

# KING COUNTY EQUITY AND SOCIAL JUSTICE ANNUAL REPORT

DECEMBER 2015



Affordable, safe, quality housing  
Access to parks and natural resources  
Equity in County practices  
Access to affordable, healthy, local food  
Equitable law and justice system  
Community and public safety  
Access to safe and efficient transportation  
Quality education  
Access to health and human services  
Healthy built and natural environments  
Family wage jobs and job training  
Early childhood development  
Strong, vibrant neighborhoods  
Economic development



King County

**OFFICE OF  
EQUITY AND SOCIAL JUSTICE**

**OFFICE OF  
KING COUNTY EXECUTIVE  
DOW CONSTANTINE**

[www.kingcounty.gov/equity](http://www.kingcounty.gov/equity)

401 Fifth Ave, Ste. 800, Seattle, WA 98104

206-263-9600 / TTY Relay: 711



*Tribal dedication of West Point Archaeological Exhibit,  
supported by King County*



*Movie under the stars event at Steve Cox Park  
in White Center*

**Alternative Formats Available**

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*King County contingency at 2015 Pride Parade*

# LETTER FROM KING COUNTY EXECUTIVE DOW CONSTANTINE



As we present our 2015 Equity and Social Justice Annual Report, our commitment to create a more equitable King County is stronger than ever, and our effort must measure up to the scope of our challenges.

A local government like King County cannot on its own reverse all entrenched inequities. But we can make a real difference in people's lives, if we examine our policies, decisions, programs, and practices through an equity lens. And, we can engage and involve the community in a meaningful way, understand more fully the residents we serve, and then truly connect with people and partners to start changing the equation.

As we take stock of the year, there is one area that is of particular concern, not just here locally, but nationally as well – income inequality.

It's axiomatic that economic growth is driven by a strong middle class. But in King County, 95 percent of the net new households created since 2000 earn either less than \$35,000 a year, or more than \$125,000. One can quibble over the definition of middle class, but the dearth of new households earning anywhere near the 2013 median income of \$72,000 is troubling.

Our middle class is simply not growing, even in good times. This economic sinkhole in the center wasn't in evidence when I was growing up in West Seattle. Back then, it seemed as though the majority of the parents worked at Boeing, or the port, or the steel mill – or they were teachers, or police officers, or shopkeepers. There was a large working and middle class; a comfortable quality of life with plenty of access to the common goods of the mountains and Puget Sound; and few signs of either great wealth or great poverty.

But without a strong, growing middle class, we are prone to a vicious cycle of less-robust consumer spending, lower government revenues, and reduced investment in the infrastructure and education needed for future growth and opportunity.

There are also race and place-based elements to these income gaps. Since the Great Recession, the average income for whites in King County has risen steadily and significantly, while blacks have experienced net average income loss.

Income inequality is a long-festering issue that has its roots in historical, macroeconomic, and social trends and policies. From the start, our nation set clear and unfair rules by race for who



could own land and accumulate wealth. Even as our postwar generation made progress on civil rights and enjoyed a period of shared and robust economic growth, we have seen the liberalization of trade and finance; the decline in the power of labor unions; significant shifts in national tax policy; and a decline in investment in education and infrastructure.

My core commitment for King County has been to create conditions under which each person can have a fair shot at success—regardless of race or wealth or place of residence. And, by fair shot, I don't mean a long shot.

This Annual Report highlights how King County has worked with our community, partners, and employees to realize tangible results, including reducing the rate of persons without medical insurance from 16 percent to below 10 percent, and creating a low-income transit fare to keep money in the pockets of those who most need it.

Our approach is based on the belief that people want – and should reasonably expect – a good and affordable place to live, ways to get around, a quality education for their kids, and fair access to the ladder of success. They don't need anyone to carry them up that ladder, just a solid foundation beneath their feet.

This Report also shows how we need to boldly address the root causes of inequities, such as with the newly voter-approved Best Starts for Kids, the most comprehensive approach to early childhood development in the nation. Best Starts for Kids is performance-driven and science-based, and starts with prenatal support, sustains the gain through teenage years, and invests in healthy, safe communities that reinforce progress.

Best Starts for Kids expands opportunity and begins the transition to less expensive, more effective upstream solutions to costly challenges such as mental illness, substance abuse, homelessness, domestic violence, and incarceration.

One-size-fits-all solutions won't address inequities; but we can accomplish that by meeting people where they are. This requires an intentional focus on addressing impacts on historically disadvantaged communities, while exploring and questioning the elements of our existing systems that have perpetuated disparate outcomes.

We must not be afraid to tackle the big racial equity issues of our time, including disproportionality in the justice system, and how practices and policies in schools, law enforcement, and the justice system have led to unacceptable outcomes for communities of color. These challenges demand from us community-wide collaboration.

To better connect our residents with their government, we must use innovative practices to strengthen human relationships and deepen communication between “We the people” and the people we employ, entrust, and empower to meet our community needs.

No change is possible in the community if we don't start our work internally and ensure that our employees are fully engaged. Our organizational culture has to be one in which employees listen to and respect each other, as we learn and grow together.

To achieve my goal of becoming the best run government, we need a workforce that is diverse at all levels. As a regional government working in an increasingly interconnected world, a diverse workforce makes us more competitive, innovative, and nimble – allowing us to provide the best services to the many communities we serve.

In this Report, you will read how we are preparing our organization and workforce to serve our increasingly diverse communities of tomorrow.

I thank all of you – our employees, community organizations, residents, businesses, local governments, and philanthropic groups – who have taken to heart our collective call to create a better and more prosperous region for everyone. We are making a difference.

Sincerely,



*Dow Constantine*  
King County Executive

# EQUITY FROM THE START

**Foreword by Brenda Blasingame, M.A.**  
**Seattle resident and National Director of Programs and Partnerships at Save the Children U.S. Programs. She is also an immediate past president of the Open Arms Perinatal Services Board and a University of Washington faculty member.**



**“A new baby is like the beginning of all things—wonder, hope, a dream of possibilities.” – Eda J. Leshan**

Every child is born into possibility, yet for too many the opportunity to reach that possibility is unequitable from the start. About 22 percent of our nation’s children live in poverty, and the numbers are even more devastating for children of color: 39 percent for African Americans, 37 percent for American Indians, 33 percent for Latinos/Hispanics, and 23 percent for mixed race children.

Best Starts for Kids, an initiative recently passed by King County voters, is a bold move to ensure that all children—regardless of race or economic status—have access to the support needed for the best possible start in life. The initiative follows what science and research have already proven: strategically investing in all children with prevention and intervention at critical development points in their early years can not only prevent negative outcomes later in life but can set the trajectory for lifelong success.

Sadly, equity has not always been part of our early childhood education history. For example, as the enslavement of blacks was coming to an end in the United States in the 1860s, our own state of Washington was establishing the first boarding school on the Yakima Reservation. And although the Supreme Court decision on *Brown v. Board of Education* was rendered in 1954, the fight to desegregate schools in our country continued into the 1970s. In 1965, Head Start became the first attempt to create equity nationally in early childhood education. A half century later we continue to work on achieving equity in education—and we still have a long road ahead.

