

**KING COUNTY PARKS, TRAILS, and OPEN SPACE REPLACEMENT LEVY
FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**

What is the *King County Parks, Trails, and Open Space Replacement Levy*?

On Monday, April 29, the King County Council approved a measure for the August 6, 2013 primary election ballot to replace the current parks levies, which expire at the end of 2013. The measure would fund operations and maintenance of King County's 200 parks, 175 miles of regional trails, and 26,000 acres of open space, including the Community Partnerships and Grants Program. It would support prioritized investments that include infrastructure repair and replacement; open space acquisition, and trail and trailhead development. The measure would also fund local city parks and the Woodland Park Zoo.

How much would the measure cost a King County homeowner?

The *King County Parks, Trails, and Open Space Replacement Levy* authorizes a CPI-indexed property tax levy lid lift of 18.77 cents per \$1,000 of assessed value for the period of 2014 through 2019. The levy would replace the current parks levies and cost an estimated \$56 per year for the owner of a home valued at \$300,000. It is expected that it would generate an estimated \$396 million over the six-year period.

How would the proceeds of the *King County Parks, Trails, and Open Space Replacement Levy* be used on existing parks and trails?

Forty-seven percent of levy proceeds would fund the operations and maintenance of King County's existing system of 200 parks, 175 miles of trails, and 26,000 acres of open space. The levy would fund the repair or replacement of aging parks infrastructure, including proposed projects such as repair or replacement of 14 bridges and trestles on regional trails and 13 children's play areas.

The levy measure also includes funding for the development of trailhead facilities and parking lots at 11 proposed sites, which connect to 8,400 acres of existing parks that include 140 miles of trails for hiking, biking and horseback riding. Proposed project examples include an Issaquah trailhead for Cougar Mountain Regional Wildland Park and construction of a trailhead at Pinnacle Peak Park in Enumclaw.

Would proceeds of the *King County Parks, Trails, and Open Space Replacement Levy* be used to acquire additional open space lands?

Yes. The levy provides funding to acquire roughly 450 acres per year of open space (in fee or through easements), or 2,700 acres over the six-year period. New open space acquisitions would be reviewed by the King County Conservation Futures Citizen Advisory Committee and include lands that conserve forests and other types of native habitat, protect water quality for fish and wildlife, and provide recreation opportunities for King County residents.

What does the *King County Parks, Trails, and Open Space Replacement Levy* include for regional trails?

The levy provides funding for on-going maintenance of King County's 175-mile Regional Trails System and to further develop 14 trail projects that fill in missing links and connect to trails in cities and to transit and civic hubs. King County continues to work with nine south county and eastside cities on two new trail corridors, the Lake to Sound Trail and Eastside Rail Corridor, and levy proceeds would help fund planning, permitting, development of those projects.

What types of infrastructure repairs would this levy fund?

The *King County Parks, Trails, and Open Space Replacement Levy* includes funding to repair aging parks infrastructure, which reduces the division's maintenance backlog and addresses public safety. Examples of proposed projects include replacing 13 play areas at the end of their life cycles, repairing and restoring historical structures at Steve Cox Memorial Park and Marymoor Park, partially funding replacement of an out-of-code maintenance facility, and carrying out repairs at the Weyerhaeuser King County Aquatic Center.

Does this levy fund the Community Partnerships and Grants (CPG) Program?

Yes. The *King County Parks, Trails, and Open Space Replacement Levy* includes funding to continue the CPG Program, which has resulted in an estimated \$4 dollars of community resources for every public dollar spent over the last 10 years. The CPG Program develops partnerships that result in new or improved public park amenities by leveraging community investments, such as cash, grants, volunteers, and in-kind donations. There are currently more than 40 projects in various stages of planning, design, or construction, which, once completed, will add new public recreation facilities valued at an estimated \$50 million.

Why has a levy been proposed?

This levy proposition is consistent with the county's practice of not using General Fund monies on regional parks, trails and open space or on local parks in rural unincorporated areas. King County Parks has not received General Fund support since 2010. The current levies, which are the primary revenue sources for King County Parks' operating and capital budgets, both expire at the end of 2013. There are no other sources of funding identified at this time to fund King County's parks, trails, and open space.

