



King County

## Historic Preservation and Historical Programs Advisory Task Force

March 1, 2010

The Honorable Bob Ferguson, Chair  
Metropolitan King County Council  
516 Third Avenue, Room 1200  
Seattle, WA 98104

Re: Final Recommendations

Dear Chair Ferguson:

As outlined in Ordinance 16579, the King County Historic Preservation & Historical Programs Advisory Task Force respectfully submits the attached final recommendations for the distribution of \$1 document recording fee surcharge revenue. These recommendations have been carefully vetted and considered by the Task Force, and we hope the Council will give them careful consideration.

Thank you for the opportunity to serve as the Chair of this Task Force. It has been an honor to deliberate with the highly qualified individuals who served as Task Force members, to listen to members of the public and organizations committed to promoting preservation and heritage within our community, and to work with Council staff member Simon Farretta.

We look forward to presenting this report to you, and to answering any questions you may have.

Sincerely,

Marilyn Brockman AIA, Chair  
King County Historic Preservation & Historical Programs Advisory Task Force

cc: Metropolitan King County Councilmembers

*Marilyn Brockman, Chair,  
Bassetti Architects*

*Richard R. Anderson,  
Northwest Railway  
Museum*

*Joe Follansbee,  
Association of King County  
Historical Organizations*

*Vicki Stiles,  
Shoreline Historical  
Museum*

*Marie Strong,  
Seattle Landmarks  
Preservation Board*

*Heather Trescases,  
4Culture Heritage  
Advisory Committee*

*Robert Weaver,  
King County Landmarks  
Commission*

*Susan White,  
City of Des Moines  
Councilmember*



**King County**

# Historic Preservation and Historical Programs Advisory Task Force

**Final Recommendations  
March 1, 2010**

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# Executive Summary

## **Recommendation 1: Appropriate accounting methods**

*Approved 8-0 on January 15, 2010*

The Task Force recommends creation of a dedicated first tier account to provide for the receipt of revenues and disbursement of expenditures for the \$1 recording fee surcharge.

## **Recommendation 2: Methods and mechanisms for the distribution of funds<sup>1</sup>**

*Approved 5-3 on February 22, 2010*

The Task Force recommends that the \$1 document recording fee surcharge be allocated between the King County Historic Preservation Program and the King County Cultural Development Authority (4Culture) as follows:

2011-2015	Historic Preservation Program	40%
	Cultural Development Authority	60%
2016-onward	Historic Preservation Program	35%
	Cultural Development Authority	65%

## **Recommendation 3: Recommended Eligibility Criteria for Revenue Use**

*Approved 8-0 on February 5, 2010*

### Definitions

- "Historic preservation" means the preservation or conservation of the county's historic and archaeological resources, and those programs and projects initiated to foster such preservation or conservation through activities such as interpretation, community education and outreach, cultural tourism and rehabilitation of historic resources.
- "Historical programs" are those projects and programs initiated to preserve King County's heritage and to support community and regional heritage organizations and public agencies in those efforts.

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<sup>1</sup> A Minority Report for Recommendation 2 is included as Attachment 1 to the full report.

- "Heritage" means King County's history, ethnic history, indigenous and traditional culture, folklore, and historic and archaeological resources (which may include historical documents).

#### Criteria

- All historic properties in King County that are listed in a local, state, or federal register shall be eligible to receive funding.
- All heritage organizations and programs focusing on King County history shall be eligible to receive funding.
- Agencies should strive to achieve a reasonable balance between funding for historic preservation projects and heritage programs.
- Funding decisions shall give extra weight to the following factors:
  - public benefit of the project or program
  - areas of greatest need within King County without regard to political district, geographic consideration, or project size or ownership
  - assisting newer and smaller organizations, particularly where funding would help the organization leverage additional funding or build long-term capacity

#### **Recommendation 4: Additional recommendations to promote historic preservation & historical programs**

*Approved 8-0 on February 26, 2010*

The Task Force makes the following additional recommendations:

- The Historic Preservation Program should develop a formal fee structure for providing services to King County departments and local governments.
- King County cultural agencies should develop and distribute a guide for newly elected officials in small communities explaining how to promote economic development through historic preservation.
- Conduct evaluations on the effectiveness of on-going programs, including examining current county support and regulatory structures related to issues such as archeological resources.