Today we know more than ever about the critical earliest months and years of a child’s life. We know that 90 percent of a child’s brain develops during the first three years of life—and that by the time children are eight years old and usually in third grade, much of what they need to succeed in life has already been established. That includes cognitive, social and emotional development, gross motor skills, and the foundations of executive functioning, including the ability to pay attention, manage emotions and solve problems.

In King County about 25,000 children are born each year, and half of the young people under age 18 are people of color. What’s more, in some parts of the County, one in four children under the age of five live in poverty. The long-term consequences of ongoing poverty and adverse experiences are especially severe for the youngest children, making it less likely that they will graduate from high school, complete college, or be consistently employed as adults.

Achieving equity for the approximately 20,500 children in King County under the age of five living in poverty—plus children in families at other income levels who are also struggling—is the right thing to do, and it is the economically-sound thing to do.

## **USING TARGETED STRATEGIES TO ACHIEVE FAIR STARTS FOR ALL**

The Early Childhood Longitudinal Study, sponsored by the National Center for Educational Statistics, examines child development, school readiness, and early school experiences and shows that gaps for children who live in low income or poverty circumstances begin as early as nine months. Researchers from Stanford learned that by 18 months children in low-income families are already months behind their higher-income counterparts. If left as is, these gaps can widen over time, with the opportunity gap leading to the readiness gap, resulting in an achievement gap. What's more, children who fall behind tend to stay behind.

Across the County efforts are underway to increase the prospects available for all children, specifically those whose life circumstances limit access to necessary opportunities that support optimal early development. Best Starts for Kids further advances these opportunities with a concept known as “targeted universalism”—using focused strategies to reach universal goals.

The process starts by establishing goals for all children's success, then putting in place the supports needed for them to succeed. These supports are then customized to a child's specific environment. This ensures that children who are the furthest behind and have the most to gain get the custom-tailored support they need for optimal personal development.

## **WE ARE CHANGING THE TRAJECTORY THAT POVERTY AND RACIAL INEQUITIES PUT IN PLACE**

In addition to Best Starts for Kids, all across our County bold steps are being taken to create equal access to high-quality early childhood education opportunities. As a result, very young children are beginning their journey from cradle to college and career with the support they need for success. Some of the innovative approaches in our own backyard include:

- Thrive Washington, a statewide leader on racial equity in early learning. Thrive has invested in the development of a Racial Equity Theory of Change, a framework for advancing racial equity in early learning by ensuring that all children, especially those with minimal access to resources, have the support necessary for optimal development.
- The City of Seattle's new subsidized preschool pilot program operates on a sliding scale basis, making it accessible for families of all income levels. As a result, children from varying socio-economic backgrounds can learn together. Early research also shows that economic integration within preschool classrooms leads to stronger language skill development for all children.
- The Roadmap Project is taking place in South King County and South Seattle with a single goal: doubling the number of students who graduate from college or earn a career credential by 2020. Implementing a cradle-to-career approach, the project is focused on closing the opportunity and achievement gaps that exists for children of low-income families and children of color in seven King County school districts.

Today we live in a world that connects us in ways that we would have never imagined forty or even twenty years ago. We have to think differently about our future. It is no longer about “my” children and “those” children; it is about “our” children. We can no longer let a zip code or socio-economic status or race determine the likelihood of future success. Our futures are linked, and every child needs the opportunity to be his or her best possible self.

# KING COUNTY EQUITY AND SOCIAL JUSTICE: WHERE WE'VE BEEN AND WHERE WE'RE GOING

## OUR HISTORY

King County's work on equity and social justice can be described as fitting into three phases. Before 2008, many of our departments and agencies focused on disparities and disproportionality in various realms such as health and criminal justice, which were generally not coordinated across the County. In early 2008, then-King County Executive Ron Sims launched Equity and Social Justice (ESJ) an "initiative" based out of the Executive Branch designed to intentionally incorporate an equity lens into departments' policies and decisions, organizational practices and engagement with community.

Starting in 2010 with new King County Executive Dow Constantine and the County Council, Equity and Social Justice became an integrated part of the County's work with the countywide Strategic Plan and ESJ ordinance. This new ordinance named the Inter-Branch Team as the coordinator and facilitator of the County's equity work and formalized systems and frameworks, including the Determinants of Equity.

This last year represents the latest phase for King County Equity and Social Justice with two major developments: the creation of the Office of Equity and Social Justice and the launch of the first ESJ Strategic Plan process.

## OUR PRESENT AND FUTURE

### The new Office of Equity and Social Justice

Established on January 1, 2015, the new Office of Equity and Social Justice works hand-in-hand with the Inter-Branch Team to support the work of all County employees and agencies and serve as the backbone and coordinator of key County efforts to advance equity in the organization and community. Although there is now an ESJ Office, every County agency and employee is still ultimately responsible for advancing and being accountable for Equity and Social Justice activities and deliverables.

The ESJ Office and Inter-Branch Team work with and support staff in integrating and embedding equity into areas such as Best Run Government, Lean, budgeting and Lines of Business. These same players also lead a series of employee trainings, including basic ESJ, tools and race trainings. Similarly, the ESJ Office and Inter-Branch Team work with community-facing initiatives and support their staffs in integrating equity and social justice in plans, processes and policies. Work with partners includes Best Starts for Kids, the Juvenile Justice Equity Steering Committee, the Comprehensive Plan and the Strategic Climate Action Plan.

The ESJ Office also supports the commitment and work plan processes for all departments and agencies. These work plans are developed by Inter-Branch Team members



*A community discussion to shape the Equity and Social Justice Strategic Plan*



*Employees shaping our Equity and Social Justice Strategic Plan*

working with their departments and agencies—most of which have their own ESJ teams.

Currently a significant task of the ESJ Office is to work with Council and others to implement the recommendations of last year's Limited-English Proficiency (LEP) Proviso Report. The implementation of these Proviso Report recommendations will be closely integrated with the creation of the Immigrant and Refugee Task Force and its report and recommendations, which include the consideration of an immigrant and refugee commission.

### **The ESJ Strategic Plan**

Since spring of 2015 the County has been working on the development of the new ESJ Strategic Plan, which will guide the work of ESJ both in the short and long term. Questions that are driving the planning include: Where are the areas where ESJ can make the greatest impact? What is working and needs to be expanded? What is not working and needs to be discontinued? Where can King County learn and leverage “best practices” that promote change? Where are the areas of intersection where

King County can work together with partners in community organizations, business, labor, education, philanthropy and cities to achieve improved outcomes?

