

# Report of the King County Parks Levy Task Force

October 2012

## Executive Summary

The King County Parks Levy Task Force was charged by County Executive Dow Constantine to respond to two questions:

- What should be done to preserve the County’s 26,000-acre system of parks and trails after the current operating and capital levies expire at the end of 2013?
- What should be done to meet the future parks and recreation needs of King County residents?

We recommend that the County ask the region’s voters to **continue the levels of support** provided by the two current parks and open space levies – ensuring the County’s parks, open space and trails remain open; funding capital improvements in cities’ parks and trails systems; and supporting the Woodland Park Zoo -- and also seek funding for a **limited set of strategic enhancements** to: provide more and improved County parks and trails; acquire additional open space to serve our growing region; and fund two major trail corridors. We recommend using a six-year, inflation-adjusted (CPI-indexed) property tax levy lid lift mechanism to generate the revenue to support these investments. A summary of our recommendation is presented below.

### SUMMARY OF TASK FORCE FUNDING RECOMMENDATION<sup>1</sup>

Continuing Current Level of Effort	14.89 cents	Strategic Enhancements	4.12 cents
County Parks Operations and Maintenance	8.29	Preserve/Protect BNSF corridor	0.23
Regional Open Space Acquisition	1.32	Support 4H Program	0.03
Regional Trails System	2.48	Community Partnerships and Grants	0.08
Community Partnerships and Grants	0.16	Asset Replacement and Repair	0.80
Cities’ Parks and Trails	1.32	Bridges and Trestles	0.30
Woodland Park Zoo	1.32	Trailhead Development and Accessibility	0.20
		Regional Open Space Acquisition	0.70
		New Trail Corridor Development	1.80

**TOTAL RECOMMENDED LEVY RATE:<sup>2</sup>**

**19.01 cents / \$64 annual household impact**

This is a bold package and calls for strong regional leadership. We believe this proposal is consistent with the vision voters of King County have supported many times: approving legacy investments in our quality of life and preserving our spectacular natural environment.

<sup>1</sup> Assumes six-year Consumer Price Index (CPI)-indexed levy lid lift for 2014-2019, OEFA forecasts from 2012 August, and cost growth rate assumptions approved by the King County Office of Performance, Strategy and Budget.

<sup>2</sup> Numbers may not total due to rounding.

# Report of the King County Parks Levy Task Force

October 2012

## Introduction

Confronted with a \$52 million general fund crisis in 2002, King County faced the very real possibility of closing its large system of parks, pools, and recreational programs. Informed by extensive public outreach and stakeholder input, as well as by the work of the *Metropolitan Parks Task Force*, the Parks Business Transition Plan was adopted by the King County Council and became the blueprint for restoring stability to the County's parks system. King County Parks reoriented its mission to focus on providing regional trails, regional recreational facilities, regional natural area parks, and local rural parks. Cities helped make this transition possible by assuming ownership for dozens of local in-city parks facilities, including many swimming pools, playgrounds and athletic fields. The County also sought financial sustainability through a property tax levy and a commitment to generate business revenues through entrepreneurial and enterprise activities. That initial levy, targeted to provide operations and maintenance for the period of 2004-2007, was approved by voters in 2003 by 57 percent.

In 2007, the *Parks Futures Task Force* recommended that the Division continue along the path set forth under the Parks Business Transition Plan and that a seven-cent operating and a five-cent capital levy be placed on the ballot. In the end, the King County Executive proposed and the Council approved the following levies for 2008-2013:<sup>3</sup>

- A five-cent operating levy (does not support parks or facilities in the Unincorporated Growth Area)
- A five-cent open space and trails levy for:
  - Open space and regional trails for King County (3 cents)
  - Open space and trails for the 39 cities within King County (1 cent, distributed by population and assessed value)
  - Woodland Park Zoo operations, environmental education programs and capital improvements (1 cent)

King County voters approved the levies by 63 percent and 59 percent respectively.

In June 2012, King County Executive Dow Constantine convened a third citizen task force, the *King County Parks Levy Task Force*. He asked us to recommend a funding strategy to ensure the vitality and sustainability of King County's parks and trails upon the expiration of the two current levies at the end of 2013. This report presents our findings and recommendations with respect to the following questions, which served as the core of our mission as a task force:

- What should be done to preserve the County's 26,000-acre system of parks and trails after the current operating and capital levies expire at the end of 2013?
- What should be done to meet the future parks and recreation needs of King County residents?

---

<sup>3</sup> See Appendix 1, providing a summary of the current levies approved by voters in August 2007.

The Executive also requested that we outline the structure and scope of any funding recommendations and that our recommendations promote the equity and social justice goals of the County and the King County Strategic Plan.<sup>4</sup>

### Task Force Proceedings and Membership

The King County Parks Levy Task Force (“Task Force”) met nine times over this past summer. We held our first meeting on June 26 and our last meeting on October 2. All meetings were open to the public. We received extensive briefings from the King County Parks Division (“Division”) staff and other stakeholders on a full range of topics, including: the Division’s mission and vision, assets and operations, financing structure, and recent history; the non-county facilities and programs supported by Open Space and Trails Levy; feedback from stakeholders and members of the public as to what they value and need from their parks, trails and open space; and the priorities of the Division as to future funding. We heard from several outside stakeholders as to their priorities for future funding and considered the results of a survey of King County residents on park and recreation issues, conducted on behalf of the Division in August 2012. We reviewed the various funding mechanisms and tools available to the Division; considered the issue of competing ballot measures expected to be submitted over the next two years; and received information on the County’s General Fund. All our meeting agendas, summaries and materials can be found online at <http://kingcounty.gov/recreation/parks/taskforce.aspx>.

The Task Force is a diverse group. We come from all parts of King County – south, east, north and west and rural and urban areas. We represent a variety of professional backgrounds and affiliations, from the field of parks and recreation to transportation engineering to open space preservation. Collectively, we brought a broad range of perspectives and experience to this challenge, and we learned much from one another over the course of our discussions. A full list of members is set forth at **Exhibit A**. We were led by three co-chairs: Louise Miller, Kathy Surace-Smith, and Jeff Watling, and had the benefit of an outside facilitator to guide our discussions. Over the course of our deliberations, and thanks in no small part to the Division being extremely responsive to our many requests for information, we reached a strong consensus recommendation on future parks and recreation funding, as presented in this report.

### Task Force Findings

1. ***King County’s parks, trails and open space contribute immeasurably to our quality of life, preserving our natural heritage, supporting active lifestyles for our residents, and providing economic benefits.***

#### *Basis for finding:*

- King County’s 200 parks provide venues to meet the increasing recreation demands of our growing population. King County Parks today operates 82 athletic fields available for a variety of team sports and other activities, 29 play areas, 26 picnic shelters, 2 equestrian arenas, and a world class aquatic center.
- The King County Regional Trails System includes 175 miles, connecting urban and rural communities. The Regional Trails System directly touches 30 of our 39 cities and serves as an

---

<sup>4</sup> Our mission statement is reproduced in full at Appendix 2.

increasingly important alternative to traditional means of commuting, as well as providing an important family recreational resource.<sup>5</sup>

- With more than 21,000 acres of natural areas, King County Parks preserves our natural heritage of forests, streams, and salmon, protecting water quality and reducing our carbon footprint while providing many passive recreation opportunities. In many cases, through creative transactions the County has protected invaluable habitat areas in private ownership with conservation easements to preserve the natural values of these lands for public benefit.
- These parks, trails, and natural areas also support our region's economy by making this a place where people want to live, work and raise their families.<sup>6</sup>