# Historic Preservation and Historical Programs Advisory Task Force Final Recommendations

## **Task Force Background**

The Historic Preservation and Historical Programs Advisory Task Force was established by Council Ordinance 16579, effective July 2009. The Task Force has eight total members. Five members were appointed by the Executive to represent specific constituencies, as required by the ordinance:

<b>Member</b>	<b>Representing</b>
Joe Follansbee	Association of King County Historical Organizations
Marie Strong	Seattle Landmarks Preservation Board
Heather Trescases	Cultural Development Authority (4Culture)
Robert Weaver	King County Landmarks Commission
Susan White	a suburban city with an ILA with King County for historic preservation services (Des Moines)

The Council approved the appointments on September 14, 2009. These five members then met three times, completing selection of three additional Task Force members on October 2, 2009:

<b>Member</b>	<b>Affiliation</b>
Richard R. Anderson	Northwest Railway Museum
Marilyn Brockman	Bassetti Architects
Vicki Stiles	Shoreline Historical Museum

Marilyn Brockman was selected as Chair on October 13, 2009.

## **Task Force Process**

The full group met for the first time on October 13 with a November 1 interim report deadline and a March 1 final report deadline. Members met a total of 14 times in just over five months.

The Task Force process began with the adoption of bylaws. The group agreed that a minority opinion could be added with the support of at least three members. The Task Force then developed goals for working together, forming recommendations, the use and distribution of funds, and the larger impact on the community.

In accordance with the Council's direction that the "task force shall study the funding and governance structures for historic preservation and historical programs in King County," the group developed a set of inquires and arranged a series of briefings:

- King County Budget – Polly St. John, Council Senior Budget Analyst
- Cultural Development Authority – Jim Kelly, Executive Director
- King County Compliance Audit Report No. 2008-04 – Susan Baugh, Principal Management Auditor
- Association of King County Historical Organizations – Deborah Kennedy, President of the Board of Trustees
- King County Historic Preservation Program – Julie Koler, Historic Preservation Officer
- Seattle Historic Preservation Program and Landmarks Preservation Board – Karen Gordon, Historic Preservation Officer

The Task Force also reviewed information from a variety of sources, including the Office of Management and Budget and Council staff.

The Task Force solicited input from stakeholders both online and at regular meetings. Nearly 20 individuals or organizations provided testimony.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> See Attachment 2 for a list of individuals who gave public testimony.

## Funding Background

Washington State House Bill 1386, codified in 2005, raised the document recording fee surcharge from two dollars to five dollars (RCW 36.22.170). The legislation specified that “one dollar of the surcharge shall be used at the discretion of the county commissioners to promote historical preservation or historical programs, which may include preservation of historic documents.”

The \$1 surcharge has generated the following revenue in King County:

<b>HB 1386 \$1 Recording Fee Surcharge Revenue (Account 44136)</b>		
2005	\$299,300	Actual
2006	\$706,759	Actual
2007	\$673,919	Actual
2008	\$512,878	Actual
2009	\$555,894	Actual
2010	\$550,000	Estimated

State law originally required the \$1 surcharge to be deposited in the general fund, but that requirement was removed by the Legislature in 2009. King County continues to deposit the surcharge revenue in the general fund.

## Intent of HB 1386

The Task Force believes the Legislature intended to create new funding resources to supplement existing programs or to create new programs. This conclusion strongly informed the recommendations on distribution of funds and eligibility criteria.

Councils and commissioners in counties such as Clark and Snohomish have earmarked the HB 1386 funds for new grants available for historical preservation and heritage programs. Pierce County officials chose to extend their County’s preservation officer position along with providing grants. These counties, along with Kittitas and San Juan Counties, have been recognized by the Washington Trust for Historic Preservation with the 2008 Landmark Deeds Award for Public Service for their allocation of HB 1386 as a funding source for heritage and historic preservation activities.