Created with the deep engagement of employees and the broader community, the ESJ Strategic Plan will impact lives and inequities by focusing on institutional policies, practices and systems and serve as a blueprint for change. It will also be a dynamic action plan for achieving greater institutional and regional equity and social justice. The strategic planning process is as important as the plan. The process is designed to gather and recognize employee and community equity-related priorities, challenges, assets and contributions, valuing the thoughts and experiences of employees and community partners from the start. By late 2015, close to 600 employees and several hundred organizations will have been engaged in the process.

The ESJ Strategic Plan will also define the role that King County Equity and Social Justice will have in leading and supporting regional equity efforts. King County continues to play a part in regional and national forums, such as Governing for Racial Equity Network, Place Matters, and the Puget Sound Regional Equity Network. And in addition to developing our internal capacity to tackle equity in the community, King County is also focused on building community capacity—in community-based organizations, local governments, labor organizations and other sectors—to position the region to address persistent inequities that King County government cannot address alone.

## SELECT ESJ HIGHLIGHTS AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS FROM THE PAST YEAR

- November 2014**
- ESJ Inter-Branch Team delegation attends the Race Forward conference in Dallas.
  - First ESJ Fair is held to highlight employee work and attended by a broad representation of employees.
- December**
- Hundreds of employees attend the ESJ Forum with a presentation by Rachel Godsil of the Perception Institute on implicit bias and structural racism. A team subsequently creates an anti-bias facilitation guide, available online.
- January 2015**
- New Office of Equity and Social Justice is created, with dedicated staffing and resources to work with the Inter-Branch Team to lead, support and coordinate internal and regional equity activities.
  - New Determinants of Equity Report identifies and catalogs community-level indicators for the Determinants of Equity to support equity reviews, plans and budgets, and performance management.
- February**
- The Seattle Foundation and King County invest \$1.5 million to expand successful community efforts that confront increasing inequity.
- March**
- King County leaders announce new actions to end racial disproportionality in the justice system, decriminalize homelessness and mental illness, and partner with schools and communities.
  - Metro's Partnership to Achieve Comprehensive Equity (PACE) Program is awarded the national Pacesetter award for its work as an unequaled example of "innovative leadership in public sector labor relations."
  - Bus service becomes more affordable for riders who qualify for Metro Transit's new ORCA LIFT reduced fare.
- April**
- Launch of two new ESJ trainings on Equity Tools and Race: The Power of an Illusion.
  - New Water Taxi, the MV Sally Fox, starts service with ADA friendly and passenger safety amenities.
- May**
- ESJ Strategic Planning process begins. Summer workshops are held with 560 employees and more than 100 organizations are engaged to shape the plan.
  - Nine Bridge Fellows graduate, complete a leadership program and produce a collaborative ESJ project.
- June**
- King County along with partner jurisdictions host the Governing for Racial Equity Conference to advance equity in government, with more than 500 people in attendance at the Seattle event.
  - New Strategic Climate Action Plan serves as roadmap for achieving ambitious targets to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, recognizing vulnerable communities that are most impacted by climate change.
- July**
- Executive and King County Council put Best Starts for Kids on the November ballot, giving voters the opportunity to transform the way the region invests in our children's future.
  - King County joins with community leaders, parents and youth to work to end racial disproportionality in our juvenile justice system, as part of the Juvenile Justice Equity Steering Committee.

## August

- New King County ordinance creates the Immigrant and Refugee Task Force to expand access to opportunities and voices in government.
- King County Council and Executive sign legislation broadening the Federal Voting Rights Law in King County by requiring voting materials be translated into languages beyond Chinese and Vietnamese, starting with Spanish and Korean.
- Seventeen employee projects awarded funds as part of the 2015-16 Equity and Social Justice Opportunity Fund.

## September

- Executive launches initiative to create 700 units of workforce housing around transit centers.
- Following intensive outreach and enrollment efforts by County and partners, census data confirms dramatic decrease in number of uninsured adults in King County.
- The Water Taxi's newest vessel, the MV Doc Maynard, starts service with ADA friendly and passenger safety amenities.

## October

- A new Immigrant and Refugee Task Force launches to examine better ways to integrate and engage immigrant and refugee residents and examine the creation of a commission.
- A delegation of King County employees and dozens of regional partners from community organizations, philanthropy and local jurisdictions attend PolicyLink's Equity Summit in Los Angeles.



*The Governing for Racial Equity Conference*



*Executive Constantine and Council Chair Phillips sign new voting rights legislation*

## REDUCED METRO FARES MAKE BUSES MORE AFFORDABLE TO THOUSANDS

ORCA LIFT, Metro's income-based reduced fare program, has grown at a steady pace since its inception in March 2015. The program, which is available to qualified riders whose income is below 200% of the federal poverty level, provides cardholders a savings of up to 50% of the per trip cost on Metro and Kitsap Transit buses, Sound Transit Link light rail, the King County Water Taxi and the Seattle Streetcar.

ORCA LIFT is a partnership between King County Metro and Public Health - Seattle & King County and includes eight human service agencies as participating enrollment sites. The program is on pace to enroll more than 25,000 people by the end of its first year as it continues to increase its outreach and enrollment. For example, it has been promoted as part of the current Affordable Care Act enrollment now under way.

Next steps for ORCA LIFT include expanding its use to employees of businesses with workforces at the minimum wage level and to clients of social and human service agencies that provide transportation subsidies.

The ORCA LIFT program was created based on significant input from the community and continues to be well regarded and supported, and it has helped advance the national debate on the connection between transportation and public health.



*Metro passengers*

## INCREASING ACCESS TO HEALTH CARE



*Enrollment event in South Park*

The Executive's "all-hands-on-deck" approach to promote enrollment under the Affordable Care Act helped more than 200,000 people enroll in the new healthcare insurance system -- dropping the percentage of uninsured adults in King County from 16 percent to below 10 percent.

The number of uninsured declined for all racial and ethnic groups. One highlight was the decline for African Americans, for whom the number of uninsured adults dropped by 60 percent.

These declines mean fewer local residents are delaying needed medical care because of cost, and more people are getting routine preventive care -- providing access to timely treatments and a better chance to control chronic diseases, such as diabetes or heart disease. They also can access crucial cancer screenings, early help for depression or for drug use problems, or vaccinations.

Still, as many as 139,000 adults do not have insurance, and King County continues to find new ways and partnerships to help individuals and families enroll in coverage, especially in the ethnic groups and zip codes with the greatest needs.

# BEST STARTS MATTER

## **DETERMINANT OF EQUITY:**

**Impacts all determinants**

**WHO: King County with a broad range of partners across multiple sectors**

**WHAT: Implementing preventive strategies that improve the well-being of all children**

In November of this year, King County voters approved the Best Starts for Kids levy, which is designed to improve the health and well-being of children, youth and young adults by investing in prevention and early intervention strategies.

Earlier parts of this Equity and Social Justice Annual Report have shown the needs that exist in many of our communities. Best Starts for Kids is a game changer that is moving us towards realizing that household income is no longer a top predictor of a child's success in life.