**2. *The public places a high value on acquiring open space and developing a regional trail system; the Division's mission and goals are aligned with these public priorities.***

*Basis for finding:*

The Division's *2011 Customer Satisfaction Initiative*<sup>7</sup> interviewed 1700 respondents online, 400 park users, 16 parks directors, County employees and included two citizen focus groups. It found broad support for six common themes:

- the value of parks, trails and natural areas
- the importance of investing in maintenance and protect existing infrastructure
- strong support for the Regional Trails System and a desire to complete missing links in that system
- support for partnerships to leverage tight resources
- recognition that there is not full equity in the geographic distribution of parks, trails, and recreational opportunities and a desire to address that inequity
- the need for a regional discussion on aquatics-- which was also recognized as beyond the scope of current deliberations on funding King County Parks

The Division expresses its current priorities in terms of four core goals, which are consistent with the Division's mission and Business Transition Plan (adopted by the County Council in 2002) and support the themes of the *2011 Customer Satisfaction Initiative*:

- Goal 1: Take Care of What We Have
- Goal 2: Grow/Connect Regional Open Space and Natural Lands
- Goal 3: Improve Regional Trails System and Regional Mobility
- Goal 4: Make Parks More Accessible

The Task Force finds that these are appropriate goals, and if followed, will preserve the necessary focus of effort required by limited resources and defined by Parks' mission and the Business Transition Plan.

---

<sup>5</sup> A wealth of information on the benefits of trails can be found at [www.americantrails.org](http://www.americantrails.org).

<sup>6</sup> The Trust for Public Land has considerable data on the economic and health benefits of parks. See: <http://www.tpl.org/>. Appendix 3 includes additional detail on King County Parks' inventory.

<sup>7</sup> The full report can be found at: [http://your.kingcounty.gov/dnrp/library/parks-and-recreation/documents/task\\_force/background\\_materials/10.KCP\\_Input\\_Summary\\_All\\_Report-Final.pdf](http://your.kingcounty.gov/dnrp/library/parks-and-recreation/documents/task_force/background_materials/10.KCP_Input_Summary_All_Report-Final.pdf).

3. ***Due to the County's and the Division's financial situation over the past decade, the Division has faced challenges in providing adequate levels of service. Taking care of the park and trail assets we have should be a major priority for future funding.***

*Basis for finding:*

In 2013, King County Parks will be 75 years old, and many facilities in its inventory are even older. The current parks levies provide no funding that can be used for major maintenance of existing infrastructure, and Real Estate Excise Tax (REET) revenues, which traditionally have been used by the Division for major maintenance, are down 83 percent from 2006 to 2012. At the same time, King County Parks continues to grow, adding new responsibilities to care for and steward. As a result, the overall level of maintenance and particularly capital facilities repair and replacement has eroded over the last six years, despite the best efforts of Division staff and some 50,000 hours of volunteer support annually. Day-to-day maintenance levels are visibly lower than that found in local city parks' systems.

Major maintenance deferred too long can lead to long-term damage and even permanent closure of facilities. We understand from presentations by Division staff that some regional trails and recreation facilities could face closure if supporting bridges and trails are not repaired. This is not acceptable. The public's investment in King County's parks, trails and natural areas must be protected. An outside consultant identified multiple bridges and trestles and Division maintenance shops in serious need of repair. In addition, the consultant found many play areas, restrooms and other facilities in serious need of repair. The major maintenance backlog for the Division has grown each year for the last several years.

For the public to continue to support parks and trails, the public must continue to be able to use those parks and trails. A greater priority must be given in the next levy to supporting capital repair and facilities maintenance.

4. ***Preservation of open space protects water quality, provides habitat for fish and wildlife, and creates recreational opportunities. In light of the current economic climate and lower land values, the Division has an excellent opportunity to make progress on the regional open space vision.***

*Basis for finding:*

The County's planned open space and natural lands acquisitions are targeted strategically to enhance connectivity of lands already in the open space inventory, improving water quality, creating corridors for wildlife, and protecting critical habitat. Between 2009 and 2013, assessed values for property in King County have fallen nearly 20%. There is a unique opportunity before us now to acquire legacy properties at very attractive costs that may otherwise be lost forever.

A portion of the 2008-2013 Open Space and Trails Levy, which is often leveraged with the Conservation Futures Tax (CFT) funds or other grants, has helped to add 5,500 acres of open space to King County Parks' inventory. Many of the natural lands have been preserved through purchase of easements (4,800 of the 5,500 acres), which is an effective use of limited resources because easements are less expensive than acquiring title, and conservation easements limit the Division's ongoing maintenance costs associated with natural land management.

5. ***The Regional Trails System provides many benefits; there remain a number of missing links and gaps in the System that should be addressed. We are at a critical juncture in terms of moving ahead with two legacy trail projects: the Lake-to-Sound Trail through south King County and the Burlington Northern Santa Fe (BNSF) Rail Corridor on the Eastside.***

*Basis for finding:*

Trails provide not only a recreational outlet but also an increasingly important alternative to traditional means of commuting. They provide a safe pathway to school for children and a place for family recreation.

Several trails in the network have notable gaps. Projects are underway or planned to complete critical connections on the following trails: East Lake Sammamish, Sammamish River, Lake-to-Sound, Green River, Green-to-Cedar River, Soos Creek, Foothills Trail, and Snoqualmie Valley. Since 2008, the Open Space and Trails Levy has provided key matching funds that helped the Division secure almost \$4 million in state and federal grants for Regional Trails System development. Sustained long-term funding will be needed to complete these efforts.

The Lake-to-Sound Trail addresses the lack of trails serving south King County. Completing the many gaps in this trail is possible within the next six years—if funding is available. The Lake-to-Sound Trail runs through many of the most economically disadvantaged areas of King County, and once completed, will serve communities characterized by poor health outcomes. It will provide these residents easy access to the entire Regional Trails System, as well as link to major transit hubs.

After years of effort, the County is about to acquire a 15.6 mile segment of the Eastside Rail Corridor, formerly the BNSF rail corridor. This corridor will become the responsibility of the Division and will require at least minimal maintenance while plans for future development are completed. Neither day-to-day maintenance nor the studies and outreach necessary to support future development plans of this corridor are currently funded. This trail will link eastside cities from Woodinville in the north through Renton in the south and will connect to other trails, creating an off-street, non-motorized network from Snohomish to Pierce County.

6. ***City and County parks systems are integrally linked. It is appropriate for a regional levy to provide capital funding for parks and trails in King County's 39 cities.***

*Basis for finding:*

City and county parks, trails and natural areas are integrally linked, and our region is stronger when both city and county park systems are thriving. The public often does not perceive where one system picks up and another leaves off. Together, these systems provide the full range of parks and recreation services the public needs and expects and that contribute so much to our quality of life. King County Parks provides regional parks and trails and is also the local provider for parks in unincorporated King County, which is home to 280,000 residents. In King County's 39 cities, local parks and recreation agencies provide a range of services, from soccer fields to senior programs, and also have trails networks and natural areas that support and often connect directly to the County's larger regional trail and open space assets.

City parks and recreation agencies have made a strong case to continue receiving proceeds from a future county-wide parks levy and to expand the scope of eligible uses for those proceeds. Representatives from city parks departments explained to us that with the greater focus on active recreation in city systems, city priorities for capital funds may often not be limited to trails and open space. In recent years, many cities have assumed ownership of local parks previously owned by King County. Given the synergistic relationship among regional and local parks and trails, we find it is appropriate to expand the scope of use of levy funds allocated to cities to include any capital purpose within local parks and recreation systems.