## **Statement on the Value of the King County Historic Preservation Program and 4Culture Heritage and Preservation programs**

The Task Force wishes to make clear that the HB 1386 funds allocation decision described in this report should not be interpreted as a statement of relative value for either the King County Historic Preservation Program or 4Culture's Heritage and Preservation programs. The programs provide complementary services valued by all county residents interested in preservation and heritage, and each makes significant and long-lasting contributions to the quality of life and economic development of King County.

### **Guiding Principles**

The Task Force unanimously agreed that the final recommendations should adhere to the following guiding principles:

- All funds should be disbursed for heritage and historic preservation, with a clear accounting of the projects and programs receiving funds.
- The funds should supplement, not supplant, existing county funding sources for heritage and historic preservation.

### **The Budget Crisis**

The Task Force recognizes that King County is in the midst of a budget crisis. Revenue shortfalls as a result of the overall economic decline and the ongoing structural deficit have forced the County to trim the 2010 budget and make difficult decisions on essential services. The Task Force received comments from both Polly St. John, Council Senior Budget Analyst and Elissa Benson, Deputy Director of the Office of Strategic Planning & Performance Management, indicating that declining revenue sources and additional projected budget cuts of nearly \$150 million over the next two years would make it unlikely that the general fund will be able to make up for the HB 1386 revenue sequestered in a dedicated account.

Although the Task Force is opposed to supplantation and would prefer that HB 1386 revenue be used to create new or extend existing programs and grant

opportunities, we recognize that current budget realities may force the County to use some HB 1386 revenue to continue on-going services within the King County Historic Preservation Program. The Task Force hopes that this solution is short term, and eventually the County will be able to fund the essential services of the Historic Preservation Program from the unrestricted general fund, releasing HB 1386 funds for their intended purpose of supplementing existing programs or creating new programs.

## **Task Force Recommendations**

Based on presentations from the stakeholder organizations represented on the Task Force, briefings and information from County budget and audit staff, public testimony, and group research and discussion, the Task Force makes the following four recommendations:

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### **Recommendation 1: Appropriate accounting methods**

*Approved 8-0 on January 15, 2010*

**The Task Force recommends creation of a dedicated first tier account to provide for the receipt of revenues and disbursement of expenditures for the \$1 recording fee surcharge.**

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#### *Recommendation Background:*

The \$1 recording fee surcharge must be used to fund historic preservation, historical programs, or document preservation. King County Compliance Audit 2008-04 noted that the practice of depositing the restricted funds in an unrestricted general fund account made it difficult to track use:

“Policies and protocols are needed... to restrict the use of the Current Expense Fund portion of the recording surcharge revenues to historic preservation purposes because there was not a clean audit trail. This would facilitate tracking the actual revenues and expenditures and promote greater transparency and accountability over how the recording surcharge proceeds are used.” (2008-04, page 11-12)

The Task Force encountered the same difficulties obtaining clear information on the use of surcharge revenue. The Office of Management and Budget was able to provide the Task Force with a general list of “Budgeted General Fund Expenditures Related to Historic Preservation” extending back to 2005, but could not link the surcharge revenue with specific project expenditures.

Because the general fund does not allow expenditures to be directly linked to revenues, the Task Force is recommending establishment of a separate fund. This option became possible when the State Legislature amended RCW 36.22.170 in 2009 to allow the funds to be stored outside of the general fund.

In order to ensure transparency and compliance with state law, the Task Force maintains the surcharge funds must be placed in a dedicated first tier account.