At its foundation, Best Starts for Kids is based on world-class science and research—much of it developed right here at the University of Washington—that tells us that supporting children and families early and at critical times throughout a child's youth is the best way to ensure his or her health, well-being and lifelong success.

All of the Best Starts for Kids strategies were developed with input from a wide range of community partners and practitioners in order to address equity in our County. These strategies are designed to be both universal and targeted, which means that some evidenced-based programs will be offered throughout the entire County, while others will be unique to certain geographical or cultural communities. The communities themselves will determine how best to meet their needs.

## **KEY AREAS**

**Investing Early.** Fifty percent of the levy goes towards strategies focused on pregnant women and children under age five, including a modest investment to sustain and expand parent and child health services that are delivered through the County's Public Health centers.

**Sustaining the Gain.** Thirty-five percent is dedicated to strategies focused on children and youth aged five through 24. Research tells us that the brain continues to develop during this time and that prevention methods focused on key developmental stages or transition points in a young person's life help sustain gains made earlier in life.

**Communities Matter.** Ten percent of funds go towards community-level strategies to expand and sustain the partnership between King County and The Seattle Foundation on Communities of Opportunity. This community initiative is based on our understanding of the impact of place on a child's success and the importance of supporting communities in building their own capacity to create positive change.

**Outcomes-Focused.** Five percent of funds will support evaluation—allowing the County to both assure that we are achieving the results we hope for with Best Starts for Kids and allowing community-based organizations to show that their programs work.

## **EXAMPLES OF BEST STARTS FOR KIDS STRATEGIES INCLUDE:**

**Universal access to developmental screenings** for very young children, when it is proven to be most effective at helping infants and toddlers prepare for school.

**Increased access to mental-health screenings** for middle school-age youth.

**Nurse home visitations for first-time mothers**—from pregnancy through a child's first two years—to make sure they get off to a strong, healthy start.

**Flexible funding for families to prevent homelessness.** For example, helping a working mother keep her transportation so she can make it to work and not lose her job, decreasing the likelihood that she and her family become homeless.

# BUILDING EQUITABLE COMMUNITIES WHERE NEEDS ARE GREATEST

## **DETERMINANTS OF EQUITY:**

**Impacts all determinants**

**WHO:** Community organizations, The Seattle Foundation and King County

**WHAT:** Creating greater health, social, economic and racial equity

Launched as a partnership between The Seattle Foundation and King County in March 2014, Communities of Opportunity is now a broad partnership with community organizations with the ambitious goal of creating greater health, social, economic and racial equity in King County.

Part of the inspiration for Communities of Opportunity were the King County maps that showed the census tracts with the greatest inequities across several measures of well-being.

"It's one thing to hear statistics, but when you start putting those facts into a visual representation, you see that there are parts of King County where residents' lives are shorter, health is poorer, fewer children are graduating from high school, unemployment is higher and they're all clustered together," says Alice Ito, the Director of Community Programs at The Seattle Foundation.

The other inspiration comes from the people and voices in the communities themselves.

**"In White Center, residents' voices make the difference in identifying what is important to this community," says Sili Savusa, Executive Director of the White Center Community Development Association. "Communities of Opportunity helps us maintain our accountability to families and build our relationships with each other and our collaborative partners in a way that makes sense to the White Center community."**

Communities of Opportunity maximizes positive impact by using cross-sector partnerships to co-design strategies with community leaders. Along with catalyzing public and private resources to serve underinvested neighborhoods, Community of Opportunity works on policy and systems change with place-based strategies to improve health, housing, economic opportunity and community cohesion.

"In the past few years, the diverse communities in the Rainier Valley began to come together to improve our livelihoods, preserve and express our cultures, secure resources and grow indigenous leadership," says Tony To, the Executive Director of HomeSight. "Communities of Opportunity has been instrumental in leveraging these existing efforts to better enable community ownership of solutions across issues and interests."

So far, the key to Communities of Opportunity's success has been the balance between "context" experts who know the community and its interests intimately and "content" experts who have the technical know-how.

Throughout 2015, monthly co-design meetings with 50/50 representation between local community representatives and institutional staff were held to develop strategies and evaluation indicators for each of the three local cross-sector partnerships in the Rainier Valley area of Seattle (with HomeSight as the lead), SeaTac and Tukwila (Global to Local), and the White Center/North Highline unincorporated area (White Center Community Development Association).



*Community, philanthropic and government representatives jointly designing strategies*

**“Global to Local and the Food Innovation Network are building on the business skills and experience of SeaTac and Tukwila residents,” says Adam Taylor, Executive Director of Global to Local. “ We are working to bring groups together across multiple sectors to collectively address long-standing problems, while recognizing that those solutions can and should be community driven.”**

“Communities of Opportunity says that instead of working alone in siloes, we must work together in cross sectors and concentrate our investments in the places with the most urgent needs and the greatest potential. We are focusing on community-driven efforts and catalyzing our systems and policies so that we drive resources to this 20 percent of our County, which actually

benefits our entire County,” says Kirsten Wysen, Project Manager at Public Health–Seattle and King County.

The insights so far have been enlightening, and the teams will continue to learn more as they move from the design to implementation phases of the five-year funding commitments to these sites.

**“With Communities of Opportunity we are beginning to see the connections and profound impact on health and life expectancy in areas where people do not have adequate housing security and other amenities that form the social determinants of health,” says Cheryl Markham, Strategic Advisor for Community Development and Housing at King County Department of Community and Human Services.**

## KING COUNTY DATA, DEMOGRAPHICS, AND ASSETS

POPULATION MEASURES	LOWEST RANKED	HIGHEST RANKED
<b>Life expectancy</b>	74 years	87 years
<b>Health, broadly defined:</b>		
Frequent mental distress	14%	4%
Smoking	20%	5%
Obesity	33%	14%
Diabetes	13%	5%
Preventable hospitalizations	1.0%	0.4%
<b>Housing:</b>		
Poor housing conditions	8%	0%
<b>Economic opportunity:</b>		
Income below 200% poverty	54%	6%
Unemployment	13%	3%

**Rainier Valley, population 41,350:** Active business association, deep cultural roots, diverse immigrant communities, 59 languages, ethnic community centers, youth initiatives, residents aim to thrive.

**White Center, population 17,760:** Engaged resident leaders, institutional partnerships in place, ethnically and culturally diverse community with a well-supported community development association, vibrant multi-ethnic business district, two Hope VI communities, three parks, affordable housing.

