2010, the Executive established immediate priorities within County government to improve customer service, build lasting regional partnerships, stabilize County finances, build a culture of performance and empower employees to work together as “One King County”. With support from the County Council, other County elected leadership, and our employees and partners, King County government has made significant strides in all of these areas.

The Executive’s focus on getting the foundational elements of King County government working effectively has also allowed the County to establish a strong record of accomplishment that improves the quality of life for all King County residents. This record includes improving the safety of our communities through innovative approaches to gun violence, enhancing the health and longevity of residents through access to health insurance, increasing mobility through providing more bus service than ever, providing economic opportunity by expanding contracting for small businesses, and protecting our rural lands and open spaces.

Building on the Foundation: A Call for Shared & Sustainable Prosperity

While King County government has accomplished much over the last four years, two significant national and global trends threaten our continued quality of life: growing [inequality of opportunity](#) and [climate change](#). On the national level, Congressional inaction has stymied progress toward reversing these trends. Executive Constantine recognizes that our region has the innovative spirit, the will and the capacity to lead progress on addressing these issues, as we have on other issues such as marriage equality. Executive Constantine has therefore developed a comprehensive agenda for King County government to address these trends, and has issued a call to action for other institutions and organizations in our region. Tackling these trends and putting

our region on a path to sustainable and shared prosperity will require all of us working together.

Building Equity & Opportunity

King County boasts a quality of life and rates of longevity and health that are among the highest in the world. And yet, mirroring national trends, significant portions of our County are being increasingly left behind, especially when we look at our region by race, income and zip code. For example, when comparing the ten zip codes with the highest income or life expectancy with the ten zip codes with the lowest, there is a difference of more than \$100,000 in household income and 10 years of life. These inequities hurt everyone – not just people on the lower rungs of the social and economic ladder. Creating greater equity and opportunity is essential for sustained and robust economic growth. Our prosperity as a region depends on everyone being able to contribute and reach his or her full potential.

The Executive’s work to incorporate an equity lens throughout all that King County does has received national recognition. The County’s approach is grounded in a growing body of research that ties people’s economic and health outcomes to their access to the human, natural, built, and market infrastructure conditions such as early childhood development, public safety, healthy food, health care, parks, efficient transportation choices, affordable housing, and job training.

The Executive’s cornerstone initiatives and supporting strategies to create equity in King County are highlighted below. You can view our [Building Equity infographic](#), and read King County’s [Equity and Social Justice Annual Report](#) for more information.

Confronting Climate Change

Our region is already experiencing the impacts of climate change on public safety, the environment, and our natural resource-based economies like forestry, agriculture, and fishing. Temperatures in many of our streams are unsafe for salmon, marine waters are acidifying, Puget Sound water levels are rising, Cascade mountain snowpack has dwindled, and we experience more flooding during the fall and less water flow in rivers and streams in the summer.

Under Executive Constantine’s leadership, King County has achieved many of the ambitious goals in its Strategic Climate Action Plan – increasing renewable energy use production in County operations, pioneering the use of hybrid-electric buses, and protecting forest lands. Much of this work has been recognized as best practice nationally. In his second term, the Executive will increase his focus on climate change even further, through partnerships and alliances to create concerted, coordinated, and

accountable actions to reduce countywide emissions, make our communities even more resilient, and build on our strong base of green business.

The Executive's cornerstone initiatives and other strategies to address climate change and reduce our emissions in King County are highlighted below. For more information, you can read the [confronting climate change infographic and policy brief](#), or visit the County's [climate change webpage](#).

The Executive's Four Cornerstones to Build Equity and Confront Climate Change

1. Transforming Health & Human Services

Our region's health and human services delivery system is fragmented, focused more on providing costly late-stage care than on preventing crises from happening in the first place, and has not adapted to demographic trends that call for a shift in how and where services are delivered. With our partners, King County is working to create a system that is responsive, customer friendly, and focused on prevention and the social and health outcomes that support healthy and vibrant people and communities.