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**Recommendation 2: Methods and mechanisms for the distribution of funds**

*Approved 5-3 on February 22, 2010*

*Voting yes: Richard R. Anderson, Joe Follansbee, Vicki Stiles, Marie Strong, Heather Trescases*

**The Task Force recommends that the \$1 document recording fee surcharge be allocated between the King County Historic Preservation Program and the King County Cultural Development Authority (4Culture) as follows:**

<b>2011-2015</b>	<b>Historic Preservation Program</b>	<b>40%</b>
	<b>Cultural Development Authority</b>	<b>60%</b>
<b>2016-onward</b>	<b>Historic Preservation Program</b>	<b>35%</b>
	<b>Cultural Development Authority</b>	<b>65%</b>

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*Recommendation Background:*

The Task Force believes the Legislature intended to create new funding resources to supplement existing programs or to create new programs.

*King County Funding Precedents*

In 1980, King County Ordinance 04828 directed the creation and funding of the King County Landmarks Commission and a full-time Historic Preservation

Officer. In each year since the ordinance was adopted, King County has implemented these statutes with appropriations from county general funds. In addition, King County has a long and consistent record — through periods of economic growth and short-term decline — of supporting additional historic preservation services, including the extension of services to some cities via interlocal agreements. The County has also supported specific heritage programming via direct appropriations intended for not-for-profit preservation and heritage agencies, as well as non-county local governments within King County.

The Task Force believes that if the Legislature had not provided a new dedicated source for heritage and preservation funding, this pattern of general fund support would have continued.

Given the Legislature's intent and King County's history of funding historic preservation and historical programs, the Task Force believes all HB 1386 revenue should supplement — not supplant — existing funding and support new preservation and heritage programming.

In principle, the Task Force is opposed to supplantation. However, the Task Force recognizes that current budget realities may require supplanting some general fund revenue with HB 1386 funding or risk irreparable damage to the King County Historic Preservation Program.

The majority of the Task Force believes that the recommended allocation of 40 percent of HB 1386 revenue to the county Historic Preservation Program in the budget years 2011 through 2015 will allow county government to fulfill its statutory obligations, as well as contractual obligations to cities with interlocal agreements. In addition, the five-year period before the Task Force's recommended reduction of HB 1386 funds to 35 percent after 2015 will give the Historic Preservation Program time to adjust operations and revenue sources in order to maintain and grow services to unincorporated King County and small cities.

The Task Force expects general fund revenue to resume funding the Historic Preservation Program as soon as possible, releasing HB 1386 funds for their intended purpose of supplementing existing programs or creating new programs.

### *Proportional Distribution*

Document filing fees under RCW 36.72.170 are collected county-wide. The document types — marriage records, birth records, real estate transactions, and so forth — reflect the activities of the population as it is distributed within the county. No statistical information is readily available that shows which parts of the county generate more or less of the HB 1386 revenue. However, because King County's population is concentrated in the incorporated cities, with Seattle and Bellevue dominating the distribution, it stands to reason that most of the HB 1386 revenue is generated by the population centers.

The Task Force received letters from the Seattle City Council and Mayor requesting that the majority of revenue be distributed through a countywide organization, such as 4Culture, in order to ensure equitable distribution.<sup>3</sup> In addition, the Task Force notes that Bellevue and Bothell, two major population centers, are not served by interlocal agreements and so would not benefit directly from HB 1386 allocations to the King County Historic Preservation Program.

The Task Force believes that allocating 60 percent of HB 1386 revenue to 4Culture in the budget years 2011 through 2015, with an increase to 65 percent in the following years, responds fairly to the issue of proportional distribution according to population.

### *Role of 4Culture*

King County has charged 4Culture with the mission of distributing lodging tax revenues intended for cultural uses to qualified preservation and heritage applicants. The applicants, mostly not-for-profit organizations, produce the vast majority of cultural services and products in the county. 4Culture has established a record for fair, equitable, and accountable distribution of lodging tax revenue throughout King County to these applicants. 4Culture's transparent and efficient distribution procedures ensure King County taxpayers receive a tangible public benefit from the distributions.

The County has shown through the creation of 4Culture that money intended for cultural use is best distributed by an independent agency which understands cultural product and service providers. The Task Force notes that 4Culture's charter (KC Ordinance 14482) calls for any new or "other" revenues and fees

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<sup>3</sup> See Attachment 3 and Attachment 4

designated for cultural purposes should be managed by 4Culture.<sup>4</sup> Filing fee revenue created by HB 1386 is an example of a revenue type that falls under the 4Culture charter.