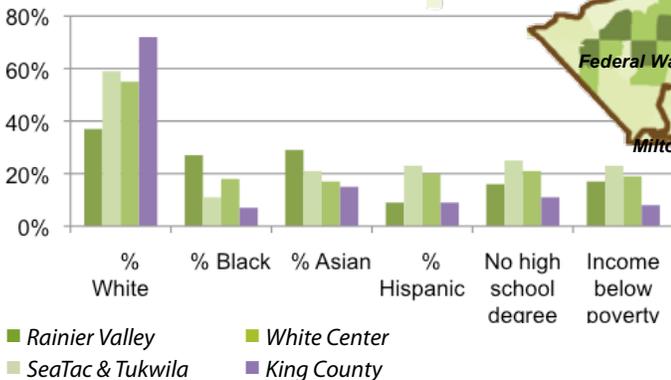
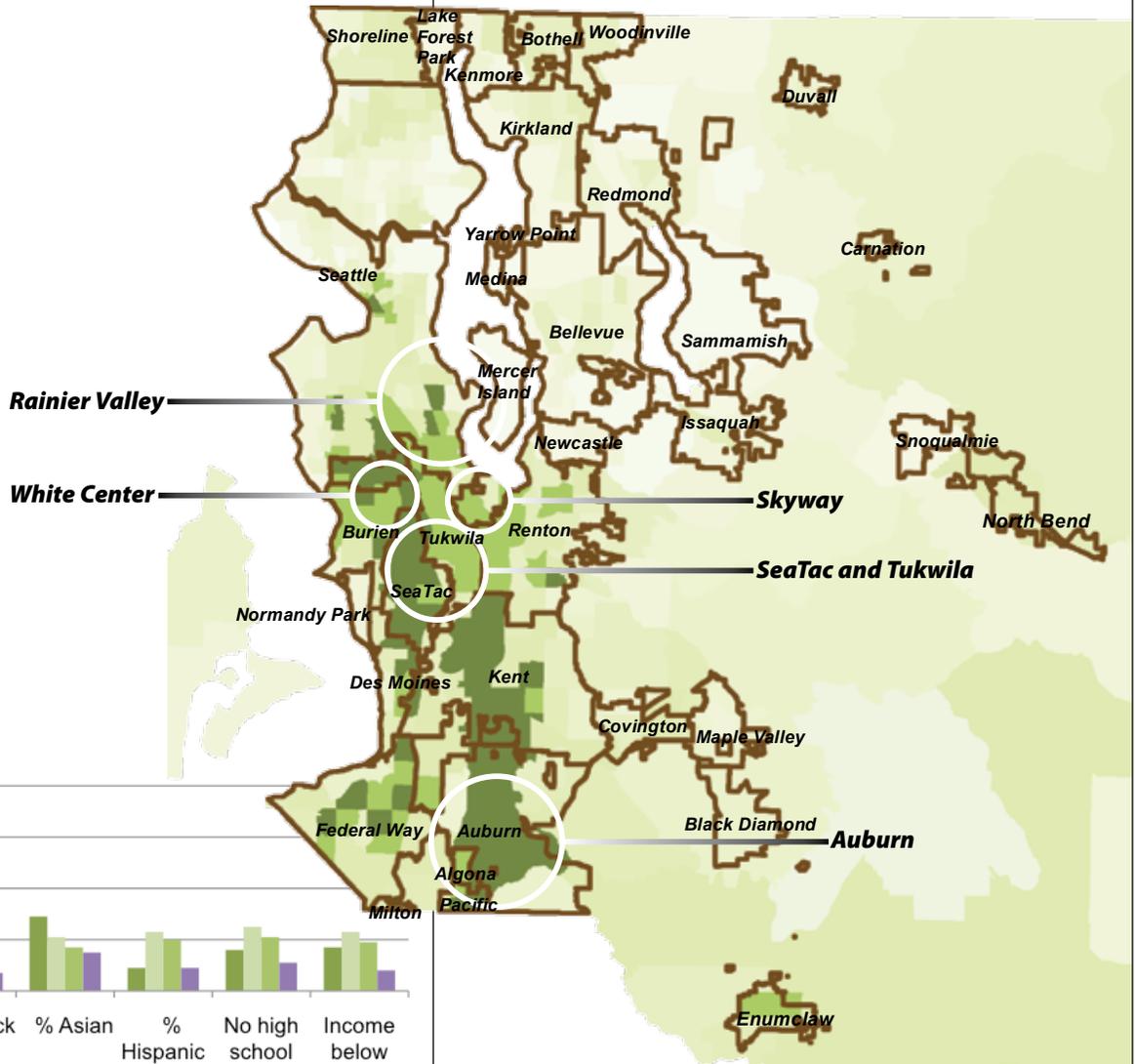
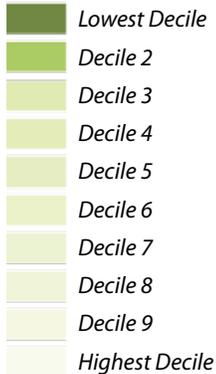
**SeaTac and Tukwila, population 46,321:** Diverse community, 70 languages, Food Innovation Network in place to create entrepreneurial and employment opportunities, residents interested in catering, food processing, baking, food trucks and urban farming.

**Auburn and Skyway:** Planning grants awarded.

### LEGEND

— City Boundaries

### RANKING



Data: Public Health-Seattle & King County, King County Health Profile, Health Reporting Areas, December 2014

# ROOTING OUT RACIAL DISPROPORTIONALITY IN JUVENILE DETENTION

**DETERMINANTS OF EQUITY:** Equitable law and justice system, equity in County practices, family wage jobs and job training, quality education, community and public safety

**WHO:** All three branches of King County government with youth advocates and leaders from juvenile justice reform, school districts, police departments, courts and local governments

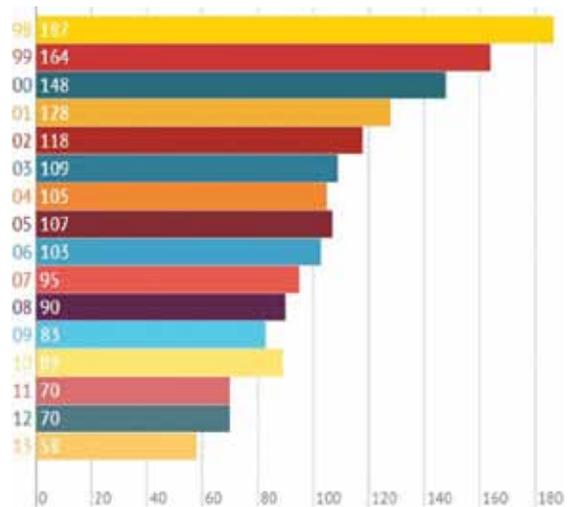
**WHAT:** Addressing persistent disproportionality in juvenile detention

Over the last 20 years, the data on King County's juvenile justice system have told a bittersweet story.

A rise in alternatives to detention and improved court practices helped cut the number of King County youth in detention down by nearly three-fourths, reducing the daily population from a high of 205 young people in 2000 to a low of 45 in 2014. Numbers of youth in detention for every race have shrunk in the last decade, even as the County's population has grown to 2 million. Today, only about a quarter of the 212 beds at Youth Services Center are filled.

But as the overall number of young people in detention went down, the proportion of black youth in detention went up. Although only 10 percent of King County's youth population is black, they make up almost half of our juvenile detention population. Black youth are not benefiting from King County's work to reduce the detention population as much as others, showing the need for a stronger focus on racial equity in our work.

