



KING COUNTY
Signature Report

ATTACHMENT 1
1200 King County Courthouse
516 Third Avenue
Seattle, WA 98104

Ordinance

Proposed No. 2022-0199.1

Sponsors Dembowski and Kohl-Welles

1 AN ORDINANCE providing for the submission to the
2 qualified electors of King County at the general election to
3 be held in King County on November 8, 2022, of a
4 proposition to restore King County's conservation futures
5 property tax levy authorized under RCW 84.34.230 to a
6 rate of \$0.0625 per one thousand dollars of assessed
7 valuation for collection in 2023 and use the dollar amount
8 of the 2023 levy for the purpose of computing limitations
9 for subsequent levies under chapter 84.55 RCW to provide
10 funding for conservation futures as permitted under chapter
11 84.34 RCW, including, but not limited to, to pay, finance
12 and refinance costs of the acquisition and preservation, of:
13 urban green spaces, natural areas, wildlife and salmon
14 habitat, trails, river corridors, farmlands and forests; and
15 providing for conservation futures advisory committee
16 recommendations.

17 **STATEMENT OF FACTS:**

18 1. Natural lands support wildlife, provide clean air, enhance recreation
19 opportunities, protect clean water, improve health and promote climate
20 resilience. Farmlands promote sustainable local agriculture and a thriving

21 agricultural economy. Forests protect wildlife, provide recreation
22 opportunities, enhance water quality and promote a sustainable local
23 timber industry. Protected river corridors provide salmon habitat, flood
24 protection and recreation opportunities and promote the health of Puget
25 Sound. Trail corridors provide access to recreation opportunities, increase
26 nonmotorized mobility and improve air quality. Urban green spaces
27 protect key lands in population centers to enhance public health and well-
28 being, build community and expand recreation opportunities.

29 2. Protection and stewardship of urban green spaces, forests and
30 farmlands anchor numerous determinants of equity that inform the
31 county's equity and social justice initiative.

32 3. King County recognizes the disproportionate impacts on many King
33 County communities due to existing and historical racial, social,
34 environmental and economic inequities. The communities are particularly
35 vulnerable to excessive heat, poor air and water quality and flooding
36 episodes. Protecting and stewarding land in these communities can help to
37 improve: individual, community and environmental health; food access;
38 and community economic development.

39 4. For decades, King County has demonstrated leadership in protecting
40 natural lands. In 1968, King County voters approved the Forward Thrust
41 initiative, which provided funding to preserve four thousand acres of park
42 land as well as fifty-three miles of waterfront and riparian corridors.

43 5. In 1982, King County initiated its Conservation Futures program,
44 which has successfully protected more than one hundred thousand acres of
45 valuable resource lands and farmlands.

46 6. In 1989, King County voters approved the Open Space bond measure,
47 which provided funding for preserving high-conservation-value open-
48 space land.

49 7. In 2003, 2007, 2013 and 2019, King County voters approved tax levies
50 to support parks, trails and open space.

51 8. In 2009, the voters of King County approved a charter amendment,
52 known as the Open Space Protection Amendment, to enhance
53 conservation protections for key county-owned natural lands.

54 9. That long legacy of preserving natural lands has made King County
55 one of the most livable areas in the country and a sought-after place to
56 live, work and do business.

57 10. In 2015, Motion 14458 set forth King County's policy to remain one
58 of the greenest metropolitan areas in the world by protecting and
59 conserving land and water resources that will: enhance quality of life;
60 strengthen the region's economy; enhance biodiversity; provide
61 recreational opportunities; and promote sustainable forestry, farming and
62 locally grown food.

63 11. In September 2016, the King County executive convened the land
64 conservation initiative advisory group to advise the council and the
65 executive on ways to preserve remaining conservation lands within a

66 generation, including benefits and challenges, a preferred timeline and
67 public and private funding options.

68 12. The land conservation initiative advisory group included twenty-seven
69 county residents with wide-ranging expertise, including professionals from
70 cities, environmental organizations, local businesses, real estate firms,
71 investment firms and philanthropists.

72 13. Working with the advisory group, cities, federal and state agencies,
73 tribes and other partners, the department of natural resources and parks
74 undertook a parcel-by-parcel review of remaining open space lands and
75 other conservation opportunities in King County to determine the most
76 important parcels to protect in perpetuity.

77 14. In 2018, Ordinance 18774 set forth King County's policy to:
78 accelerate the protection of vital open spaces, including urban green
79 spaces, natural areas, wildlife and salmon habitat, trails, river corridors,
80 farmlands and forests; to address equity and social justice issues by
81 increasing the availability of open spaces in historically underserved areas;
82 and address generational equity by spreading costs of protecting vital open
83 space over time.

84 15. Key funding goals of Ordinance 18774 include accelerating the pace
85 of acquisitions and thereby reducing their ultimate cost, spreading costs to
86 future taxpayers who will benefit from lands protected in perpetuity,
87 maximizing the use of available moneys, prioritizing acquisitions in equity
88 areas and parcels that are at high risk of development, geographic equity

89 over time and ensuring that sufficient reserves remain available to pursue
90 emerging conservation opportunities.

91 16. Following recommendations of the advisory group, the open space
92 equity cabinet was convened in 2018 and included twenty-one county
93 residents representing twelve different community-based organizations. In
94 collaboration with the conservation futures advisory committee, the
95 cabinet updated the conservation futures process that prioritizes
96 acquisition of land conservation initiative targets in communities
97 experiencing the greatest need.

98 17. After reviewing a variety of potential funding mechanisms, the
99 advisory group recommended that the county restore its existing
100 conservation futures property tax levy to the rate authorized by RCW
101 84.34.230 of \$0.0625 per one thousand dollars of assessed valuation to
102 provide moneys to implement the land conservation plan.