- 7. The Woodland Park Zoo is a treasured regional asset that receives nearly twelve percent of its annual operating revenues from the 2008-2013 Open Space and Trails Levy. Loss of this revenue would have significant negative impact on Zoo programs and operations.***

*Basis for finding:*

The Woodland Park Zoo is a unique and regional asset. Per correspondence from the Zoo submitted to us, 75 percent of visitors come from King County; 25 percent of members and 43 percent of school visits come from outside Seattle. This correspondence also notes that “in an urbanizing area that is increasingly disconnected from the natural world, the Zoo offers a great place for a family to spend the day, for children and adults to learn about animals and their habitat, and to get back in touch with nature in a unique way.” (See **Exhibit B.**) We also would note that the Zoo’s program to fund transportation for school children to visit the Zoo helps many low income communities and supports the County’s equity and social justice goals.

In 2012, nearly twelve percent of the Zoo’s annual operating budget will come from the Open Space and Trails Levy. To avoid program cuts, particularly to environmental education programs, the Zoo has requested continued funding from a future levy at the current, indexed rate. We believe it is important to continue regional funding for the Zoo.

- 8. The Division has demonstrated impressive success at leveraging levy funds and generating entrepreneurial revenue, reducing needed taxpayer support for the County’s parks and trails. Considering the passive nature of the majority of the County’s parks and trail assets, a modest downward adjustment in entrepreneurial revenue growth forecasts is appropriate.***

*Basis for finding:*

King County Parks has made difficult choices and smart investments in the last decade to leverage the limited funding available for parks and trails. The Community Partnerships and Grants (“CPG”) Program is a particularly impressive example. Since 2003, more than 40 projects have been completed or are currently underway through the CPG Program, which when completed will provide new or improved public recreation facilities worth an estimated value of \$50 million. Such is the success of this program that we are recommending additional funding for it in the future.

King County Parks has also made extensive use of volunteers — regularly securing over 50,000 hours a year in volunteer service to maintain and improve parks, trails, and natural areas-- and has a number of

arrangements with nonprofit service providers who provide programming in King County Parks' facilities.

Consistent with the 2002 Business Transition Plan, King County Parks has been highly successful in securing entrepreneurial revenues, meeting a five percent annual revenue growth target every year from 2004 to 2010. However, in light of the economic climate and King County Parks' inventory-- primarily natural areas and trails that provide very limited direct revenue-generating opportunities-- it is not realistic to expect that the Division can continue to generate growth in income at that rate indefinitely. We support the Division's continued pursuit of entrepreneurial opportunities and corporate and community partnerships, and agree with them that a three percent per year business revenue growth target is more sustainable. This adjusted target is reflected in the level of maintenance and operations levy support we are recommending below.

9. ***King County Parks depends on levy revenues to operate and invest in its parks, trails, and natural areas: continuing the current level of effort for the County, Cities and Zoo will require a total levy rate of 14.9 cents in 2014.***<sup>8</sup>

*Basis for finding:*

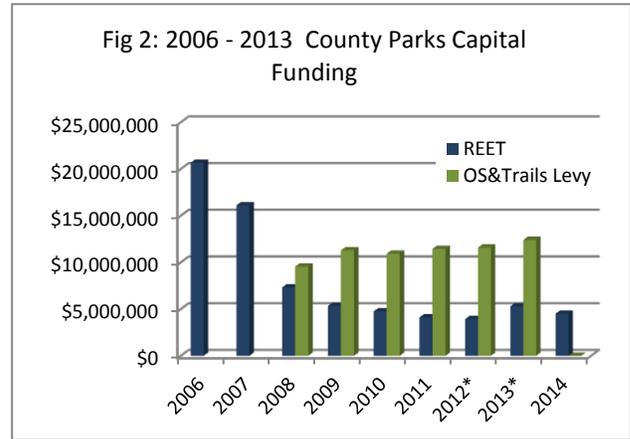
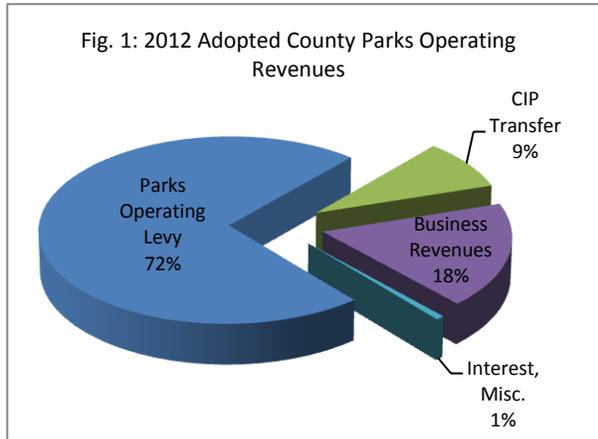
In 2012, the King County Parks Operations and Maintenance Levy is anticipated to comprise an estimated 72 percent of the Division's operating revenue, and the Open Space and Trails Levy will comprise 68 percent of the Division's capital budget. See **Figures 1 and 2**.

King County Parks' revenue outlook has deteriorated significantly since passage of the levies in 2007. Among many factors that affected the Division's financial situation was the elimination of County General Fund support by 2011 due to the County's overall budget challenges. This eliminated the only tax revenue source available to support operation of nearly 30 County local parks facilities in the Urban Growth Area (current levy monies may not be expended for operation of these local urban facilities). In this regard, it should be noted that the Task Force did not expressly discuss whether the next levy should allow or disallow use of levy funds for maintenance of local parks in the urban areas.

Since 2008, several other factors have combined to increase pressure on the Division's operating and capital budgets: a generally poor economic climate; some significant new responsibilities (including but not limited to the Maury Island site); and loss of Real Estate Excise Tax (REET) revenues, which have fallen 83 percent from 2006 to 2012. The Director of the King County Office of Performance, Strategy and Budget forecasts REET to grow very modestly over the next several years, in no small part due to annexation of significant parts of the unincorporated urban area to cities. There is no expectation that REET revenues will rebound even close to the levels seen in 2007, when the current levies were submitted to the voters. Historically, the Division has used REET to pay for major maintenance and park and trail enhancements; its significant decline in the past few years has left the Division with very few options for funding those needs.

---

<sup>8</sup> Assumes six-year Consumer Price Index (CPI)-indexed levy lid lift for 2014-2019, OEFA forecasts from 2012 August, and cost growth rate assumptions approved by the King County Office of Performance, Strategy and Budget.



Source: King County Parks Division.

Due to significant decreases in assessed values in King County since 2008, the effective levy rate for the two levies will be 13.4 cents in 2013, an increase of 35 percent since the start of the current levies. Accounting for inflation and decreased assessed values, the levy rate<sup>9</sup> required to carry forward what is currently provided by the two existing levies is 14.9 cents, which equates to \$50.20 per year for an average King County homeowner with a house valued at \$337,000.<sup>10</sup>

It is important to note that this current level of effort does not address the Division's growing major maintenance backlog, making up for the elimination of General Fund support, the significant decline of REET revenues, or system growth. Nor does it provide the Division with any additional capacity to take advantage of historically low property values to strategically add to our open space and natural areas inventory, build out the Lake-to-Sound Trail, or plan for the future of the BNSF Trail Corridor.

