

**King County**

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February 11, 2025

The Honorable Girmay Zahilay
Chair, King County Council
Room 1200
C O U R T H O U S E

Dear Councilmember Zahilay:

I am pleased to transmit to you a proposed Ordinance that would, if enacted, place a measure on the August 5, 2025, primary election ballot to reauthorize the King County's Parks, Recreation, Trails, and Open Space Levy (Parks Levy). The current Parks Levy expires at the end of 2025. If approved by King County voters, a renewed Parks Levy would enable King County's parks and trails system to remain clean, safe, and open while making strategic investments as our region grows.

The proposed ballot measure asks King County voters to authorize a property tax levy lid lift to maintain and operate King County's parks system, acquire open space, develop regional trails, and increase access to parks and recreation for all King County residents. If passed, it would also provide funding to King County cities, towns, and park districts for local parks, trail development, and operations, as well as to the Woodland Park Zoo, Seattle Aquarium, and Seattle Waterfront Park for environmental and education programs. As proposed, the renewed Parks Levy would increase the property tax rate to 24.43 cents per \$1,000 of assessed property value, generating approximately \$1.5 billion over the six-year period (2026-2031). Compared to the current levy, this would represent an approximately \$3.44 increase per month for homeowners of a median value home based on 2024 home values.

In developing the legislation, the Department of Natural Resources and Parks (DNRP) convened a Parks Levy Community Advisory Committee and undertook a robust community engagement process that included 21 community events and meetings with many interested parties. DNRP briefed each King County Councilmember office and offered briefings to all cities in the County. Online surveys in eight languages were completed by more than 4,800 community members. DNRP incorporated this community and partner input into the legislation and levy planning.

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The proposed renewed levy measure will support:

- Continued care of King County's extensive system of more than 200 parks, 185 miles of regional trails, and 32,000 acres of open space;
- Growth, connection, and stewardship of regional open space natural lands and urban green spaces, which increases climate resilience, habitat connectivity, and recreation opportunities;
- Further development of the regional trails system and improved mobility through completion of essential trail connections and maintaining existing trails; and
- Making parks and recreation opportunities more accessible for all who live, work, or play in King County.

The proposed legislation continues to invest upstream where needs are greatest. It supports community partnerships through capital, operating, and programming dollars for parks that serve communities of opportunity. The proposed renewed levy also continues and expands the Healthy Communities and Parks grant program to build capacity and increase access to green space and public recreation opportunities in underserved areas.

The proposed legislation furthers the Strategic Climate Action Plan goal to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by managing and restoring parks and other natural lands to maximize biological carbon storage. Through investments in natural lands conservation, forest stewardship, and other capital projects, the proposed legislation will increase community resilience to a changing climate.

Thank you for your consideration of this proposed Ordinance. This important legislation will help King County preserve and protect our existing parks and trails system, build upon and maximize the benefits of levy investments to date, and strategically address our region's current and future needs. Attached to this letter are the King County Parks Levy Proposed Allocation Plan, as well as the King County Parks Capital Program and Parks Operating Financial Plan for reference.

If your staff have questions, please contact Warren Jimenez, Division Director of the Parks and Recreation Division, Department of Natural Resources and Parks, at 206-477-4526.

Sincerely,



for

Dow Constantine
King County Executive

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Enclosure

cc: King County Councilmembers

ATTN: Stephanie Cirkovich, Chief of Staff, King County Council

Melani Hay, Clerk of the Council

Karan Gill, Chief of Staff, Office of the Executive

Penny Lipsou, Council Relations Director, Office of the Executive

John Taylor, Director, Department of Natural Resources and Parks (DNRP)

Warren Jimenez, Division Director, Parks and Recreation Division, DNRP