**JUVENILE DETENTION POPULATION IN KING COUNTY, 1998-2013**



"Racial disparity has no place in our justice system here in King County, especially not in systems responsible for the well-being of our youth," said King County Executive Dow Constantine.

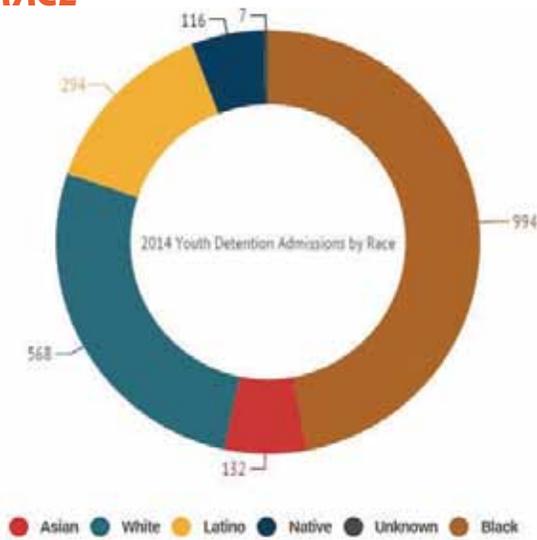
King County is not alone in seeing growing racial disparities in detention. According to the Juvenile Detention Alternatives Initiative, no urban region in the United States has been able to decrease its youth detention population without seeing racial disparities grow.

Inspired by local and national grassroots movements to reduce the use of detention, all three branches of King County government took steps to break the national trend when it announced the formation of several commitments and an action plan for juvenile-justice reform in March 2015.

**Executive Dow Constantine** pledged to cap the number of detention beds at the future Children and Family Justice Center at 112, nearly half the number available at the Youth Services Center today.

**King County Superior Court** set a goal of cutting the use of detention for probation violators 50 percent by April 2016, which could help reduce racial disproportionality in detention.

## 2014 YOUTH DETENTION ADMISSIONS BY RACE



**The Court** also set a goal to eliminate the detention for young people who run away from home, violate curfews, and are truant or responsible for other so-called “status violations,” except in cases when a youth’s life is in danger.

**King County Councilmembers Larry Gossett, Jim McDermott and Dave Upthegrove** committed to proposing an additional \$4 million in mentoring and job-training programs for youth, especially in economically distressed areas of South King County.

**A Juvenile Justice Equity Steering Committee** was organized by members of all three branches. Half the members of the committee include youth advocates, formerly detained youth and juvenile-justice reform leaders. The other half is made up of institutional leaders from King County school districts, police departments, courts and governments. The committee met for the first time in September and will form specific policy recommendations to help dismantle the school-to-prison pipeline.

“We really have no ability to fix these [problems] alone,” said King County Juvenile Court Wesley Saint Clair in an interview with King County TV in August 2015. “But together as a community, where there are many minds working toward something. . . there are real opportunities for us to make some substantial changes.”

In addition to these new commitments to combat systemic racism, several other programs were launched to reduce the detention population and the disparities within it. They include:

**Creative Justice:** With the help of Seattle’s 1 Percent for Art funds from the Children and Family Justice Center project, arts organization 4Culture launched the County’s first art-based alternative to detention after months of careful coordination with staff from the King County Prosecuting Attorney’s Office and King County Superior Court. The program’s mentor artists use writing, music, performance and visual art to help participants better understand themselves and the circumstances that often lead to incarceration. The program also strengthens positive decision-making and emotional expression skills to help young people avoid future court involvement. Creative Justice will serve a total of 48 youth this year.

**Restorative Mediation:** Restorative justice sessions are led by mediators who help offenders understand the full impact of their actions directly from victims. Mediators also help offenders devise solutions for making amends and advise them on what community-based support is available to help them stay out of the criminal justice system in the future. The County’s Restorative Mediation pilot, developed by Polly Davis of King County’s Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) in coordination with the Prosecuting Attorney’s Office and King County Superior Court, includes youth co-mediators from another restorative justice program Davis has helped develop at Garfield High School in Seattle’s Central District. Mediation can take place anywhere the parties involved feel comfortable, including community centers.

**Peace Circles:** Over the last two years, King County employees from a number of agencies and departments have participated in the Center for Ethical Leadership's Peacemaking Initiative, a leadership practice of deep listening and storytelling to build trust and strengthen relationships. Several County departments have conducted Peacemaking Circles to address issues and relationships with each other and the communities they touch. The Peace Circle process is commonly used in restorative justice programs. With the support of County leadership, some county employees with Peace Circle experience participated in a three-day Peace Circle involving Garfield High School staff.

More information and updates on these initiatives and other programs can be found at [www.KCYouthJustice.com](http://www.KCYouthJustice.com).

**"I feel like our young people at Garfield High School will be in a better place as a result of the peace circles.**

**Their teachers have learned to place a higher value on building a relationship with students, which will allow them to be much more compassionate and understanding."**

**– Marcus Stubblefield, King County Systems Integration Coordinator**



*Peace Circle*

# CREATING A DIVERSE AND INCLUSIVE WORKFORCE

## **DETERMINANT OF EQUITY:**

### **Equity in County practices**

**WHO: All County agencies working with Human Resources**

**WHAT: Improving County employee recruitment, development and promotional opportunities to create a better, more diverse and culturally responsive workforce**

As King County grows and changes, the needs of our residents are also changing. A talented and diverse workforce at all levels is essential to making sure that we're meeting the needs of the more than two million people who call our area home.

King County Executive Dow Constantine recently launched *Best-Run Government: Employees*, a major new initiative aimed at modernizing the County's recruitment, development, compensation and business systems so we're better able to meet the changing needs of the people we serve today—and into the future.

A key piece of this work is ensuring that our workforce reflects the diversity of the people and communities of King County in order to make us stronger and more effective.

"The economy of our region has been driven by people who have come from all over the world. As a regional government, diversity makes us more competitive, innovative, and nimble, allowing us to provide the best services to the many communities we serve," says Constantine.

Compared to the overall available workforce, King County's includes proportionally more people of color. At the same time, our workforce has proportionally less people of color than the communities we serve—and less people of color at the higher end of the pay scale.

*Best-Run Government: Employees* works in three key areas to enhance racial diversity across our workforce: recruitment, development and promotional opportunities. It gives our current employees opportunities to try on different roles and grow, supports employees as they step into leadership roles, and helps us continue to attract talented candidates from different backgrounds and industries.