2. Closing the Kindergarten Gap

Research increasingly points to the influence that early childhood development and experiences have on outcomes later in life. Strategic investments focused on children birth to five and their families have a large return on investment, improving educational attainment and income and reducing involvement in the criminal justice system. While King County is home to many promising pilot projects for children birth to five, there is not an entity currently evaluating the questions of scalability, capacity, integration, and sustainability that need to be addressed. In partnership with the University of Washington, the Executive will work with other key leaders to engage our region in developing a long-term unified and actionable vision and strategy.

3. Optimizing Transit, Roads and Land Use

By 2040, more than five million people will live in Puget Sound – a 30 percent increase over today's population. The majority of houses, buildings, and other structures that will make up our cities in 2050 have not yet been built. Through the Executive's leadership within King County government and on regional bodies such as the Puget Sound Regional Council, Sound Transit, and the Growth Management Planning Council, he resolves to promote smart growth investments that reduce commute times, enhance

freight mobility, ensure a supply of affordable housing, lower green house gas emissions, protect open space, and support economic growth.

4. Strengthening Prosperity and Economic Development

King County's economy is finally emerging from the Great Recession. While the economic recovery locally has been stronger than in the rest of the nation, the region faces challenges to its future prosperity. These include: barriers to opportunity for many King County residents; a growing gap in meeting our infrastructure needs, particularly in transit and roads; a need for diversification and less reliance on a few sectors and globally iconic firms; and a lack of a global identity to attract investment. The Executive is committed to strengthening the successful partnerships and strategies of his first term, with new efforts focused on how we sustainably expand our economy and extend the reach of prosperity to all our communities in King County.

Strengthening Our Region's Infrastructure

In addition to these four cornerstones, King County is undertaking a number of strategies to strengthen our human, natural, built and market infrastructure to build equity and confront climate change, as well as other goals. Together, these strategies form a strong set of actions on which we can build shared and sustainable prosperity.

Human Infrastructure

Create the conditions and opportunity for all individuals and communities to thrive and succeed.

During his first term, the Executive made significant investments in assuring equity, health and well-being for all residents of King County: setting ambitious goals to enroll everyone eligible in free or low-cost health insurance; convening a Health and Human Services Transformation Panel to develop a model for transforming the provision of regional health, human services, and community-based prevention; adding youth and young adult homelessness as a priority area for the Committee to End Homelessness; creating the Regional Veterans Initiative to improve coordination of veterans' services across the region; and providing the leadership that will lead to the voter-approved construction of a Children and Family Justice Center focused on improving the lives of at-risk youth and families. The Executive also oversaw the successful transition of King County public defense to an in-house system that will ensure high quality public defense for those who need it.

In his second term, the Executive will build on this foundation by focusing on implementation of the nationally-recognized plans and strategies developed in his first term. The County is poised for success on several fronts. Examples include:

Transform Health and Human Services

King County is working with local philanthropic partners to provide matching funds to the County's investment of \$500,000 in a "Catalyst Fund" that will support innovative individual- and community-level initiatives to deliver measurable outcomes that improve the health and wellness of people and communities. In addition, the Executive announced that King County will be one of five new sites around the country selected to participate in the next round of Living Cities' Integration Initiative. Living Cities is a collaborative of some of the world's largest foundations creating innovative solutions that work on behalf of people with low-incomes. The County will also continue its partnership on community development with the Federal Reserve Bank of San Francisco. Visit our [Transformation Plan webpage](#) to read more about the County's next steps on the Transformation Plan.

Coverage is Here King County

As of February 10, 2014, 100,000 people in King County have enrolled in free or low-cost health insurance under the Affordable Care Act. In addition to a continued initiative to enroll everyone who is eligible, King County will monitor whether people enrolled in insurance are receiving appropriate access to care, and work with the State to remove barriers. Learn more about the County's [enrollment campaign](#) or to sign up for coverage.

Youth and Young Adult Homelessness

In the 2014 budget, the County Council provided funding to support implementation of the County's [nationally-recognized initiative](#) to end youth and young adult homelessness. In collaboration with the Raikes Foundation and other community partners, the initiative is based on proven programs, driven by measurable goals, and focused on prevention, early intervention, engagement and housing to prevent and solve youth homelessness.

