



# KING COUNTY

1200 King County Courthouse  
516 Third Avenue  
Seattle, WA 98104

## Signature Report

### Ordinance 18890

**Proposed No.** 2019-0084.2

**Sponsors** Balducci, von Reichbauer, Kohl-  
Welles, McDermott and Dembowski

1 AN ORDINANCE providing for the submission to the  
2 qualified electors of King County at a special election to be  
3 held in King County on August 6, 2019, of a proposition  
4 authorizing a property tax levy in excess of the levy  
5 limitation contained in chapter 84.55 RCW for a period of  
6 six consecutive years, at a total rate of not more than  
7 \$0.1832 per one thousand dollars of assessed valuation in  
8 the first year and limiting annual levy increases by the King  
9 County inflation plus population index published by the  
10 King County office of economic and financial analysis, or  
11 the chapter 84.55 RCW limitation, whichever is greater in  
12 years two through six for the purpose of maintaining and  
13 operating King County's open space system; improving  
14 parks, recreation, access and mobility in the King County  
15 open space system by acquiring lands and continuing to  
16 develop regional trails; improving parks and trails in and  
17 acquiring lands by metropolitan parks districts, towns and  
18 cities in King County; funding environmental education,  
19 maintenance and conservation programs at the Woodland

20 Park Zoo; funding capital construction at the Seattle  
21 Aquarium; and funding for capital improvements at  
22 publicly owned pools, for all King County residents.

23 STATEMENT OF FACTS:

24 1. King County owns and operates a system of regional and local parks  
25 and trails that consists of twenty-eight thousand acres of parklands and  
26 more than one hundred seventy-five miles of regional trails. The county  
27 provides regional trails, regional recreational facilities, regional natural  
28 areas, regional parks and local parks in unincorporated areas. Examples of  
29 regional county parks and trails include Marymoor park, Cougar Mountain  
30 Regional Wildland park, the Weyerhaeuser King County Aquatic Center  
31 and the Sammamish River trail.

32 2. Parks, natural areas and trails contribute to a high quality of life. A  
33 robust system of parks and trails provides physical, social and mental  
34 health benefits to individuals; economic opportunity through recreation  
35 and tourism; economic growth for private businesses that must attract and  
36 retain skilled workers; and environmental benefits and cultural resource  
37 protection through open space conservation. King County's open space  
38 system provides all these benefits to King County residents and  
39 businesses.

40 3. The 2002 Parks Business Transition Plan, adopted by the King County  
41 council and enacted by Ordinance 14509, became the blueprint for  
42 establishing the regional open space system we have today. Building on

43 that blueprint, the county has adopted open space plans, which have  
44 provided the framework guiding King County in the acquisition, planning,  
45 development, stewardship, maintenance and management of its complex  
46 system of parks, regional trails and acres of open space. The latest open  
47 space plan was updated in 2016 and adopted by Ordinance 18309.

48 4. In implementing the open space plan, the parks and recreation division  
49 of the department of natural resources and parks has successfully focused  
50 its lines of business on regional parks and trails, backcountry trails, natural  
51 lands and local parks in unincorporated King County and has implemented  
52 business practices that generate revenue from park system assets by  
53 implementing or increasing user fees and establishing corporate and  
54 community partnerships that enhance park amenities and leverage public  
55 and private dollars to improve parks and increase access to parks.

56 5. Consistent with the recommendations of past parks-related task forces,  
57 the county has sought voter-approved levies on three prior occasions: in  
58 2003, enacted by Ordinance 14586, to provide maintenance and operating  
59 funding for the parks and recreation division for 2004 through 2007; in  
60 2007, enacted by Ordinance 15759, to provide funding for maintenance  
61 and operations as well as funding for open space acquisition, regional trail  
62 development, the Woodland Park Zoo and for King County towns and  
63 cities for use in their open space acquisition and trail projects for 2008  
64 through 2013; and in 2013, enacted by Ordinance 17568, to provide  
65 funding for maintenance and operations as well as for open space

66 acquisition, asset maintenance and improvement, parks and trails projects,  
67 the Woodland Park Zoo and for King County towns and cities to use for  
68 their parks and recreation for 2014 through 2019. Voters approved the  
69 funding measures on all three occasions that they were on the ballot. The  
70 voter-approved levies have helped keep the open space system clean, safe  
71 and open.