Because of 4Culture's record of success, and the nature of the revenue, the majority of the Task Force believes 4Culture is the best choice for distributing 60 percent of HB 1386 revenue in the budget years 2011 through 2015, with an increase to 65 percent in the following years, to qualified local governments, not-for-profit organizations, and individuals.

### *Summary*

In arriving at its recommended allocation of HB 1386 revenue, the Task Force balanced a number of factors, including the intent of the Legislature, past County funding practices, the current budget crisis, concerns by cities on proportional distribution, and 4Culture's intended role in funding cultural activities in the field. Although the allocation recommendation did not receive unanimous support within the Task Force, the majority believes the recommendation represents a reasonable compromise that acknowledges and incorporates the views of the entire panel.

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### **Recommendation 3: Recommended Eligibility Criteria for Revenue Use**

*Approved 8-0 on February 5, 2010*

#### **Definitions**

- **"Historic preservation" means the preservation or conservation of the county's historic and archaeological resources, and those programs and projects initiated to foster such preservation or conservation through activities such as interpretation, community education and outreach, cultural tourism and rehabilitation of historic resources.**
- **"Historical programs" are those projects and programs initiated to preserve King County's heritage and to support community and regional heritage organizations and public agencies in those efforts.**

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<sup>4</sup> Article II, sections B(10), and C

- **"Heritage" means King County's history, ethnic history, indigenous and traditional culture, folklore, and historic and archaeological resources (which may include historical documents).**

### **Criteria**

- **All historic properties in King County that are listed in a local, state, or federal register shall be eligible to receive funding.**
- **All heritage organizations and programs focusing on King County history shall be eligible to receive funding.**
- **Agencies should strive to achieve a reasonable balance between funding for historic preservation projects and heritage programs.**
- **Funding decisions shall give extra weight to the following factors:**
  - **public benefit of the project or program**
  - **areas of greatest need within King County without regard to political district, geographic consideration, or project size or ownership**
  - **assisting newer and smaller organizations, particularly where funding would help the organization leverage additional funding or build long-term capacity**

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### *Recommendation Background:*

Recommendation 3 provides criteria to guide the distribution of surcharge revenue by the Cultural Development Authority and the King County Historic Preservation Program.

The Task Force has also provided definitions of historic preservation, historical programs, and heritage for the purposes of administering this revenue. King County Compliance Audit 2008-04 noted that "additional clarification is needed in defining historic preservation and identifying relevant uses of the surcharge revenues, because not all interested organizations agree on what constitutes a historic preservation organization or program."

Definitions were also needed because the Office of Management and Budget's list of "Budgeted General Fund Expenditures Related to Historic Preservation" included at least one item – \$237,470 to 4Culture for stewardship of the county's art collection – that no nationally recognized agency would consider related to historic preservation or historical programs.

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**Recommendation 4: Additional recommendations to promote historic preservation & historical programs**

*Approved 8-0 on February 26, 2010*

The Task Force makes the following additional recommendations:

- The Historic Preservation Program should develop a formal fee structure for providing services to King County departments and local governments.
  - King County cultural agencies should develop and distribute a guide for newly elected officials in small communities explaining how to promote economic development through historic preservation.
  - Conduct evaluations on the effectiveness of on-going programs, including examining current county support and regulatory structures related to issues such as archeological resources.
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# Attachment 1

## Minority Report

*Chair Marilyn Brockman, Robert Weaver, Susan White*

### **Recommendation 2: Methods and mechanisms for the distribution of funds**

**A minority of the Task Force recommends that the \$1 document recording fee surcharge be allocated between the King County Historic Preservation Program and the King County Cultural Development Authority (4Culture) as follows:**

2011-2015	Historic Preservation Program	60%
	Cultural Development Authority	40%
2016-onward	Historic Preservation Program	40%
	Cultural Development Authority	60%

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#### *Recommendation Background:*

The Task Force unanimously agreed that HB 1386 funds should be distributed to the King County Historic Preservation Program and the Cultural Development Authority. Three Task Force members, however, do not agree with the allocation ratios or logic presented in the majority opinion.