How does my local park benefit from this levy?

Commensurate with the level of support provided to local cities from the expiring 2008-2013 Open Space and Trails Levy, the *King County Parks, Trails, and Open Space Replacement Levy* would provide an estimated \$4.2 million per year for distribution among King County's 39 cities, based upon assessed value and population. Levy proceeds for cities are designated for parks and recreation capital purposes in their communities, including as match for local, state and federal grants.

What would the Woodland Park Zoo receive from this levy?

An estimated \$4.2 million per year would support the Zoo, a continuation of the level provided under the current 2008-2013 Open Space and Trails Levy. Levy proceeds for the Zoo are designated for environmental education programs, with emphasis on accessibility for traditionally underserved populations in the county; horticulture and maintenance of buildings and grounds; conservation and animal care for rare, threatened or endangered Pacific Northwest species; and for board-approved capital projects/campaigns in existence as of December 31, 2012. In 2012, proceeds from the 2008-2013 Open Space and Trails Levy accounted for approximately 12 percent of the Zoo's total operating revenues.

Why is the 2013 levy proposition different from the levies approved by voters in 2007?

Approximately 80 percent of the *King County Parks, Trails, and Open Space Replacement Levy* renews the levels of service provided by the expiring parks levies, and 20 percent supports prioritized investments, such as infrastructure repair of play areas and bridges and trestles on the Regional Trails System identified in a recent major maintenance study, development of two major trail corridors in south and east King County, and construction of trailheads and parking lots at parks and trails.

Between 2008 and the present, King County Parks' operating and capital budgets have been affected by an overall sluggish economic climate, the elimination of General Fund support in 2010, and an 80 percent decline in revenue from the Real Estate Excise Tax since 2006 - Parks' primary source for infrastructure repairs and capital improvements. These factors, along with projected inflation, were considered in the economic modeling for the levy proposition.

Who decided how levy proceeds would be used?

In 2011, King County Parks conducted a county-wide customer satisfaction initiative to determine the levels of public satisfaction with the services currently provided by King County Parks and to develop a better understanding of the region's future parks and recreation needs and what roles King County can play in meeting those needs. Those findings were shared with the citizen-based King County Parks Levy Task Force, a panel of business and civic leaders that was appointed and convened by the King County Executive in June 2012. The Task Force's recommendations informed the King County Executive's proposal to fund the future of King County's parks and trails system, and ultimately, provided the basis for the proposition approved by the King County Council for the August 6, 2013 primary election ballot. More information about the Task Force's proceedings can be found at www.kingcounty.gov/parks/levy.

What happens if the levy is not approved?

The current 2008-2013 Operations and Maintenance Levy, which expires at the end of 2013, provides approximately 70 percent of King County Parks' operating revenue, with 17 percent generated from business and entrepreneurial activities. King County Parks has not received General Fund support since 2010, and there are no other sources of funding identified at this time that would keep King County's parks and trails operating and maintained. The business revenues that the division generates are dependent upon facilities being open.

King County Parks has used proceeds from the current 2008-2013 Open Space and Trails Levy, which expires at the end of 2013, as a source of matching funding, which is required for most local, state, and federal grants. Past projects have included development of regional trails like the East Lake Sammamish Trail and acquisition of open space lands. Without an available source of matching funds, King County Parks is not eligible for those types of funding opportunities. In addition, there has been an 80 percent decline in Real Estate Excise Tax (REET) revenue since 2006, which historically has paid for Parks' infrastructure repair and replacement and facility development. Current projections show REET remaining relatively flat for the period of 2014-2019, which would not provide enough revenue for King County Parks to address the priorities identified in its maintenance backlog.

How can I learn more?

To learn more about the *King County Parks, Trails, and Open Space Replacement Levy*, visit www.kingcounty.gov/parks/levy.

Stay informed of all happenings at King County Parks on Facebook at www.facebook.com/iheartkcparks or by following the King County Parks blog, "The Plog," at <http://kingcountyparks.wordpress.com>.