**10. At least for now, there is no reasonable alternative but to again seek voter approval for another levy to support County parks and trails operations and capital projects.**

Basis for finding:

We reviewed all the currently available types of mechanisms to fund parks, including:

- *The County General Fund* – Dwight Dively, Director of the King County Office of Performance, Strategy and Budget, was very clear that the County General Fund will not absorb the cost of operating and maintaining King County's parks, trails and natural areas in 2014 or anytime in the foreseeable future at the expense of other mandated services.
- *A new taxing district* – Parks and Recreation District or Service Area, or Metropolitan Parks District – we find that these mechanisms are somewhat cumbersome and are more complicated to establish.
- *Bonds for capital purposes* – the 60 percent threshold required for approval by voters is a high bar. We prefer an option that is more likely to be successful. Also, this mechanism does not address day-to-day operating needs since bond proceeds must be spent on capital items.

<sup>9</sup> A non-indexed levy would require a higher levy rate.

<sup>10</sup> Average home value based upon 2011 King County Assessor's Office estimates.

- *Imposition of an additional REET* — there is statutory authority for a third REET tax (RCW 82.46.070). This is of limited use since it can only be applied to purchasing and maintaining new conservation areas.
- *Levy Lid Lifts* – there are three types of property tax levy lid lifts:
  - a six year levy with indexing (current mechanism);
  - a six year levy subject to I-747 limits; or
  - a one-year levy.

An annual levy is obviously too limited to provide any security for the continued operation of the system.

The six-year, inflation-adjusted levy, which is what King County voters approved in 2007 to fund the Division, has a “simple majority plus one requirement” for passage and the inflation adjustor helps keep the initial levy rate to a minimum.

**11. *Residents strongly support the County’s parks and trails and there is good indication of support for continuing a levy at the level we are recommending. We believe that these initial findings should be confirmed later by gathering additional public opinion.***

*Basis for finding:*

The survey of King County residents conducted in August 2012 by EMC Research for the Division indicates strong public support for parks and recreation generally, and among those familiar with the Division’s assets, strong support for King County Parks specifically. The report from this research is presented at **Exhibit C**. A few of the more compelling findings are noted here:

- Sixty-five percent of those surveyed gave a positive rating to the King County Parks system.
- In concept, 86 percent of residents surveyed rated it very important or somewhat important to fund the Division’s operations; 75 percent rated capital funding very important or somewhat important.
- Investment priorities that rated strongest were open space acquisition, the Woodland Park Zoo, equity and social justice issues, and major maintenance. However, *all investment priorities included in the survey received over 75 percent favorable ratings*—including the Eastside Rail Corridor trail, Lake-to-Sound Trail, funding for cities’ park agencies, building out the existing Regional Trails System, and improving the level of service in the County’s parks and trails.
- After respondents were told it would cost the average household approximately \$73.60 per year, 56 percent of those surveyed ranked it very important or somewhat important that enhanced operations and capital investments be funded. Twenty-six percent were undecided.

The EMC survey was statistically valid and provides encouraging insight into King County residents’ values and interests around parks issues. That said, it would be helpful in the future to do an additional survey to confirm these initial findings.

## Task Force Recommendations

### ***Process to Reach Funding Recommendations***

After providing extensive information about the County's parks, trails and open space and the Division's current financial and operating conditions, the Division presented the details of economic modeling for a broad set of funding components for the period of 2014-2019, such as basic maintenance, increased levels of service, and the development of major trail corridors. Continuation of funding for cities' parks and the Zoo were also presented. The Division utilized the August 2012 Office of Economic and Financial Analysis (OEFA) forecast for assumptions on assessed value, consumer price index, cost of living adjustment, and new construction indicators, and the King County Office of Performance, Strategy and Budget approved the cost assumptions employed in the modeling. We also considered project proposals submitted to us through public comment.

We then asked the Division to present its priority components and associated levy rates, including information on the total annual revenue generated and estimated annual cost per household. The Division grouped its priority components into categories based on its four core goals and presented the rationale and specific items that each component would fund.

The Task Force then decided to vote on each component individually, including the proposals presented through public comment. In some cases, if requested by a Task Force member, we voted specifically on individual subcomponents of a proposal. In cases where consensus was not reached due to a significant number of questions or concerns on a component, we asked the Division to bring back more information at the next meeting. Once our questions were answered, we again voted on the components.

As agreed upon in our ground rules, the Task Force conducted business based on consensus, which we further defined to mean 80 percent of those present in person or by proxy at a meeting.

### ***The Recommended Funding Package***

We are endorsing a funding package that we see as a bold step forward for our region. First, we recommend the County again use a six-year, inflation-adjusted (CPI-indexed) property tax levy lid lift mechanism. Second, we recommend continuing to fund the components currently supported by the Parks Operations and Maintenance Levy and the Open Space and Trails Levy.

**Table 1: Continued levels of service of current levies, carried over to 2014-2019**

<b>Description</b>	<b>Levy Rate (cents)</b>	<b>Annual \$ (millions)</b>	<b>\$ per HH (annual)</b>
Operations and Maintenance	8.29	\$26.5	\$27.90
Regional Open Space Acquisition	1.32	\$4.2	\$4.40
Regional Trails System	2.48	\$8.0	\$8.40
Community Partnerships and Grants	0.16	\$0.5	\$0.50
Cities' Parks and Trails	1.32	\$4.2	\$4.40
Woodland Park Zoo	1.32	\$4.2	\$4.40
<b>Total:</b>	<b>14.89</b>	<b>\$47.7</b>	<b>\$50.20</b>
<i>*May not add due to rounding.</i>			

Third, we recommend small but strategic set of investments that will help the Division to preserve, improve and enhance its parks, trails and natural areas.

**Table 2: Strategic enhancements for 2014-2019**

<b>Description</b>	<b>Levy Rate (cents)</b>	<b>Annual \$ (millions)</b>	<b>\$ per HH (annual)</b>
BNSF Corridor Preserve & Protect	0.23	\$0.7	\$0.80
4-H Program	0.03	\$0.1	\$0.10
Community Partnership and Grants	0.08	\$0.24	\$0.30
Asset Replacement and Repair	0.80	\$2.6	\$2.70
Bridges and Trestles	0.30	\$1.0	\$1.00
Trailhead Development and Accessibility	0.20	\$0.6	\$0.70
Regional Open Space Acquisition	0.68	\$2.2	\$2.30
New Trail Corridor Development	1.80	\$5.8	\$6.10
<b>Total:</b> <i>*May not add due to rounding.</i>	<b>4.12</b>	<b>\$13.3</b>	<b>\$14.00</b>

The combined total package is presented at **Exhibit D**.

This proposal is a truly regional package. It invests in all parts of the county, both geographically and demographically. It incorporates the County’s goals for equity and social justice by focusing resources on underserved areas of the county, and reducing barriers to access parks, trails, and natural areas.

Our proposal takes advantage of the opportunities presented by today’s current low property prices and favorable construction climate, which give us an unprecedented opportunity to make real progress in improving connectivity in the County’s inventory of natural lands and open space and closing the gaps in our trail system. The package also addresses the increasing use and wear and tear on the Division’s aging assets: we must do a better job of funding repair and maintenance of our existing assets to honor the public’s investment here and minimize the risk of future closures due to deterioration. Our proposal includes a small amount of additional funding for the Community Partnerships and Grants (CPG) Program, which has had phenomenal results in building partnerships and leveraging public dollars into new or improved recreation facilities throughout the county.

While this funding proposal does not respond to all of the challenges facing the Division, we believe it will achieve the goal of keeping King County’s system safe and open for all King County residents to enjoy while making investments that support the future of our growing region.

The Division presented us with four goals, restated in Table 3. Outlined below is how our funding proposal aligns with those four goals, starting in each case with items that reflect a continuation of current service levels, and then identifying the strategic investments we recommend adding.