Gun Violence

In February 2013, the Executive signed an Executive Order directing Public Health to develop innovative strategies to address gun violence. In partnership with law enforcement and retailers last autumn, the Executive launched the [Lok-It-Up campaign](#) to encourage safe storage of firearms in the home. In his second term, the Executive will work in partnership with law enforcement to conduct a review of gun violence incidents involving youth and young adults, and he will convene regional leaders to assess the

data and work together on developing solutions. Learn more about [gun violence in King County](#).

Regional Veterans Initiative

In February 2013, the Executive appointed five respected veterans as special advisors to develop recommendations for providing King County veterans with better access to the services they deserve. The special advisors' report recommended that King County map the complex system of services available to veterans and play a role in convening various federal, State and local partners in coordinating services. The County completed the service mapping in 2013 and in February 2014, the Executive appointed US Air Force veteran Dana Sawyers and charged her with convening and coordinating service providers. Read the report and [see the service map](#).

In addition to implementation of the planning efforts that had already been underway, in his second term the Executive is launching the following new initiatives to further strengthen our human infrastructure:

Closing the Kindergarten Gap

In partnership with the University of Washington, the Executive will work with other key leaders to engage our region in developing a long-term unified and actionable vision and strategy for supporting children from birth to five to ensure that they enter kindergarten ready to learn. The goal of this work is to clearly understand the social, emotional, and educational needs of children from birth to age five, the status of the region's current capacity to address those needs and the future steps necessary to ensure that all children in King County are ready for and have access to high quality, developmentally appropriate, affordable, early learning opportunities that are aligned and integrated to support their success in the K-20 system. As part of this effort, the Executive will embark on a listening tour of school districts in King County.

Youth Action Plan

In partnership with the King County Council, and in alignment with the Transformation Plan and the youth and young adult homelessness initiative, the Executive will convene community leaders to undertake a review of current County youth programs and planning for what youth need to be safe and healthy, on track to succeed academically, and socially and civically engaged. At the same time, the Executive and the separately elected leaders of our criminal justice agencies will continue developing strategies to reduce youth involvement in the criminal justice system through multi-system partnerships such as Uniting for Youth, a collaboration of educators, juvenile justice, behavioral health and child welfare professionals.

Rapid Re-Housing

King County has joined the City of Seattle, Seattle Housing Authority, King County Housing Authority, United Way, and Building Changes in funding a Rapid Re-Housing program that will enable 350 homeless families in the next year to exit immediately from shelters and the streets into their own apartment with short term rental assistance, case management, and employment assistance. National data show that with this model, 80 percent of the families never return to homelessness. The County is also funding a similar model for homeless single adults who are on the streets and in shelters. Not only does this model take families and individuals off the streets and out of shelters, it helps them get back on track with their lives and makes room in shelters and our crisis response system for others who are in crisis.

Community Reentry from Detention

In 2013, over 35,000 individuals returned to the community from King County jails and state prisons. Compared to the general County population, these individuals are disproportionately people of color. For many of them, the problems in their lives – including addiction, mental illness, unemployment and homelessness - contributed directly to their crimes, and will result in future criminal justice system involvement if left unaddressed. Releasing these high-risk individuals without appropriate support puts public safety at risk, results in large criminal justice system costs, and does not help them becoming contributing members of their communities. This year, the Executive will coordinate reentry projects aimed at reducing recidivism and getting people's lives back on track. King County is also partnering with the Washington State Department of Corrections to develop a federally-funded demonstration project that will better connect individuals on community supervision to services in the community and support their successful reentry.

Continued Erosion of the State and Federal Funding Support

While King County is making progress on these innovative efforts to advance equity, significant challenges and threats remain due to continued state and federal budget reductions and inaction. In particular, State and federal cuts to mental health services and public health threaten the County's delivery of these needed services to our community. State mental health cuts could lead to more people with mental illness experiencing acute distress and being "boarded" at local hospitals while they wait for a bed in overcrowded psychiatric facilities. Federal cuts to public health funding could result in less access for people needing these services. During 2014, the Executive will advocate for State and federal funding to support critical mental health and public health services, and will develop a plan for sufficient and sustainable local revenue to support a transformed system of health and human services.

Natural Infrastructure

Safeguard and enhance King County's natural resources and environment.

In his first term in office, Executive Constantine took action to safeguard King County's natural resources and environment through energy efficiency, investments in water quality, and open space preservation.