## **OUR KING COUNTY WORKFORCE**

- **Over 13,000 employees**
- **One in three is a person of color**
- **Less racial diversity at higher pay ranges**
- **85% union represented by 100 bargaining units**
- **One in 10 eligible to retire today, 3 in 10 eligible to retire in five years**

## **WHAT WE'RE DOING**

### **RECRUITMENT**

- **Launching a research-based campaign to encourage candidates of diverse backgrounds to visit the "Go Public" employment portal and to work for King County**
- **Revising job descriptions and advertisements to remove unnecessary minimum qualifications that could be artificial barriers to employment for otherwise qualified individuals**
- **Allowing candidates to substitute equivalent experience for education in job applications where possible**
- **Ensuring diversity of race, gender and age on interview panels and training panel members to be aware of and alert to their implicit biases in the process**
- **Proactively seeking candidates from diverse backgrounds and communities for job openings and encouraging them to apply**
- **Advertising job opportunities online, on social media, and through local colleges and community publications to connect with qualified individuals from underrepresented groups**

- Actively promoting our supported employment program and highlighting King County’s accommodation program to encourage greater placement of employees with disabilities
- Continuing our efforts to become a veteran-ready employer by building on the 87 veterans we hired in 2014

## DEVELOPMENT

- Opened an Employee Resource Center, where employees can learn more about King County careers and brush up on their resume writing and interview skills
- Rebuilt our learning and development program, which now offers both classroom and online training. In 2014, 171 classes were held with a total employee attendance of more than 6,400.
- Piloted the first Bridge Academy to help employees develop leadership skills, learn more about County systems and operations, and advance their King County careers. A Bridge Academy graduate has been hired to expand the program in 2016.
- Worked with union leadership to explore how we can better connect members with learning and development opportunities
- Continued to offer a leadership academy to help supervisors, managers and aspiring leaders develop their leadership skills
- Enhanced our employee mentorship program

## PROMOTIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

- Systematically streamlining our job classification system to provide clear pathways for employees moving up and across the organization
- Advertising special duty, stretch assignments and job openings transparently across the County
- Conducting pilot programs to increase the number of part-time opportunities available to staff as they transition into retirement and other phases of their life and making special duty assignments available for other employees

King County’s basic policies and processes that are in place today—our fundamental “personnel” system—were largely put in place in 1969 and refined in 1972 when King County was a very different place to live and work. We have a lot of work to do to ensure that we are more welcoming and attractive to the workforce of today and tomorrow.

*Best-Run Government: Employees* provides the framework for making the changes we need to become a more modern, diverse and nimble employer. Some of these changes are already underway, while some will be implemented over the next 18 months.

“We recognize that we need to show, in all we do and how we do it, that we value the diversity of thought, experience, background and ideas that employees—current, prospective and future—bring to public service,” says Nancy Buonanno-Grennan, the County’s Human Resources Director. “By using a lens of equity and opportunity, we are slowly dismantling our old ways of doing business and incorporating less bureaucratic and more responsive ways of recruiting, developing, supporting and engaging our employees.”

**“The economy of our region has been driven by people who have come from all over the world. As a regional government, diversity makes us more competitive, innovative, and nimble, allowing us to provide the best services to the many communities we serve,” says Constantine.**

## BRIDGE FELLOWSHIP

In May 2015, the first Bridge Fellows graduated from the inaugural Bridge Fellowship program, part of King County's commitment to empowering and developing our employees.

The program selected nine applicants from across the County to participate in a one-year leadership development program designed to advance their careers with King County. The participants learned more about King County as an organization, shadowed employees in other County roles, created development plans for growth, and worked collaboratively on a team project designed to extend the knowledge of Equity and Social Justice across King County.

"The Bridge Fellowship was a great experience for me. It gave me the opportunity to learn how King County works from leaders and a wide range of subject matter experts," says Debra Baker, one of the Bridge Fellows. "The program helped me develop new skills and put me in a better position to be successful in a special duty opportunity."



*Bridge Fellows at graduation*

## FITTING THE PIECES TOGETHER: IT'S ALL ABOUT RESPECT

King County wants to be the best-run government in the nation. That means we are committed to using Lean methods to continuously improve, advancing equity and social justice, and engaging employees in our mission and their work.

These three efforts have one important thing in common: the basic value of and respect for people.

- **Lean**, or continuous improvement, empowers the people who do the work. Lean focuses on delivering more value to our customers—the people of King County—by eliminating waste in our work processes. With Lean problem solving, we plan, measure and adjust our work to continuously improve and more effectively deliver services to the people of King County.

- **Equity and social justice** ensures that as we solve problems, we take advantage of opportunities to promote equity and address root causes of our region's greatest challenges and problems.

- By focusing on creating a workforce in which **employees are engaged**, we create an environment where people are inspired to do their best as they solve problems and build equity in our communities. The bottom line is employees who see a purpose to investing their energy, feel safe taking risks, know what really matters, and have the support and resources to make meaningful contributions.

## EXPANDING OPPORTUNITY AND DEVELOPING OUR FUTURE WORKFORCE THROUGH INTERNSHIPS

Internships and mentorships of youth are critical for expanding opportunities to those who traditionally have not been exposed to King County and other major employers.

For example, the Department of Community and Humans Services' summer youth employment program placed 205 young adults into summer internships. Of these, 76 percent were young people of color, 95 percent were low income, 15 percent were homeless and 21 percent were involved in the justice system.

"It was so hard to get a job before the summer internship program. It has helped me appreciate being employed and I am very glad for the opportunity. I am homeless and living in a shelter. . . but now with an income, I will have money to work towards having my own place to live," says one intern.

The internship placements varied broadly. Twenty-three young adults were placed into internships in eight different King County departments and an additional 14 students participated in an "earn and learn" project with the Departments of Natural Resources and Parks. One youth will continue in a longer-term internship in Roads, while another was hired by the Department of Transportation as a temporary employee.



*Intern Thu Phan (right) with Assistant Roads Maintenance Manager Joann Kosai-Eng*

# TRANSFORMING THE ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE FROM WITHIN

## DETERMINANTS OF EQUITY:

### Equity in County practices

**WHO: Amalgamated Transit Union 587, Professional & Technical Employees Local 17, King County employees and management**

**WHAT: Employees, unions and management working together to create an inclusive culture built on openness, shared responsibility and respect**

In 2013, King County Metro Transit received an open letter published by Amalgamated Transit Union Local 587 that decried concerns with longstanding issues of disparity and bias in the workplace. The letter closed with a plea for a sincere labor-management partnership to create a culture of openness and objectivity.

Metro responded by joining with the union in a new partnership. The members of this Partnership to Achieve Comprehensive Equity (PACE) agreed to “work together with sincerity to usher in a culture of openness and objectivity.” In this proposed culture, all Metro employees will be respected, engaged and empowered at work, which in turn will allow them to provide the best possible service to the community.

Today, as a chartered partnership between employees, labor unions (representing both supervisors and employees) and management, PACE asks employees to

help identify barriers they see to inclusion and to recommend strategies for overcoming those barriers.

PACE is also a platform for courageous learning about sensitive issues like cultural competence, implicit bias, and power and privilege. It leads the way for Metro and its employees to embrace the richness of differences we all bring to the workplace—to the benefit of the organization as a whole, the employees and the region we serve.