**Table 3: King County Parks Core Goals for Future Funding**

- Goal 1: Take Care of What We Have
- Goal 2: Grow/Connect Regional Open Space and Natural Lands
- Goal 3: Improve Regional Trails System and Regional Mobility
- Goal 4: Make Parks More Accessible

- **Goal 1: Take Care of What We Have**

Protecting the public’s investment in the existing King County system means no longer deferring critical facility maintenance and repair, which only gets more expensive over time. We must make investments now to keep our parks and trails clean, safe, open and accessible for all King County residents.

Continuation of current service level:

- **Fund Current Operations & Maintenance levels.** This provides continuing funding for the current level for day-to-day operations and maintenance of King County’s 200 parks, 175 miles of trails, and 26,000 acres of open space. Note that this does not replace the elimination of General Fund support or increase operations and maintenance funding. It does incorporate an assumption that for the 2014-2019 funding period, entrepreneurial revenue generation will increase at 3 percent each year. *Levy rate: 8.29 cents.*

Strategic enhancements:

- **Protect and Preserve the BNSF Corridor.** King County is assuming ownership of the corridor in 2012, and this large new asset requires at least a basic level of maintenance pending development of the corridor. This new obligation should be funded rather than further stretch the Division’s already constrained maintenance budget. *Levy rate: 0.23 cents.*
- **Funding for 4-H.** Without funding from the County, 4-H can’t operate its programs, which provide youth throughout the county with many different types of educational opportunities. This small investment of County funds should continue in the future. This is an equity and social justice program that also builds on the prior investments our region has made in preserving agricultural lands and rural areas. *Levy rate: 0.03 cents.*
- **Asset Replacement and Repair.** This funds the major maintenance of critical infrastructure, including replacing the central maintenance shop, repairing structures and facilities at four priority sites identified in the Major Maintenance Study, and replacement of aging play areas. We are convinced that further delay will simply cost the taxpayers more money: it is critical to take care of these assets. *Levy rate: 0.8 cents.*
- **Bridges and Trestles.** This is a down payment on a much larger inventory of the Regional Trails System’s bridges and trestles that will eventually need repair and replacement. It addresses the 14 structures most at risk. *Levy rate: 0.3 cents.*

- **Goal 2: Grow/Connect Regional Open Space and Natural Lands**

This funding builds on King County’s on-going commitment to protect open space for the future, benefitting wildlife, addressing climate change, and preserving water quality. We think *the time is now to increase these efforts*, especially in light of today’s historically low land prices; if prime natural lands are not protected, there is the risk that they will be lost forever to development. Furthermore, these funds provide match for Conservation Futures Tax dollars and other grants, which leverages their

impact. The priority for these funds should be on lands with high ecological value, that connect to existing green space corridors, and that provide recreational opportunities. Both components we recommend include funding for on-going maintenance for newly acquired land.

Continuation of current service level: Levy rate: 1.32 cents.

Strategic enhancements: Levy rate: 0.68 cents

- **Goal 3: Improve Regional Trails System and Regional Mobility**

King County's Regional Trails System plays an important role in our region. In addition to providing recreational opportunities for cyclists, joggers, and dog-walkers, it helps get people out of their cars during the commute time. It addresses our growing population and climate issues, can provide safe routes to school and other locations for families, and encourages healthy lifestyles.

Continuation of current service level:

- **Missing links and mobility connections.** The major focus of current funding is on connecting the missing links for eight existing regional trail corridors. This item also includes an allocation for mobility oriented projects that connect transit hubs to the Regional Trails System. Levy rate: 2.48 cents.

Strategic enhancements:

- **Major trail corridor development.**

- **Lake-to-Sound Trail.** This funding will enable design and construction of multiple phases, nearly completing the 16-mile corridor by the end of the six-year funding period, assuming no major delays in permitting, property use agreements, or other issues. This is a major equity and social justice investment, addressing the deficient access to regional trails in southwest King County and creating options for healthier living among populations with some of the poorest health outcomes in King County. The corridor will intersect with five other regional trails, link to transit, civic, and employment centers, and is a partnership with five south King County cities. The project is currently underway, but this funding will enable progress to be accelerated. Levy rate: 1.0 cents.
- **BNSF Corridor.** This item will fund master planning, public outreach, and a feasibility study and will lay the groundwork for a potential interim trail along the County's portion of the former BNSF rail corridor. A future trail will connect five Eastside cities and intersect with seven other regional trails. This is a long-term project that will extend beyond the 2014-2019 period, but this funding will provide sufficient resources to lay the foundation for future development of the corridor. Levy rate: 0.8 cents.

- **Goal 4: Make Parks More Accessible**

Making parks more accessible means working to ensure these public places provide benefits that all King County residents can enjoy.

Continuation of current service level:

- **Community Partnerships and Grants (CPG) Program:** The CPG program provides seed funding to community partners for projects that develop public recreational opportunities on King County-owned lands and are matched by their donations of money, goods and services, and volunteer labor. The Task Force strongly supports this item and recommends continuing the current level of funding. Levy rate: 0.16 cents.

- **Cities' parks and trails capital programs.** This item carries forward the allocation provided to King County's 39 cities, continuing to distribute funds based upon population and assessed value. With this allocation, we are also endorsing a broadening of eligible uses to any park or trail capital purpose, including but not limited to open space acquisition, athletic field improvements, and major facility maintenance. *Levy rate: 1.32 cents.*
- **Woodland Park Zoo.** We strongly endorse continuing the current level of support to this treasured regional facility for the current range of programmatic and capital uses of these funds. *Levy rate: 1.32 cents.*

Strategic enhancements:

- **Community Partnerships and Grants (CPG) Program.** Based upon the many successful projects completed to date and the way that community partners leverage this funding, we recommend increasing available funds by \$240,000 annually. *Levy Rate: 0.08 cents.*
- **Trailhead Development and Accessibility.** Accessibility was a major message to us from the King County Parks Levy Citizen Oversight Board: they noted that the County has made incredible investments in open space, but that without trailheads or parking lots, these public lands are difficult for King County residents to access and enjoy. This item will improve parking and trailhead facilities at eleven priority sites, which will facilitate public access to more than 8,400 acres of land and nearly 140 miles of trails for hiking, mountain biking, and horseback riding. *Levy Rate: 0.20 cents.*

**Total Package Recommended by Task Force**

Based upon the economic modeling and financial information presented to us by Parks staff, we recommend a total package based upon a six-year, inflation-adjusted (CPI-indexed) levy lid lift with a rate of \$19.01 cents. This is estimated to generate \$60.9 million in 2014, an amount that would grow with inflation over the levy period. In 2014, the levy would cost the owner of home valued at \$337,000 an estimated \$64 per year. **Table 4** below presents a summary of our recommendation by programmatic area.

**Table 4: Programmatic Summary of Task Force Recommendation<sup>11</sup>**

Item	Levy Rate (cents)	Annual \$ (millions)	\$ per HH (annual)
Operations and Maintenance	8.78	28.1	29.60
Infrastructure Investments	1.30	4.2	4.40
Open Space Acquisition	2.00	6.4	6.70
Regional Trails System	4.28	13.8	14.50
Cities' Parks and Trails	1.32	4.2	4.40
Woodland Park Zoo	1.32	4.2	4.40
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>19.01¢</b>	<b>\$60.9</b>	<b>\$64.00</b>

<sup>11</sup> Assumes six-year Consumer Price Index (CPI)-indexed levy lid lift for 2014-2019, OEFA forecasts from 2012 August, and cost growth rate assumptions approved by the King County Office of Performance, Strategy and Budget. Average home value based upon 2011 King County Assessor's Office estimates.