The Executive's 2010 [Energy Plan](#) set ambitious targets for energy efficiency that are now generating more than \$2.5 million in annual savings, and the county has surpassed its goal of meeting half of its energy needs through production or use of renewable energy.

The Executive also followed through on commitments to better protect our treasured shorelines and waterways and clean up historic contamination. Key accomplishments include completing a major update to the county's shoreline protection standards, bringing the state-of-the-art [Brightwater Wastewater Treatment Plant](#) on-line to support our growing region, and moving forward with \$750 million in investments to control wastewater and stormwater overflows into Puget Sound and the Lake Washington Ship Canal.

Under the Executive and Council's leadership, King County also made great strides in protecting vital open spaces for future generations and developing our world-class system of regional parks and trails with a particular focus on making them accessible to all county residents. Through partnerships and perseverance, the county protected more than a mile of threatened, undeveloped shoreline and upland forest on Maury Island; seized a one-time opportunity to secure the [Eastside Rail Corridor](#) for trails and transportation; and reached a goal of protecting 200,000 acres of forest land in eastern King County. Last summer, voters resoundingly approved the [King County Parks Levy](#), providing increased resources for regional open space and trails.

Over the next four years, the Executive will strengthen partnerships and alliances to put our region on a path to meet climate targets, protect key open space and trail connections, increase local food production, and focus conversations around achieving the best water quality outcomes. Some examples of key initiatives include:

Climate Change

Through partnerships and alliances the Executive will seek coordinated and accountable actions to reduce countywide emissions, make our communities even more resilient, and build on our region's strong base of clean technology innovation and corporate commitments to sustainability. During the first half of 2014, the Executive will work in partnership with the King County-Cities Climate Collaboration, with support from the New Energy Cities program, to develop a set of specific joint comments that will ensure King County is on track to meet state and local targets for reducing greenhouse gas

emissions. Building on the successful model of the King County Aerospace Alliance, the Executive will create an alliance of businesses, economic development organizations, universities, and environmental groups with the objective of making King County a nationally-recognized center for clean technology, innovation, and training. And, building on the County's approach to its equity and social justice work, the Executive will challenge all County agencies to focus on operational commitments to increase County government's energy efficiency and renewable energy. For more information, you can read the [confronting climate change infographic and policy brief](#), or visit the County's [climate change webpage](#).

Local Food Initiative

Of the nearly \$6 billion we spend in King County on food and beverages every year, less than two percent of that is produced here in King County. There is an increasing interest among our residents, tourists and food-related businesses on locally produced food and beverages while, at the same time, our farmers face barriers in getting their products to market and farmland faces development pressure as our region grows. Moreover, many urban communities, particularly low-income communities, lack access to healthy foods and fresh produce. The Executive is launching a local food initiative to expand our local agricultural production, increase its value, and increase access to local foods for all residents in King County.

Regional Trails and Parks

The County will focus on linking major trail corridors together; linking the regional trail network to the transit, rail and ferry networks; and providing greater access to recreation opportunities for all King County residents. Specific major regional trail projects over the next four years include the Eastside Rail Corridor and the Lake-to-Sound Trail, which connects underserved communities in south King County. The Executive will also work with the new King County Parks Foundation and build on the success of our parks partnerships with the private sector to increase investment in open space and trail legacy projects. Visit our [King County Parks website](#) to find a place to recreate.

Water Quality

A top priority for the Executive is working with partners like to the City of Seattle, the Port, and Boeing to clean up historic contamination of the [Lower Duwamish Waterway](#), which runs through communities which face some of the greatest disparities in terms of health, employment, and air and water pollution. Clean-up of the river will be carried out in concert with actions to control sources of pollution throughout our watersheds, including runoff from polluted stormwater.

The County is also updating its stormwater management program to expand use of “Green Stormwater Infrastructure” where it is more effective at protecting our streams, lakes, and Puget Sound.

New federal and state water quality standards are on the horizon. The Executive will encourage regulatory agencies to take “outcome based” approaches where standards are used to drive actions that are likely to bring the greatest benefits for public health and habitat. The County will also partner with federal, State and local agencies; tribal governments; residents and businesses; and the environmental community and others to use innovative approaches such as the Systemwide Improvement Framework for the Lower Green River that pursue multiple benefits for water quality, public safety, and habitat.

