

BUDGET PRIORITIES FOR THE 2023-2024 BIENNIAL BUDGET



King County
Council

The COVID 19 pandemic is not over, and we must continue funding to ensure the County remains the safe, steady, and reliable public health leader on which this region has counted from the beginning. However, the 2023-2024 Biennial Budget will also be the first regular budget process the County will undergo with a priority on recovering and thriving after the global COVID 19 pandemic. A commitment to address the underlying inequities exacerbated by this pandemic, and investments in community led, upstream programs aligned with racial and social justice should underpin budget decisions for this and future biennia.

- Behavioral Health – Fill the Gap:** The past two years have laid bare and deepened, in both new and unfortunately predictable ways, the deficiencies in our region’s behavioral health system. This budget should identify and find paths to address key gaps in the County’s overburdened and under resourced behavioral health capacity. From crisis response to the strain of living through over two years of the COVID 19 pandemic, we have an obligation to step forward for the health of our community.

- Housing and Homelessness:** The enormous pressure on the region’s housing market increased exponentially during the COVID 19 pandemic, compounding our existing homelessness crisis. We must take more bold steps to address the over 40,000 individuals who are experiencing homelessness or housing instability throughout the entire county.

This budget must ensure racial equity and social justice underpins all County investments and programs designed to alleviate the immediate challenges of our unhoused neighbors and increase the availability of affordable housing.

- Support a Safe King County for everyone:** King County should be a safe place for every person who lives, works, and visits our vibrant region. The budget should invest in equitable access to justice and community safety strategies to enhance safety and tackle the challenges posed by increased reports of crime in the past two years, especially sexual assaults, domestic violence, illicit synthetic opioids, and gun violence.

- Invest in people:** Every resident deserves to have opportunities to enhance their quality of life, and this budget should ensure the County is a partner. From apprenticeship and workforce development programs, to increased access to open space and recreational activities, to ensuring women and families have the support needed to juggle work and life in an uncertain economy – we can provide the support needed for an equitable recovery from the COVID 19 pandemic.

Here at the County, we must also empower the King County workforce to thrive while serving their community. Training and retention strategies, and a commitment to recruit and fill needed positions, will be a significant acknowledgement of the effective, very hard work they’ve done to help our communities navigate the COVID 19 pandemic.

- Climate and the environment:** King County must continue to lead by example in the work to fight climate change and keep climate justice for those most harmed at the heart of our efforts. This budget must continue to innovate with new investments to lower the region’s carbon footprint while enhancing and accelerating strategies that support a safe and healthy environment.