## Other Recommendations

### ***Funding Mechanism: Six-Year, Inflation-Adjusted (CPI-Indexed) Property Tax Levy Lid Lift***

We recommend that King County Parks again use a CPI-indexed six-year levy lid lift. This has been successful among voters in the past, allows for a lower initial rate than otherwise required, and accounts for future inflation.

That said, we here convey some important concerns associated with this levy structure.

- First, we are concerned about the use of a periodic voter-approved levy as the principle long-term funding source for Parks' operations. We are concerned about the future possibility of voter exhaustion, particularly as levies must increase over time to account for growth in costs of doing business. Given the fundamental importance of King County's parks, trails, and natural areas, we believe it important to find a more sustainable funding source or sources. We recognize that finding an alternate to a short term levy is simply not feasible within the time remaining before the current levies expire.
- Second, we understand that due to our state's taxing structure, there are multiple taxing authorities and that a King County levy has impacts on junior taxing districts. We believe it is important for the County to evaluate the impacts of a Parks levy on those districts.
- Third, we understand the pressures that King County has regarding its General Fund; however, we see parks and trails as essential to our quality of life. If the County's system of parks and trails is to continue to grow and thrive, we believe that it should receive some meaningful level of General Fund operating support, as is true for mandated services such as courts and police.
- Fourth, and related to our first three concerns, we strongly urge the County to undertake, in a timely way, a study examining long-term and secure funding sources for parks, trails, and natural areas--and to do so with the cities and other partners.

### ***Presentation of levy package: Defer to Executive***

We understand a levy funding proposal needs to be placed before the voters in 2013 and that there will likely be competing measures on the ballot at each election next year. We defer to the Executive's judgment as to on which ballot the measure or measures should appear.

We are very comfortable with the proposal we are recommending, have carefully screened the set of included investments, and believe there is a compelling story for why King County voters should support it. However, we believe it critical for the Executive to continue gathering public opinion to better inform the final decision-making around the funding proposal, including whether it should be divided into multiple levy propositions or submitted as a single proposal.

If future data gathered suggests that the funding proposal should be significantly altered from our recommendation, we are willing to reconvene as a Task Force to review this additional data and provide further recommendations to you.

### ***Other items considered***

We largely concurred with the Division's recommendations as to priority investments, but we did not accept all their proposals. While all items presented are arguably worthy of investment, after deliberation and in some cases two rounds of voting, our consensus recommendation stands. In the few cases we did not concur with their recommendations, we did so out of a concern to keep the levy rate down given the region's economic challenges and our awareness of competition for voter approval of other items.

The Task Force also received comment from a few other agencies and groups seeking funding. After deliberating on each, the Task Force declines to include them in our recommendations.

Additional detail on all the items considered but not recommended is set forth in **Exhibit E**.

It is important to note that the Task Force did not engage in a broad public outreach effort, and we do not regard the few presentations we received as representative of the greater community. For a broader assessment of community priorities, we referred to the Division's *2011 Customer Satisfaction Initiative* and the results of the August 2012 public survey. Also, understanding that there is interest in funding other projects is one of the reasons we have proposed additional CPG funding.

### **Conclusion**

The contributions that our region's parks, trails and natural areas make to the quality of our lives in this region cannot be overstated. It is imperative that we find a way to continue the current level of effort and address the key opportunities and challenges before us with respect to the Division. Our recommended funding proposal is a bold response that is also a financially prudent public investment.

We are grateful to the Division for their many, many hours of work and excellent presentations informing our deliberations. We look forward to working with the County in support of the continued success of King County's parks, trails and natural areas.

We thank the King County Executive for the opportunity to serve on the King County Parks Levy Task Force. We welcome the opportunity to meet with you to discuss our recommendations and answer any questions you may have regarding them.

## **LIST OF EXHIBITS & APPENDICES**

**Exhibit A: List of Task Force Members**

**Exhibit B: Letter from Woodland Park Zoo**

**Exhibit C: Report from EMC Research, Survey Conducted August 2012**

**Exhibit D: Task Force Recommended Funding Package**

**Exhibit E: Other Items Considered**

**Appendix 1: Detail on 2008-2013 Companion Parks Levies – Amounts and Allocations**

**Appendix 2: King County Parks Levy Task Force Mission Statement**

**Appendix 3: Overview of King County Parks**

---

## Exhibit A

### 2012 King County Parks Levy Task Force

**Shiv Batra**, Executive Vice President, Tetra Tech

**David Burger**, Executive Director, Stewardship Partners

**Leda Chahim**, Government Affairs Director, Forterra

**Julie Colehour**, Principal, Colehour + Cohen

**Karen Daubert**, Executive Director, Washington Trails Association

**Mike Deller**, Washington State Director, The Trust for Public Land

**Hilary Franz**, Executive Director, Futurewise

**Donald Harris**, Manager, Property and Acquisition Services, City of Seattle, Parks and Recreation

**Terry Higashiyama**, Community Services Administrator, City of Renton

**Al Isaac**, Des Moines Legacy Foundation Board of Directors

**Terry Lavender**, Chair, King County Conservation Futures Citizen Advisory Committee

**Joey Martinez**, Commissioner, Burien Planning Commission

**Gordon McHenry Jr**, Mountains to Sound Greenway, Board of Trustees

**\*Louise Miller**, Former State Legislator and King County Councilmember

**Mathew Pruitt**, Commissioner, Finn Hill Parks and Recreation District

**Charles Ruthford**, Board Member, Cascade Bicycle Club, Board of Directors

**Chukundi Salisbury**, Project Manager/Trails Coordinator, City of Seattle, Parks and Recreation

**\*Kathy Surace-Smith, Esq.**, Principal and Owner, Lochleven Consulting PLLC

**Jim Todd**, Citizen Volunteer

**Justin Vanderpol**, Evergreen Mountain Bike Alliance Board of Directors and King County Parks Levy Citizen Oversight Board Member

**\*Jeff Watling**, City of Kent, Director, Parks, Recreation and Community Services

*\* Task Force Chairperson*

*Affiliation is listed for identification purposes only.*

**Exhibit B**  
**Letter from Woodland Park Zoo**

September 11, 2012

King County Parks Levy Task Force  
Louise Miller, Jeff Watling and  
Kathy Surace-Smith, co-chairs  
King County Parks Division, King Street Center  
Seattle, WA 98104

Dear Chairs Miller, Watling and Surace-Smith, and Members of the Task Force:

Woodland Park Zoo is very pleased to have been included in and benefitted from the 2007 King County Parks Levy, which provides about 10 percent of our annual operating budget and has been responsible, over the past five years, for thousands of school visits, for new equipment and capital repairs at the zoo, and for budget stability in a difficult economic period for many of our other programs, including environmental education and care for endangered species.

The economic conditions of the past four years have required the zoo, along with many other public and private institutions, to carefully monitor the bottom line, to reduce staff, curtail programs, close an exhibit, and to require staff to take unpaid furloughs and forego pay raises and retirement matches in selected years. The county levy has been an essential element, along with support from the city of Seattle and private philanthropists that has allowed us to continue to manage and improve our programming through this difficult period.

So it is on behalf of our 1.2 million annual visitors, 40,000 members, 700 volunteers, 80,000 annual school visitors and others that we request inclusion in the county's upcoming parks levy when it is renewed in 2013.