The minority was particularly impacted by the public testimony received from small communities and organizations in King County, who voiced an urgent need for ongoing services from the Historic Preservation Program. The minority is concerned that the loss of the HB 1386 fees from the general fund will force the County to make a choice between adequately funding the Historic Preservation Program or funding other essential services already suffering from budget cuts.

The minority – recognizing the current budget constraints on the County – recommends that the Historic Preservation Program be allocated 60% of the HB 1386 funds for five years, and 40% of the funds thereafter. This initial five year funding for Historic Preservation Program would result in a sizeable cut of 29%,

but would preserve the core functions of the program. It is our belief that over the next five years, the Historic Preservation Program will have a chance to develop new funding sources, partners, and strategies that would enhance their position and meet expanding community and regulatory needs. It is the hope of the minority that an improved economy and a fix for the general fund structural deficit will, within 5 years, allow the County to re-assess general fund contributions to the program to ensure dependable preservation and archeological assistance to County residents.

The minority's recommendation would provide 4Culture with 40% of HB 1386 funds immediately, which represents a significant increase in grant opportunities for heritage and preservation programs over what will be provided through the Lodging Tax. In five years, 4Culture's share will increase to 60%, further expanding opportunities for projects and programs throughout King County.

The majority, however, has proposed an immediate reallocation of 60% percent of HB 1386 funds to 4Culture, leaving an allocation of 40% for Historic Preservation Program. This would result in a Historic Preservation Program budget cut of 53% from the 2010 budget, eliminating many services and threatening the basic functions of the program with no time for transition.

In order to preserve the core functions, excellent service, and community goodwill established by the Historic Preservation Program over three decades of service, sufficient funding must be allocated in the short-term. The minority believes that allocating 60% of HB 1386 funding to the Historic Preservation Program from 2011-2015 and 40% thereafter will allow the County to continue these services and still provide new granting opportunities through 4Culture.

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## Attachment 2

### Individuals Giving Public Testimony

#### Written

- Steve Rodrigues, Kalakala Alliance Foundation, 10/24/09
- Monica Park, Redmond Historical Society, 11/05/09
- Arthur Skolnik, former Washington State Historic Preservation Officer, 11/06/09
- Phyllis Keller, Woodinville Heritage Society, 12/11/09
- John Chaney, AKCHO Board Member, 12/14/09
- Lauren McCroskey, King County Landmarks Commission Chair, 02/04/10
- Holly Taylor, Past Forward - Northwest Cultural Services, 02/05/10
- Mary Moore, Sammamish Historical Society, 02/09/10
- Lauren McCroskey, King County Landmarks Commission Chair, 02/09/10
- Seattle City Council Members: Nick Licata, Sally Bagshaw, Tim Burgess, Sally Clark, Jean Godden, Bruce Harrell, Mike O'Brien, Tom Rasmussen, City of Seattle, 02/11/10
- Michael Moore, Skykomish Design Review Board, 02/12/10
- David Pilgrim, Maple Valley Historical Society, 02/13/10
- Chris Moore, Washington Trust for Historic Preservation, 02/16/10
- Theo Cleveland, Skykomish Mountain Lion's Club Chapter of the International, 02/16/10
- The Honorable Mike McGinn, City of Seattle, 02/19/10
- Linda Van Nest, Greater Kent Historical Society, 02/21/10

#### In-Person

- Arthur Skolnik, former Washington State Historic Preservation Officer, 12/11/09
- Phyllis Keller, Woodinville Heritage Society, 12/11/09
- Kathleen Brooker, Historic Seattle, 01/15/10
- Marie McCaffrey, HistoryLink, 02/05/10
- Karen Gordon, City of Seattle Historic Preservation Program and Landmark Preservation Board, 02/12/10
- Chris Moore, Washington Trust for Historic Preservation, 02/12/10