In the words of Metro Deputy General Manager Rob Gannon, “PACE is intended to become the engine of sustainable organization change that is holistic, profound and irreversible.”

As it pursues its mission of building and sustaining an inclusive, fair and equitable workplace for everyone, PACE seeks to do the following:

- Respect, engage and empower employees
- Create shared responsibility for the work culture
- Use proven processes for transforming organizations
- Be intentionally inclusive

There’s still a long way to go before Metro achieves its goal of comprehensive equity, but the agency is already making significant progress. Its new Diversity and



*The PACE triangle*



*Employees, unions and management working together*

Inclusion Manager, Anita Whitfield, is working to identify the building blocks needed for an effective and sustainable diversity and inclusion program.

Meanwhile, a recent recruitment effort to fill seven transit chief vacancies was directly influenced by the employee-driven PACE recommendations, which focused on increasing transparency and helping applicants navigate the recruitment process. The result was a highly qualified and diverse group of new transit chiefs—a win for all.

“When we do it well, our ability to truly value and embrace each other’s differences can have far-reaching, positive impacts,” Whitfield said. In the case of the transit

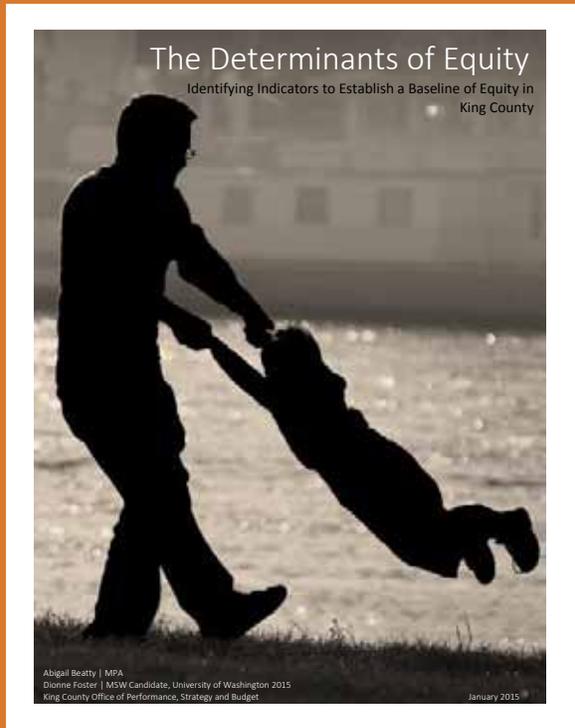
chief recruitment, not only does Metro benefit from the diverse thinking and life experiences of these highly qualified candidates, but the new process “provides real hope to those who don’t believe they will ever have a chance because they don’t fit a traditional mold.”

# THE MEASURES OF EQUITY

In early 2015, King County released the report, “The Determinants of Equity: Identifying Indicators to Establish a Baseline of Equity in King County.” This report was an effort to set an equity baseline for community-level measures.

The report highlights outcomes for 13 of the 14 determinants of equity that focus on community conditions—including social, physical and economic factors. The report team selected 67 community-level indicators for the report, then narrowed them down to the 21 top-tier indicators for their significance and impact on multiple determinant areas.

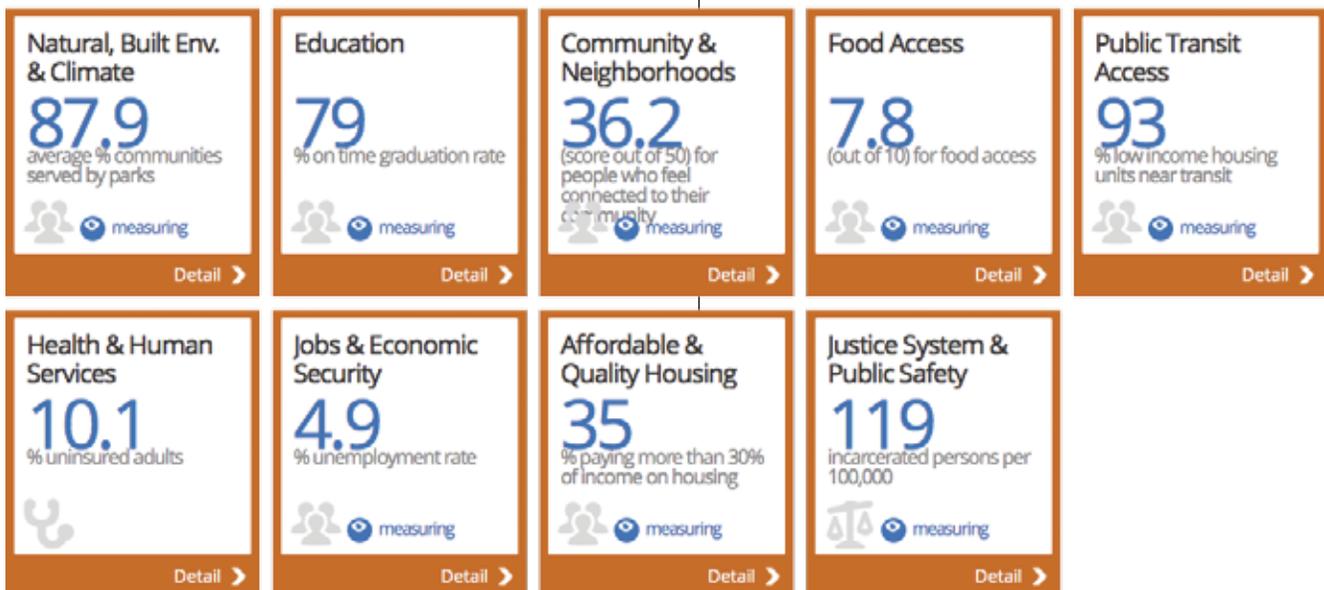
This Determinants of Equity report echoes previous findings from ESJ annual reports that race and place are significant predictors of outcomes across a broad spectrum of measures. In late 2015, key indicators were published online on the new public-facing Open Performance Dashboard. One of the goals of this tool is to enable the public to engage with King County through simplified and centralized access to operational performance data, strategic indicators and community trends.



The full Determinants of Equity report can be viewed at [www.kingcounty.gov/equity](http://www.kingcounty.gov/equity)

## EQUITY AND SOCIAL JUSTICE ONLINE DASHBOARD

<https://performance.kingcounty.gov>





*Our annual forum focused on addressing implicit bias, racial anxiety and stereotype threat*



*Our first Equity and Social Justice Fair for employees*



*King County's 2015 Juneteenth Celebration*



Affordable, safe, quality housing  
Access to parks and natural resources  
Equity in County practices  
Access to affordable, healthy, local food  
Equitable law and justice system  
Community and public safety  
Access to safe and efficient transportation  
Quality education  
Healthy built and natural environments  
Family wage jobs and job training  
Early childhood development  
Economic development  
Strong, vibrant neighborhoods



**King County**