72 6. The 2014 through 2019 voter-approved parks, trails and open space  
73 replacement levy provides approximately eighty percent of the operating  
74 budget of the parks and recreation division, with approximately thirteen  
75 percent generated through business activities and entrepreneurial efforts.  
76 King County general fund support to the parks and recreation division was  
77 eliminated as of 2011.

78 7. The community partnerships and grants program enacted by Ordinance  
79 14509 enhances parks amenities by partnering with parks and recreation  
80 organizations. Since the inception of the community partnership and grant  
81 program in 2003, more than sixty projects representing more than sixty  
82 million dollars' worth of new, enhanced, or preserved public recreation  
83 facilities have been completed, with only eighteen million dollars of King  
84 County capital investment.

85 8. The Woodland Park Zoo received distributions from the past two voter-  
86 approved levies to supplement zoo operating revenue for education and  
87 conservation programs, horticulture and maintenance and capital  
88 improvements. Levy proceeds distributed to the zoo provided

89 environmental education, programming and transportation focusing on  
90 accessibility for underserved areas, supported thousands of students  
91 annually and benefitted residents throughout King County. Levy proceeds  
92 also provided conservation and animal care for threatened Pacific  
93 Northwest species.

94 9. King County towns and cities received funding from the past two  
95 voter-approved levies. In 2008 through 2013, towns and cities could use  
96 levy proceeds for open space and natural lands acquisition and  
97 development of town or city trail projects that supported connections to  
98 the regional trail system with distributions being contingent upon an equal  
99 or greater contribution of matching moneys from the recipient town or city  
100 for the same project. In the 2014 through 2019 levy, types of uses for the  
101 distribution to King County towns and cities were broadened to provide  
102 flexibility and better meet the parks and recreation needs of cities.

103 10. Parks levy oversight committees were established to monitor the  
104 expenditures of the proceeds from the 2004 through 2007, 2008 through  
105 2013 and 2014 through 2019 levies. Annual committee review has  
106 concluded that the county has complied with all levy requirements.

107 11. King County is growing rapidly as a region. In 2017, King County's  
108 population increased by close to fifty thousand people; and over the next  
109 ten years, the region is expected to grow by another one hundred eighty  
110 thousand people. Recent surveys have indicated that since 2008, the  
111 number of people who hike in natural area parks has doubled. More and

112 more people are using the King County parks and trails, which puts  
113 greater pressure on an aging system. As development increases to  
114 accommodate population growth, the risk of losing natural lands and green  
115 spaces throughout the county grows. Those valuable lands contribute to  
116 King County residents' high quality of life. The cost of land to  
117 accommodate this growth and preserve open spaces is also increasing.  
118 Today is the opportune time to address future needs of residents by  
119 investing in our parks and trails and accelerating conservation of open  
120 space.

121 12. In King County, many communities have experienced a history of  
122 inequitable and limited regional investments in parks, recreation and open  
123 space, limiting the ability of residents to lead healthy lives. Five hundred  
124 thousand King County residents live without ready access to, parks,  
125 recreation and open spaces. There is a need to address disparities in  
126 access to parks, recreation and open space for underserved areas and  
127 communities, including people with disabilities. This proposal provides  
128 an opportunity to address parks and recreation needs of these underserved  
129 areas and communities.

130 13. Recognizing growth in population, increased use of parks and trails  
131 and the need to address disparities in preparation for the 2020 through  
132 2025 levy, the parks and recreation division conducted outreach to obtain  
133 feedback on the current park system and future parks and recreation needs  
134 for all King County residents. From August through November 2018,

135 parks and recreation division staff conducted fifty-four in-person  
136 engagement meetings with groups representing all geographic areas of the  
137 county including towns and cities, business, recreation, community and  
138 environmental interests. An online survey was also conducted from  
139 November to December 2018, and received one thousand nine hundred  
140 thirty-four responses from the public, representing all geographic areas of  
141 the county.