# Attachment 3



City of Seattle  
Michael McGinn, Mayor

February 19, 2010

Marilyn Brockman, Chair  
King County Historic Preservation and Historical Programs Advisory Task Force  
c/o Metropolitan King County Council  
516 Third Avenue, Room 1200  
Seattle, WA 98104

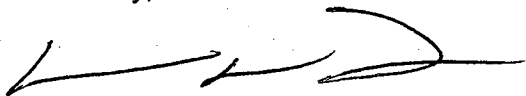
Dear Ms. Brockman,

The City of Seattle's commitment to historic preservation was formalized in 1970, after years of efforts by concerned citizens, when the Seattle City Council approved legislation that saved Pioneer Square, creating the first Preservation District in the city. This was followed shortly thereafter by a voter approved initiative for the Pike Place Market historic district, and City Council adoption of the Landmarks Preservation Ordinance to safeguard properties of historic and architectural significance around the city -- and now almost 400 structures and sites have been designated and seven historic districts have been created.

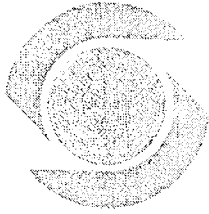
I am aware that the King County Historic Preservation and Historical Programs Advisory Task Force is in the process of formulating recommendations regarding the proposed disposition of revenue to the county under RCW 32.22.170, also referred to as HB 1386. In following the Task Force's deliberations, I have become concerned that the programs and organizations that oversee the preservation of the numerous historic buildings, sites, objects and documents within the City of Seattle will not have equitable access to these funds. Given the size and population of Seattle, it is clear that much of the revenue is collected from fees paid by citizens who live in, and businesses located in Seattle.

I respectfully request that that Task Force consider recommending that the majority of the revenue be distributed via a county-wide organization such as 4Culture, which already has the mechanisms in place for equitable and transparent distribution.

Sincerely,



Michael McGinn  
Mayor



# Attachment 4

OFFICE OF THE CITY AUDITOR FOR KING COUNTY

Thursday, February 11, 2010

Marilyn Brockman, Chair  
King County Historic Preservation and Historical Programs Advisory Task Force  
c/o Metropolitan King County Council  
516 Third Ave., Rm. 1200  
Seattle, WA 98104

Dear Madame Chair:

We understand the King County Historic Preservation and Historical Programs Advisory Task Force is currently deliberating on the proposed disposition of revenue to the county under RCW 32.22.170, commonly referred to as HB 1386. As you know, this revenue is collected county-wide through the fee all citizens and businesses in the county pay when documents are filed with the county recorder. Under state law, the revenue is dedicated to historic preservation, historical programs, and the preservation of historic documents.


As Seattle City Councilmembers, we are committed to maintaining a strong quality of life for Seattle's residents, including the preservation and interpretation of our city's history, particularly at the neighborhood level. We are also strong supporters of historic preservation and, as elected officials, keenly aware of the importance of preserving documents.

While we have not seen any official account of this fund's revenue contributions by geographic location, we suspect that populous jurisdictions with high volumes of documents to be recorded, such as marriage records, real estate transactions and wills, generate the bulk of revenue.


With this in mind we respectfully request that the Task Force when determining a distribution formula adopt principles ensuring transparency and accountability, as recommended by the King County Auditor in 2008, while reflecting the substantial contributions to the fund by residents and businesses in major cities and urban centers. It is important for us all that historic preservation programs have access to these funds in an environment where the disbursement is rational and the playing field level.

Thank you for considering our request.

Sincerely,

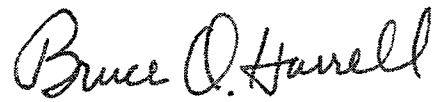
  
Nick Licata

  
Sally Bagshaw

  
Tim Burgess

  
Sally J. Clark

  
Jean Godden

  
Bruce Harrell

  
Mike O'Brien

  
Tom Rasmussen