King County has a record of recognizing Woodland Park Zoo as a valued regional institution. That recognition goes back to the Forward Thrust bonds, as well as the county-wide, 1988 bond issue that helped support – along with private donations – many of the exhibits that have been built since that time.

We know that 75 percent of our visitors come from King County, and 25 percent of our members and 43 percent of our school visits come from outside the city of Seattle. These individuals recognize that in an urbanizing area that is increasingly disconnected from the natural world, the zoo offers a great place for a family to spend the day, for children and adults to learn about animals and their habitat, and to get back in touch with nature in a unique way.

Our representatives have attended all of the meetings of the Task Force thus far, and we are very aware of the necessary balancing of needs the task force members are weighing as they design a program for the next six years.

When the last parks levy was approved, the zoo received one cent (20 percent) of the capital levy. Because of the decline in county-wide assessed valuation, the levy now appropriates 1.3 cents to maintain the zoo's portion. In 2013 dollars, that will provide \$4.07 million for the zoo, which allows us to continue programming and capital expenses at the current level.

Were the zoo's allocation to revert to 1 cent, which translates to \$3.04 million in 2013, the zoo would be forced to make significant cuts in current programming, particularly in the area of environmental education and in our ability to reach many school children in King County. By contrast, increasing the zoo's share to 1.5 cents, or \$4.7 million in 2013 would allow us to

Deborah B.  
Jensen, Ph.D.  
*President and CFO*

make significant inroads to our long-term major maintenance backlog, adding markedly to the environmental sustainability of the zoo and could help close the fundraising gap needed to complete work to renovate our exhibit for Asian sloth bears and tigers.

We recognize that all the regional parks in King County have significant financial needs and appreciate the opportunity to be included in the levy renewals in 2013. We look forward to working with the County and the Council to ensure a successful levy renewal to support the well-loved King County parks and the zoo.

Please feel free to contact me for more information, or to solicit help from David Schaefer, Director of Public Affairs, who is in attendance at your meetings.

Yours sincerely,



Deborah B. Jensen  
President & CEO Woodland Park Zoo



Stuart Williams  
Chair, Woodland Park Zoo Board of Directors

## Exhibit C

### Report from EMC Research



MARKET  
& OPINION  
RESEARCH  
SERVICES

811 First Avenue  
Suite 451  
Seattle, WA 98104  
(206) 652-2454 fax  
(206) 652-3022 fax

436 14th Street  
Suite 820  
Oakland, CA 94612  
(510) 844-0680 fax  
(510) 844-0690 fax

3857 N. High Street  
Suite 302  
Columbus, OH 43214  
(614) 268-1660 fax  
[EMCresearch.com](http://EMCresearch.com)

# King County Parks

## Levy Task Force Survey

## Presentation of Results

**TOPLINE REPORT**  
**September 2012**

## Methodology



- Telephone survey of King County residents
- Used Random Digit Dialing (RDD) to include all possible residential phone numbers in King County; Screened for adults 18+
- Conducted August 20<sup>th</sup> – 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2012
- 400 total interviewers with a Margin of Error of  $\pm 4.9$  points at the 95% confidence interval. This means that if we were to conduct the survey 100 times, for 95 of those times, we could expect the results to be within  $\pm 4.9$  percentage points.
- Trained, professional interviewers

Please note that due to rounding, some percentages may not add up to exactly 100%.

## Key Findings



- *King County Parks are viewed very favorable (82% Favorable). In addition, two thirds of County residents (65%) give a positive rating to 'the King County Parks system' and to the 'condition of King County parks and trails' (68%).*
- *Woodland Park Zoo is the highest rated facility tested (85% Favorable). Other facilities are also well rated, including Marymoor Park (67% Favorable) and the Burke-Gilman Trail (61%), though a third of residents are unable to rate these items.*
- *Both Parks Operations and Capital functions are important to a large majority of County residents, but Operations has a higher intensity (62% Very Important) than Capital (47%).*
- *Open-space acquisition (65% Extremely Important) and Woodland Park Zoo funding (62%) are the top investment priorities for Parks. Building parks in underprivileged areas (55%), reducing the maintenance backlog (52%) and improving routine maintenance (48%) round out the top 5.*
- *An Enhanced Operations package costing an average homeowner \$58.70 is Very Important (5 on a 5 scale) to a third (37%) and Somewhat Important (4 on a 5 scale) to another third (30%).*
- *An Basic Operations package costing an average homeowner \$28.40 is Very Important to half of residents (46%), and Somewhat Important to another quarter (26%).*
- *An Capital Funding package costing an average homeowner \$14.90 is Very Important to a third of residents (34%) and Somewhat Important to another third (34%).*

## County and Parks Ratings

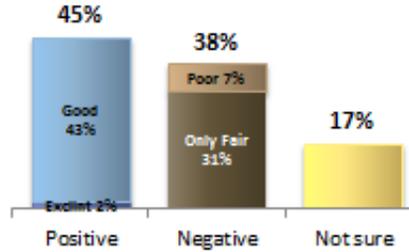


## County Direction & Overall Rating



*Do you feel things in King County are generally going in the right direction, or do you feel things have gotten off on the wrong track?*

*How would you rate King County Government overall - excellent, good, only fair, or poor, or are you not sure?*



## Park Ratings



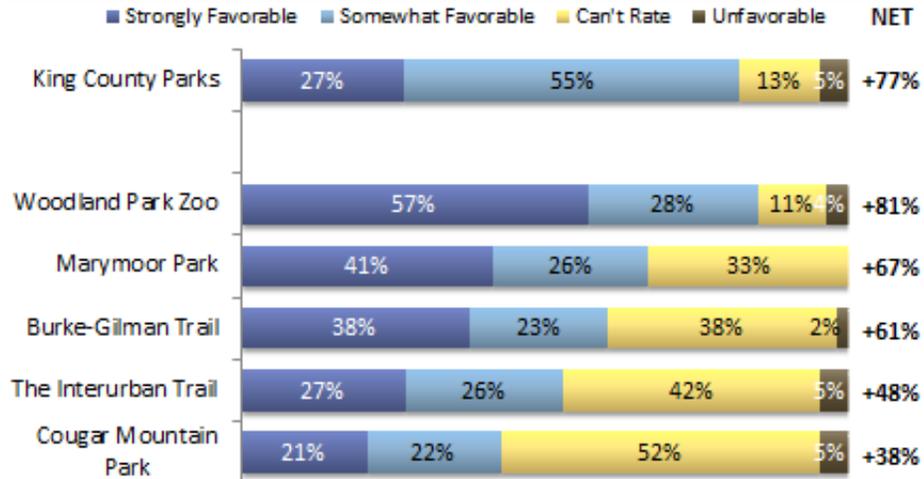
*I'd like to ask you about the condition and performance of some items in the region. For each, use a scale of excellent, good, only fair, or poor. If you're not sure, please just say so.*



## Individual Park Favorable Ratings



*I'm going to read you a list of park facilities and agencies in King County. Please tell me if you have a strongly favorable, somewhat favorable, somewhat unfavorable or strongly unfavorable opinion of each one. If you have never heard of one please just say so.*