Built Infrastructure

Shape a built environment that increases mobility, reduces climate impacts, provides affordable housing choices, improves public health, and adds to the quality of life for all residents.

During his first term, Executive Constantine built on King County’s smart growth legacy by leading a countywide update of new growth policies that will shape walkable, vibrant and healthy urban communities; provide a framework for expanding transit service throughout the region; continue to protect rural, agricultural and forest lands; and set the stage for adopting multi-jurisdictional climate emissions targets. He convened a regional task force to address longstanding conflicts around school siting, resulting in unanimous recommendations to site schools in the heart of our communities where our kids live and play. He partnered with cities on groundbreaking agreements to protect farmland by transferring development from the rural area into compact urban centers. He was instrumental in passing a new transit strategic plan, which matched service priorities to population and job centers while balancing social and geographic equity. And he brought partners together to fund replacement of the South Park bridge, set to open in 2014.

The region’s population is predicted to increase by 30 percent over the next 25 years, heightening the dual challenges of climate change and equity. How our region develops and accommodates that growth will determine whether we meet these challenges successfully. To address these challenges, during his second term the Executive will exert his leadership on several regional boards to accomplish the following:

Transportation

The Executive’s top priority is securing stable funding for Metro Transit to avoid cuts that will harm our economy and disproportionately impact low-income communities.

He will also seek funding to grow the system to address 500,000 additional needed service hours. The Executive will serve as Chair of the Sound Transit Board through key decisions as it begins building Sound Transit 2 and determines whether to seek a Sound Transit 3 package in 2016 or 2020. The Executive will partner with the King County Council on a solution to the funding crisis facing King County Roads, lead a regional discussion on system wide tolling to replace outmoded revenue sources, and seek stable funding for ferry operations. In his role on the Executive Board of the Puget Sound Regional Council, the Executive will advocate for an update to the region's [2040 transportation plan](#) that ensures transportation and land use are linked, sustainable, and address the needs of all residents, particularly those who are underserved by the current network.

Smart Growth

Actions to implement smart growth policies in the region will ensure that our population and economy can grow, and that growth occurs in a manner that minimizes infrastructure costs and maximizes mobility. The Executive will lead the region on adoption of the Puget Sound Regional Council's [Growing Transit Communities](#) compact and its implementation strategies, which will focus housing, jobs and services in urban centers and transit communities. The County will seek to add more cities to our regional [Transfer of Development Rights](#) program, which preserves agricultural and forest lands by moving development from rural areas into urban centers. The County will also continue to support the [Regional Equity Network](#), which was initially formed to give underserved communities a voice in transit-oriented development.

Affordable Housing

The Executive will lead the Growth Management Planning Council as it provides guidance to jurisdictions updating their comprehensive plans, including developing tools and strategies that will result in affordable housing choices for all county residents. He will also champion establishment of a regional revolving loan fund to preserve land for affordable housing around transit centers.

School Siting

The County will continue to partner with cities and school districts on long-term planning for [school siting](#), to better coordinate planning for the future educational needs of the region and to ensure educational excellence and health for our children by siting schools in the heart of the communities where our kids live and play.

Historic Preservation

The Executive will continue working to preserve our legacy of historic buildings, landmarks and scenic corridors through implementation of the [Historic Preservation Strategic Plan](#).

Market Infrastructure

Support an innovative, diverse, and globally-competitive regional economy.

In his first term in office, Executive Constantine worked with business, labor, workforce, education and other governmental partners to forward an agenda for a shared and sustainable prosperity. With labor, education and workforce partners, he launched efforts to provide more training and family-wage employment opportunities to veterans and other communities facing barriers. Under his watch, the County completed or launched major investments in infrastructure and transportation that will accommodate future growth and keep workers, freight and our economy moving. These investments include the new [Brightwater Treatment Plant](#), the new [South Park Bridge](#), and reform and funding that saved transit service from reductions. He formed the [King County Aerospace Alliance](#) to develop and implement strategies to support the long-term growth of the aerospace industry, a major source of family-wage jobs. And, one of his first initiatives as County Executive was to reform the County's procurement processes to promote government efficient and provide more opportunities for small and minority contractors to compete. He has recognized and promoted many of these small businesses through his annual [Executive's Small Business Awards](#).

