

CITY COUNCIL AGENDA ITEM
CITY OF SHORELINE, WASHINGTON

AGENDA TITLE:	Discussing the King County Land Conservation Initiative		
DEPARTMENT:	Parks, Recreation, and Cultural Services		
PRESENTED BY:	Eric Friedli, PRCS Department Director		
ACTION:	<input type="checkbox"/> Ordinance	<input type="checkbox"/> Resolution	<input type="checkbox"/> Motion
	<input type="checkbox"/> Public Hearing	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Discussion	

PROBLEM/ISSUE STATEMENT:

King County has a goal of working with cities to conserve more than 65,000 acres of high conservation value lands within a generation (30 years) - including urban greenspaces, farmlands, forestlands, natural areas, and trails. King County is one of the fastest growing large counties in the U.S.

In November 2015, the King County Council, via Motion 14458, asked King County Executive Dow Constantine to develop a work plan for implementing a program to protect and conserve land and water resources – the King County Land Conservation Initiative (Initiative). The County Executive convened a Land Conservation Advisory Group to review and make recommendations on the County Executive's *Land Conservation Work Plan*. The Advisory Group represents the business community, land conservation organizations, cities, the environmental community, and other stakeholders. The Advisory Group met 15 times from September 2016 to December 2017, and issued a final Report of recommendations to Executive Constantine and the King County Council on December 29, 2017.

The County Executive has considered these recommendations and the path forward will be presented at tonight's City Council meeting. Tonight, staff will be joined by Darren Greve from the King County Department of Natural Resources and Parks Director's Office to present this item.

FINANCIAL IMPACT:

There is no financial impact related to this discussion.

RECOMMENDATION

No formal action is required; this is a discussion item only.

Approved By: City Manager **DT**

City Attorney **MK**

BACKGROUND

King County has a goal of working with cities to conserve more than 65,000 acres of high conservation value lands within a generation (30 years) - including urban green spaces, farmlands, forest lands, natural areas, and trails. King County is one of the fastest growing large counties in the U.S. More than 2 million people call King County home today, with an expected 25 percent increase in population by 2040. The region must act quickly to protect our most-important remaining conservation lands before prices escalate and we lose opportunities to development.

In November 2015, the King County Council, via Motion 14458, asked King County Executive Dow Constantine to develop a work plan for implementing a program to protect and conserve land and water resources. County Council Motion 14458 can be found at the following web link:

<http://your.kingcounty.gov/dnrp/library/water-and-land/land-conservation/business-documents/motion-14458.pdf>.

The County Executive prepared the requested plan and submitted it to the County Council in March 2016. The *Land Conservation and Preservation Work Plan* (Work Plan) can be found at the following web link:

<http://your.kingcounty.gov/dnrp/library/natural-resources/land-conservation/king-county-land-conservation-workplan-march-2016.pdf>.

To assist in this effort, the County Executive convened a Land Conservation Advisory Group to review and make recommendations on the County Executive's Work Plan. The Advisory Group represents the business community, land conservation organizations, cities, the environmental community, and other stakeholders. Information on the Land Conservation Advisory Group, including its membership, can be found at the following web link:

<http://www.kingcounty.gov/services/environment/water-and-land/land-conservation/advisory-group.aspx>.

The Advisory Group met 15 times from September 2016 to December 2017, and issued a Final Report of recommendations on December 29, 2017. The Final Advisory Group Report can be found at the following web link:

<https://your.kingcounty.gov/dnrp/library/water-and-land/land-conservation/business-documents/king-county-land-conservation-advisory-group-final-report.pdf>.

King County staff met with Shoreline staff twice in the fall of 2016 to learn more about the initiative. During these meetings, Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services (PRCS) staff presented the land acquisition priorities included in the Parks, Recreation and Open Space Plan (PROS Plan). County staff also briefed the Shoreline City Council in September 2017 before the Advisory Group reconvened to make their final recommendations and issue their Final Report. The staff report for this Council discussion can be found at the following web link:

<http://cosweb.ci.shoreline.wa.us/uploads/attachments/cck/council/staffreports/2017/staff-report091117-8b.pdf>.