103 18. Protecting conservation lands through conservation futures funding
104 has a decades-long track record of success in King County.

105 19. The conservation futures advisory committee process is a respected
106 and trusted means of ensuring that public moneys are optimized in
107 preserving our natural areas and ecosystems.

108 20. Issuing bonds can help accelerate the pace of acquisitions, lower the
109 ultimate cost of acquisitions and spread the acquisition costs to include
110 future taxpayers who will also benefit from lands protected in perpetuity.

111 21. The King County department of natural resources and parks has
112 engaged in extensive outreach to receive additional input, including from
113 the public, cities, businesses, environmental organizations, historically
114 underserved communities and area tribes.

115 22. There is a window of opportunity to conserve the region's last best
116 places, but we must act now to increase the pace and scale of preservation
117 before we lose our remaining high conservation value lands.

118 BE IT ORDAINED BY THE COUNCIL OF KING COUNTY:

119 SECTION 1. Definitions. The definitions in this section apply throughout this
120 ordinance unless the context clearly requires otherwise.

121 A. "Conservation futures purposes" means all activities and expenditures
122 authorized by chapter 84.34 RCW, as may be amended from time to time, including but
123 not limited to paying, financing and refinancing costs of acquisition and preservation of
124 urban green spaces, natural areas, wildlife and salmon habitat, trails, river corridors,
125 farmlands and forests within King County.

126 B. "Levy" means the levy of regular property taxes, for the statutory conservation
127 futures purposes as provided in this ordinance and authorized by the electorate in
128 accordance with state law.

129 C. "Levy proceeds" means the principal amount of moneys raised by the levy,
130 any interest earnings on the moneys, and the proceeds of any interim or other financing
131 following authorization of the levy.

132 SECTION 2. Levy submittal to voters. To provide necessary proceeds for the
133 statutory conservation futures purposes identified in section 4 of this ordinance, the King

134 County council shall submit to the qualified electors of the county a proposition
135 authorizing restoration of King County's conservation futures property tax levy to the rate
136 authorized by RCW 84.34.230 of \$0.0625 per one thousand dollars of assessed valuation
137 for collection in 2023 and use of the dollar amount of the 2023 levy for the purpose of
138 computing limitations for subsequent levies, consistent with chapter 84.55 RCW, as it
139 may be amended from time to time.

140 SECTION 3. Deposit of levy proceeds. All levy proceeds collected as
141 authorized in this ordinance shall be deposited into a dedicated conservation futures fund
142 established by ordinance and used only for the eligible expenditures described in section
143 4 of this ordinance.

144 SECTION 4. Eligible expenditures. If approved by the qualified electors of the
145 county, proceeds of the levy authorized by this ordinance shall be used for conservation
146 futures purposes in accordance with chapter 84.34 RCW, as it may be amended from time
147 to time, and for the costs and charges incurred by the county that are attributable to the
148 election.

149 SECTION 5. Call for special election. In accordance with RCW 29A.04.321,
150 the King County council hereby calls for a special election to be held in conjunction with
151 the general election on November 8, 2022. The King County director of elections shall
152 cause notice to be given of this ordinance in accordance with the state constitution and
153 general law and to submit to the qualified electors of the county, at said special election,
154 the proposition hereinafter set forth. The clerk of the council shall certify that
155 proposition to the King County director of elections in substantially the following form,
156 with such modifications as may be required by the prosecuting attorney:

157 The King County council passed Ordinance ___ concerning funding to
158 protect conservation lands in King County. This proposition would
159 provide funding to pay, finance, or refinance acquisition and preservation
160 of: urban green spaces, natural areas, wildlife and salmon habitat, trails,
161 river corridors, farmlands and forests. It would authorize restoration of
162 the county's RCW 84.34.230 conservation futures property tax levy to a
163 rate of \$0.0625 per \$1,000 of assessed valuation for collection in 2023 and
164 use the dollar amount of the 2023 levy for the purpose of computing
165 limitations for subsequent levies.

166 Should this proposition be:

167 Approved []

168 Rejected []

169 **SECTION 6. Advisory committee.** If the levy is approved by the voters in
170 accordance with section 5 of this ordinance, the conservation futures advisory committee
171 established under K.C.C. 2.36.070 will make acquisition recommendations and
172 recommend funding allocations, consistent with K.C.C. chapter 26.12, as it may be
173 amended from time to time.

174 **SECTION 7. Implementation.** Contingent upon voter approval of the ballot
175 proposition described in section 2 of this ordinance, King County will accelerate
176 protection of open space consistent with K.C.C. chapter 26.12, as it may be amended
177 from time to time.

178 **SECTION 8. Exemption.** The additional regular property taxes authorized by
179 this ordinance shall be included in any real property tax exemption authorized by RCW

180 84.36.381, including any amendment that is adopted by the legislature during the term of
181 this levy.

182 SECTION 9. Ratification and confirmation. Certification of the proposition by
183 the clerk of the King County council to the director of elections in accordance with law
184 before the general election on November 8, 2022, and any other act consistent with the
185 authority and before the effective date of this ordinance are hereby ratified and
186 confirmed.

187 SECTION 10. Severability. If any provision of this ordinance or its application

188 to any person or circumstance is held invalid, the remainder of the ordinance or the
189 application of the provision to other persons or circumstances is not affected.

KING COUNTY COUNCIL
KING COUNTY, WASHINGTON

Claudia Balducci, Chair

ATTEST:

Melani Pedroza, Clerk of the Council

APPROVED this ____ day of _____, _____.

Dow Constantine, County Executive

Attachments: None