142 14. The feedback from the engagement meetings and online survey  
143 showed support for the King County open space system. Engagement  
144 findings showed support for maintenance and operations of the open space  
145 system, as well as critical infrastructure repair and replacement, and the  
146 acquisition, conservation and stewardship of open space, as such lands can  
147 provide for passive or active recreation opportunities and protection of  
148 habitat and water quality, and the development of and improvements on  
149 regional trail corridors. Feedback supported funding for King County  
150 towns' and cities' parks and recreation programs; the Woodland Park  
151 Zoological Society education and conservation programs and horticulture,  
152 maintenance and capital improvements; and recognized the Seattle  
153 Aquarium as a regional asset.

154 15. The King County executive took into consideration information  
155 obtained from this outreach, the region's growing population, increased  
156 use of parks and trails across King County, and the lack of parks,  
157 recreation and open space in some communities, and has put forth this

158 proposal which acknowledges the changing landscape and the need to  
159 grow the open space system to keep up with demand from the region.  
160 This proposal is also consistent with the goals and priorities of past levy  
161 task forces.

162 16. This proposal would exempt low-income senior citizens, disabled  
163 veterans and other people with disabilities from the regular property tax  
164 increase on their residences resulting from a levy authorized by this  
165 ordinance, if they have been approved for an exemption under RCW  
166 84.36.381.

167 BE IT ORDAINED BY THE COUNCIL OF KING COUNTY:

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

170 A. "Community partnerships and grants program" means the program through  
171 which King County provides moneys to recreation-oriented groups, sports associations  
172 and community-based organizations to undertake any combination of developing,  
173 operating or maintaining a recreation facility or public park in unincorporated King  
174 County and King County towns and cities for public benefit.

175 B. "Integrated floodplain management" means habitat restoration, open space  
176 acquisition or recreational opportunities that are integrated with preventive and corrective  
177 measures to reduce the risk of flooding.

178 C. "Levy" means the levy of regular property taxes, for the specific purposes and  
179 term provided in this ordinance and authorized by the electorate in accordance with state  
180 law.



181 D. "Levy proceeds" means the principal amount of moneys raised by the levy,  
182 any interest earnings on the moneys and the proceeds of any interim financing following  
183 authorization of the levy.

184 E. "Limit factor" means the most recent published King County office of  
185 economic and financial analysis King County inflation plus population index, or the  
186 limitation contained in chapter 84.55 RCW, whichever is greater.

187 F. "Open space system" means the system that includes parks, trails, natural  
188 areas, resource lands and structures or buildings owned or otherwise under the  
189 jurisdiction of the parks and recreation division of the department of natural resources  
190 and parks. For the purposes of this ordinance, with reference to King County, the term  
191 "open space lands" shall collectively refer to natural areas and resource lands.

192 G. "Targeted equity grant program" means the program through which King  
193 County provides moneys in order to achieve equitable opportunities and access to parks  
194 and recreation for underserved areas and communities, including people with disabilities,  
195 located in unincorporated King County and King County towns and cities.

196 H. "Town or city parks system" means any building or other structure related to  
197 parks or recreation, parks, trails, open space such as natural areas and resource or  
198 ecological lands and other parks or recreation property owned or otherwise under the  
199 jurisdiction of a town or city within King County.

200 **SECTION 2. Levy submittal to voters.** To provide necessary moneys for the  
201 purposes identified in section 4 of this ordinance, the King County council shall submit to  
202 the qualified electors of the county a proposition authorizing a regular property tax levy  
203 in excess of the levy limitation contained in chapter 84.55 RCW for six consecutive

204 years, with collection commencing in 2020, at a rate not to exceed \$0.1832 per one  
205 thousand dollars of assessed value in the first year of the levy period. The dollar amount  
206 of the levy in the first year shall be the base upon which the levy amounts in year two  
207 through six shall be calculated. In accordance with RCW 84.55.050, this levy shall be a  
208 regular property tax levy subject to the limit factor.

209 **SECTION 3. Deposit of levy proceeds.** The levy proceeds shall be deposited  
210 into a dedicated subfund of the parks and recreation fund, or its successor.