DISCUSSION

As noted above, County Executive Constantine transmitted the Land Conservation and Preservation Work Plan to King County Council in March 2016. Based on the King County Council's direction, King County's conservation efforts were originally focused in five major categories, which taken together benefit nature and people. They are:

- **Natural lands** for clean water, clean air, passive recreation opportunities, healthy communities, salmon recovery and wildlife, and resilience in an uncertain future;
- **Farmland** for healthy local food and a thriving agricultural economy;
- **Forestland** for clean water, clean air, salmon recovery and wildlife, and a sustainable timber industry;
- **River valley and nearshore land** for flood safety, salmon recovery, recreation, and a healthy Puget Sound; and
- **Trail corridor connections** to complete a world-class regional trail network to increase mobility, improve human health and reduce pollution.

A sixth area of focus was added by the Advisory Group, **urban green space**, in its Phase 1 Report. This category was recommended to be generally consistent with King County's five land categories identified above and should be defined through work with cities and historically underserved communities.

Throughout the two year Advisory Group process County staff engaged with all 39 cities multiple times and together mapped, priced, and prioritized 65,000 acres of the remaining highest conservation value lands to protect through this Initiative. When accounting for existing funding sources and 30 years of inflation and real estate appreciation, the additional funding needed to protect these lands is approximately \$2.5 billion over the next 30 years.

The Advisory Group's Final recommendations include:

Vision

- We endorse the goals and strategies of the Executive's Initiative to protect and secure the 65,000 acres of remaining high conservation value lands within the next 30 years.

Equity

- Equity must be an over-arching theme across this entire Initiative. Land protection is a region-wide benefit; the County and cities must ensure these benefits accrue to all residents.
- Set a base level of investment in open space equity by dedicating at least \$160 million specific to the task of eliminating disparities in access to public open spaces and trails in communities with the greatest and most acute needs. This dedicated funding is in addition to all the rest of the funding raised in the Initiative for which these priority areas are equally eligible.
- Advance Open Space Equity work early next year to engage cities and communities about the opportunities through this Initiative, and to establish community readiness in two or three initial priority areas.
- Establish an Open Space Equity cabinet to set policy, and oversee and monitor progress towards the addition of green spaces in priority areas.

Operations & Maintenance

- Provide funding in the King County Parks Levy to adequately fund operations and maintenance (O & M) of newly acquired lands to ensure new lands acquired by the County and by cities retain their conservation value, are clean, safe, and welcoming to the public; funding should be adaptable to the County's and cities' unique needs.

Ongoing Work with Cities

- Work with city partners to identify the remaining city acquisition priorities.
- In partnership with cities, develop a fair and transparent system of allocating funding that balances the need to bring funding forward through bonds to accelerate major acquisitions, with the need for continued flexibility to respond to emergent acquisition opportunities.
- Continue on-going County-city dialogue regarding implementation of the Initiative that is beyond the scope of this Advisory Group's recommendations.

Funding and Pace

- Pursue all available opportunities to further accelerate the acquisition pace, as real estate prices rise and development pressures continue to grow, including updating the King County Conservation Futures Tax Levy (CFT) policies to allow bonding against more than 50% of CFT revenue. Accelerating the pace to within 30 years will save an estimated \$15 billion and make it possible to secure these lands before they are lost.
- Rely on the Current Use Taxation (CUT) program as a strategy for protecting high conservation value lands that are not immediately at risk of development and implement a CUT "enrollment drive" for high conservation value lands that may not be immediately available for conservation acquisition; prepare to act swiftly if a CUT-enrolled property becomes vulnerable to withdrawal from the CUT program.
- Leverage public dollars from the Initiative to help steer philanthropic and other private funding to this Initiative in partnership with non-profit organizations.
- Reset the CFT levy to its original 6.25 cents/\$1,000 assessed value (AV), and consider up to two additional future resets of CFT to fill the funding gap. This will have a \$10 per year impact to the median value home in King County.

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