The Executive is committed to strengthening these successful efforts on workforce development, infrastructure investments, multi-sectoral alliances, and reform in county business practices in his second term, with a particular focus on how we sustainably expand our economy and extend the reach of prosperity to all our communities in King County.

Workforce Development

The most important investments in our region's economic development are investments in its greatest asset: the people of King County. The Executive has established a bold agenda to expand the opportunity for everyone in King County to thrive and contribute to our region's prosperity. The main components of this agenda are covered under the human infrastructure section of this policy document.

The Executive will also continue to prioritize specific workforce training and development programs that he implemented in his first term and which have been successful in providing opportunity for more King County residents to secure good paying jobs. The Executive will seek continued funding for the Veterans Aerospace and Manufacturing Pathways Program, which has helped veterans leverage their military skills into jobs earning an average of \$18.66 plus benefits. He will also seek every opportunity to support and expand the use of construction apprentices on public works projects, which pay an average wage rate of \$28.99 plus benefits.

Sustainable Infrastructure

Efficient transportation for workers, raw materials, and finished goods is critical to the health of our economy. Congestion negatively impacts business investment, as well as our environment through greater greenhouse gas emissions. The Executive will continue his strong advocacy for funding for transit and roads. With a temporary measure for transit funding expiring this year, the Executive has developed a plan for a countywide transportation benefit district which, with voter approval, would preserve current levels of transit service and provide some funding for critical roads maintenance. He has also proposed a reduction in transit fares for people with incomes below 200 percent of the federal poverty level.

The Executive will continue to steadfastly advocate for expanding transit and transportation infrastructure that supports our growing economy, and equitable mechanisms to fund these.

Strong Partnerships and Alliances

Through the King County Aerospace Alliance, the Executive will work to strengthen our aerospace industrial cluster by expanding business and trade relationships with other metropolitan areas, identifying strategic opportunities to support aerospace at the King County International Airport, and explore a regional partnership with other local airports in order to maximize use of these assets in our region. Building on the success of the King County Aerospace Alliance, he will convene an alliance to make King County a nationally-recognized center for clean technology (see natural environment section of this policy brief).

The Puget Sound region has adopted a [Regional Economic Strategy](#), and here in King County we have several successful economic development agencies that address components of this strategy. The Executive will convene the various economic development agencies in which he has a governing role or to which the county contributes in order to foster coordination, accountability and collective strategies, particularly with regard to regional interest in promoting exports, foreign direct investment, venture capital, and developing a global brand for our region. In this context, he will promote a focus on diversification, sustainability, and equity.

Reform in County Business Practices

The Executive initiated a [Procurement Reform Initiative](#) in March 2010 to provide a more efficient and equitable environment for contracting firms to do business with King County. The Initiative's two goals are to increase efficiency and expand opportunities for small business to compete. As a result, processing times for contracts have been cut in half and construction contracts awards to small contractors and suppliers have increased by 90 percent. The [Procurement Reform Progress Report](#) outlines the most

recent results of this initiative. During his second term, the Executive will continue to focus on procurement reform to increase efficiency, sustainability of county operations, and expand opportunity for small contractors.

In addition to continued procurement reform, the Executive will continue to pursue mechanisms to increase the efficiency of County permit practices. He will also work with the County Council on approving new specifications for the County's banking services contract that will assign higher scores to proposals from banks that demonstrate innovative practices to serve the needs of disadvantaged residents.

Conclusion

Through this bold yet pragmatic agenda for his second term, Executive Constantine hopes to place our region on a firmer path to a shared and sustainable prosperity. Working with County employees, elected officials, and other partners he will seek every opportunity to leverage and align County operations in service of this goal. But, King County cannot successfully achieve this goal on its own; it will require all of us working together. The Executive invites you to participate with the County in this call to action. Please click on any of the links in the document to learn more about and get involved in topics that interest you. Together, our region has the resolve and capacity to define a future in which our environment and each one of us flourish.