211 **SECTION 4. Eligible expenditures.** If approved by the qualified electors of the  
212 county, levy proceeds shall be used for the following purposes:

213 A. Costs incurred by the county that are attributable to the special election called  
214 for in section 5 of this ordinance.

215 B. Up to eight million dollars to the Seattle Aquarium from the first four years of  
216 the levy. Levy proceeds for the Seattle Aquarium shall solely be for capital costs for the  
217 Ocean Pavilion project, except as provided in subsection E.5. of this section.

218 C. Up to forty-four million dollars to publicly owned pools for: capital  
219 improvement projects, including planning, feasibility studies, preconstruction and design,  
220 construction; and major maintenance repair or replacement projects.

221 D. Up to twenty-two million dollars to habitat restoration, open space acquisition  
222 or recreational opportunities, or any combination thereof, associated with integrated  
223 floodplain management capital improvement projects and to outreach and education  
224 related to the benefits of integrated floodplain management projects.

225 E. The remainder of levy proceeds shall be used for the following purposes:

226 1. Forty percent of levy proceeds for maintenance and operations of King

227 County's open space system and the targeted equity grant program, but no more than ten  
228 million dollars may be used for the targeted equity grant program;

229 2. Forty-seven percent of levy proceeds for:

230 a. acquisition, conservation and stewardship of additional open space lands,  
231 natural areas, resource or ecological lands, rights of way for regional trails and urban  
232 green spaces;

233 b. acquisition of rights of way for and development of regional and other  
234 public trails;

235 c. capital improvement projects and major maintenance repair or replacement  
236 of open space system infrastructure;

237 d. community partnerships and grants program; and

238 e. capital improvement projects and major maintenance repair or replacement  
239 of parks or recreation infrastructure in metropolitan park districts, towns or cities;

240 3. Eight percent of levy proceeds for distribution to towns and cities in King  
241 County for their town or city parks system operations and capital improvement projects,  
242 of which amount:

243 a. twenty-five thousand dollars shall be distributed annually to each town and  
244 city;

245 b. an additional seventy-five thousand dollars shall be distributed annually to  
246 cities with a population greater than four thousand;

247 c. of the remainder, fifty percent shall be distributed in proportion to each town  
248 or city's population and fifty percent shall be distributed in proportion to the assessed  
249 value of parcels within each town or city;

250           4. Five percent of levy proceeds for distribution to the Woodland Park  
251 Zoological Society shall be used solely for: environmental education with an emphasis on  
252 accessibility to traditionally underserved populations throughout the county; horticulture  
253 and maintenance of buildings and grounds; conservation of threatened species; and  
254 development of conservation and education strategies to mitigate impacts to animals and  
255 habitats from climate change; and

256           5. Of the levy proceeds in subsections B., C., D., E.2.e., E.3. and E.4. of this  
257 section, a portion shall be retained by the county to be used for expenditures related to  
258 administration of the distribution of levy proceeds. Eligible administrative expenditures  
259 shall include all costs and charges to the parks and recreation division or the county  
260 associated with or attributable to the purposes listed in subsections B., C., D., E.2.e., E.3.  
261 and E.4. of this section as well as sections 6 and 7 of this ordinance. Consistent with  
262 RCW 84.55.050, as it may be amended, levy proceeds may not supplant existing funding.

263           SECTION 5. Call for special election. In accordance with RCW 29A.04.321,  
264 the King County council hereby calls for a special election to be held in conjunction with  
265 the primary election on August 6, 2019, to consider a proposition authorizing a regular  
266 property tax levy for the purposes described in this ordinance. The King County director  
267 of elections shall cause notice to be given of this ordinance in accordance with the state  
268 constitution and general law and to submit to the qualified electors of the county, at the  
269 said special county election, the proposition hereinafter set forth. The clerk of the council  
270 shall certify that proposition to the King County director of elections in substantially the  
271 following form, with such additions, deletions or modifications as may be required for  
272 the proposition listed below by the prosecuting attorney:

273 The King County council passed Ordinance \_\_\_\_ concerning replacement  
274 of an expiring parks levy. If approved, this proposition would provide  
275 funding for county, town, city and park district parks, and for open space,  
276 trails, recreation, public pools, zoo operations and an aquarium capital  
277 project. It would authorize an additional six-year property tax beginning  
278 in 2020 at \$0.1832 per \$1,000 of assessed valuation with the 2020 levy  
279 amount being the base for calculating annual increases in 2021 - 2025 by  
280 the King County inflation plus population index or the 84.55 RCW  
281 limitation, whichever is greater. Should this proposition be:

282 Approved? \_\_

283 Rejected? \_\_

284 **SECTION 6. Distributions.** Each distribution of levy proceeds to a King County  
285 town or city, the Woodland Park Zoological Society or its successor, or the Seattle  
286 Aquarium or its successor, for the eligible purposes identified in section 4 of this  
287 ordinance shall be subject to the execution of a contract between the county and each  
288 entity for the same purposes. Distribution of levy proceeds shall be subject to the  
289 execution of a contract for: the targeted equity grant program; publicly owned pool  
290 capital improvement projects and major maintenance repair or replacement projects;  
291 integrated floodplain management capital improvement projects and outreach and  
292 education; capital improvement projects and major maintenance repair or replacement  
293 projects to parks or recreation infrastructure in metropolitan park districts, towns or  
294 cities; and acquisition, conservation and stewardship of additional natural areas, resource  
295 or ecological lands, rights of way for regional trails and urban green spaces.

296            **SECTION 7. Parks levy oversight board established.**

297            A. If the proposition in section 5 of this ordinance is approved by the qualified  
298 electors of King County, a parks levy oversight board shall be appointed by the  
299 executive. The board shall consist of nine members. Each councilmember shall  
300 nominate a candidate for the board who resides in the councilmember's district no later  
301 than March 31, 2020. If the executive does not appoint by May 31, 2020, the person  
302 nominated by a councilmember, the executive must request that the councilmember  
303 should by June 30, 2020, nominate another candidate for appointment. Members shall be  
304 confirmed by the council. Members may not be elected or appointed officials of any unit  
305 of government, except that individuals serving in a civic capacity on a local board or  
306 commission would be eligible to serve on the parks levy oversight board.

307            B. The board shall review the allocation of levy proceeds and progress on  
308 achieving the purposes of this proposition. On or before December 31, 2021, the board  
309 shall review and report to the King County executive, the King County council and the  
310 regional policy committee on the expenditure of levy proceeds for 2020. Thereafter, the  
311 board shall review and report to the King County executive, the King County council and  
312 the regional policy committee annually. Any report to the King County council under  
313 this section shall be made in the form of a paper original and an electronic copy with the  
314 clerk of the council, who shall retain the original and provide an electronic copy to all  
315 councilmembers. The board expires December 31, 2026.

316            **SECTION 8. Exemption.** The additional regular property taxes authorized by  
317 this ordinance shall be included in any real property tax exemption authorized by RCW  
318 84.36.381.

319            SECTION 9. Ratification. Certification of the proposition by the clerk of the  
320 King County council to the director of elections in accordance with law before the  
321 election on August 6, 2019, and any other acts consistent with the authority and before  
322 the effective date of this ordinance are hereby ratified and confirmed.

323            SECTION 10. Severability. If any provision of this ordinance or its application  
324 to any person or circumstance is held invalid, the remainder of the ordinance or the  
325 application of the provision to other persons or circumstances is not affected.  
326

Ordinance 18890 was introduced on and hearing held/closed and passed by the  
Metropolitan King County Council on 4/17/2019, by the following vote:

Yes: 8 - Mr. von Reichbauer, Mr. Gossett, Ms. Lambert, Mr.  
McDermott, Mr. Dembowski, Mr. Upthegrove, Ms. Kohl-Welles and  
Ms. Balducci  
No: 1 - Mr. Dunn

KING COUNTY COUNCIL  
KING COUNTY, WASHINGTON

Rod Dembowski, Chair



ATTEST:

Melani Pedroza, Clerk of the Council

APPROVED this 2 day of MAY, 2019.

Dow Constantine, County Executive

RECEIVED  
2019 MAY -3 AM 9:09  
CLERK  
KING COUNTY COUNCIL

Attachments: None