King County Parks Survey | EMC 12-4725

1

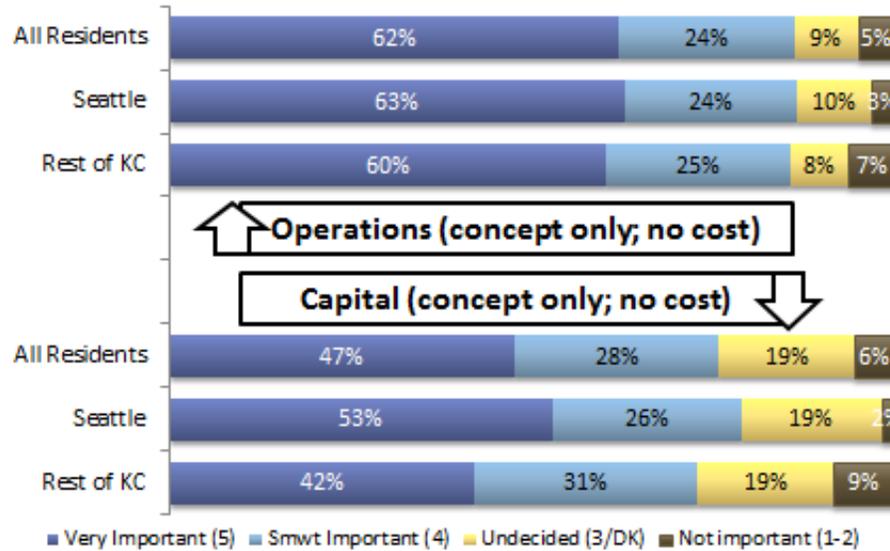
## Priorities and Cost



## Initial Ops & Capital Importance w/o Cost



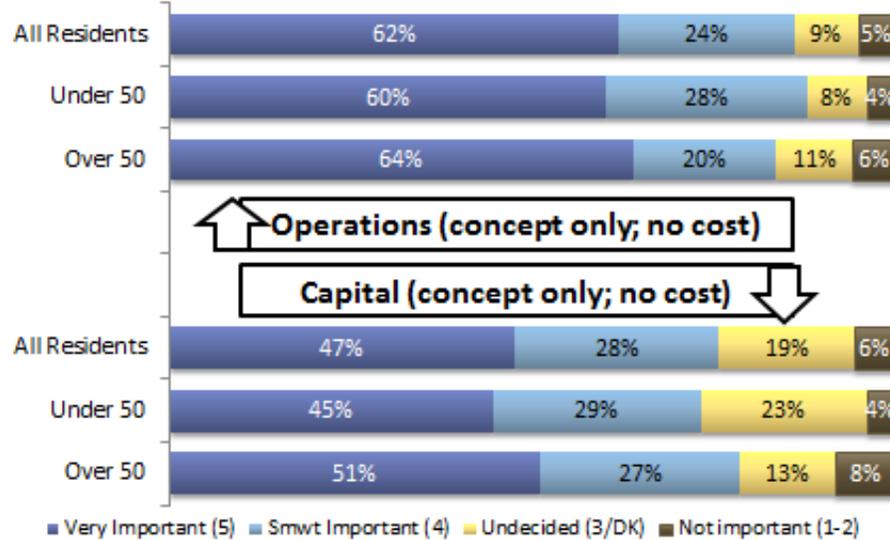
Initial Ops & Capital Importance w/o Cost by Geography



## Initial Ops & Capital Importance w/o Cost



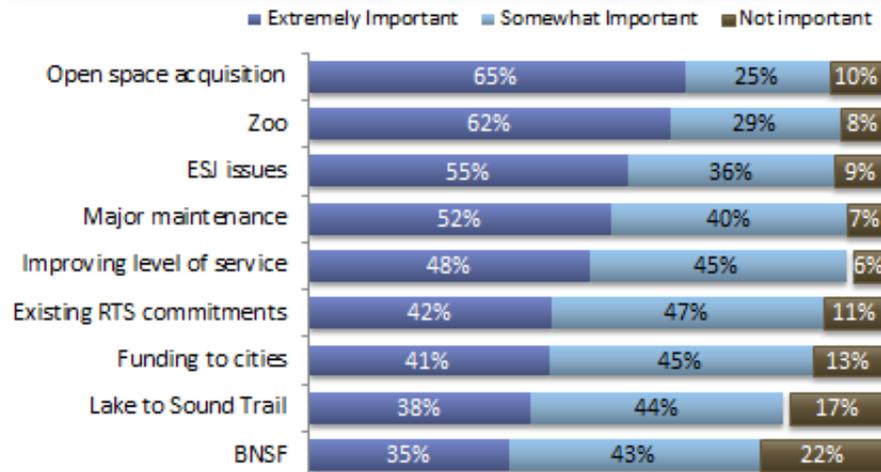
Initial Ops & Capital Importance w/o Cost by Generation



## Investment Priorities – All Residents



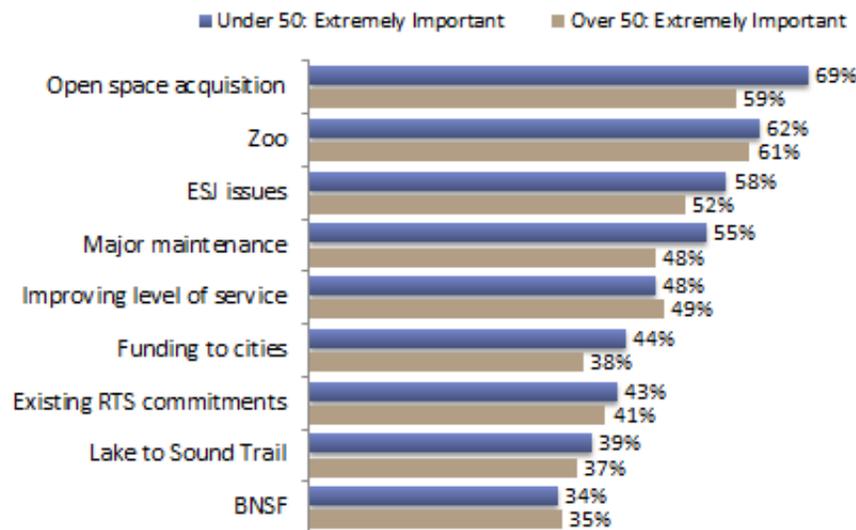
*I'd like to tell you some more about what King County Parks is considering in the next several years. For each item, please tell me if you feel that it is extremely important, somewhat important, or not important for King County Parks to invest in that item.*



## Investment Priorities – Residents Under 50



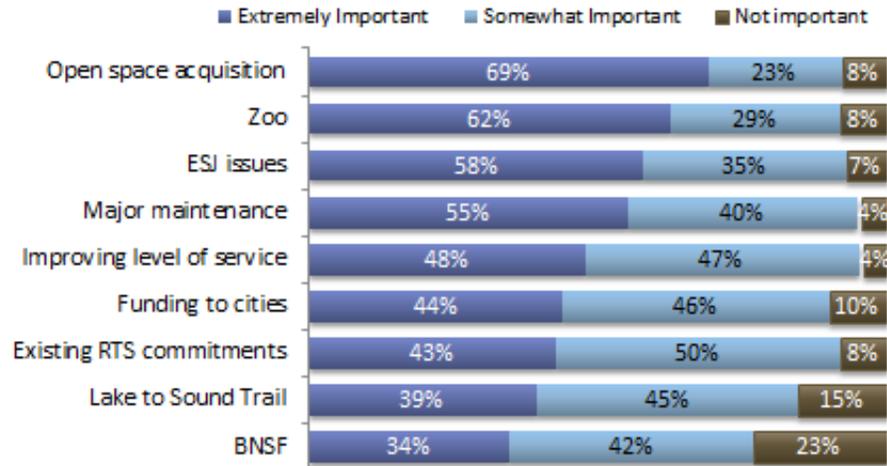
### Investment Priorities



## Investment Priorities – Residents Under 50



### Investment Priorities for King County Residents Under 50



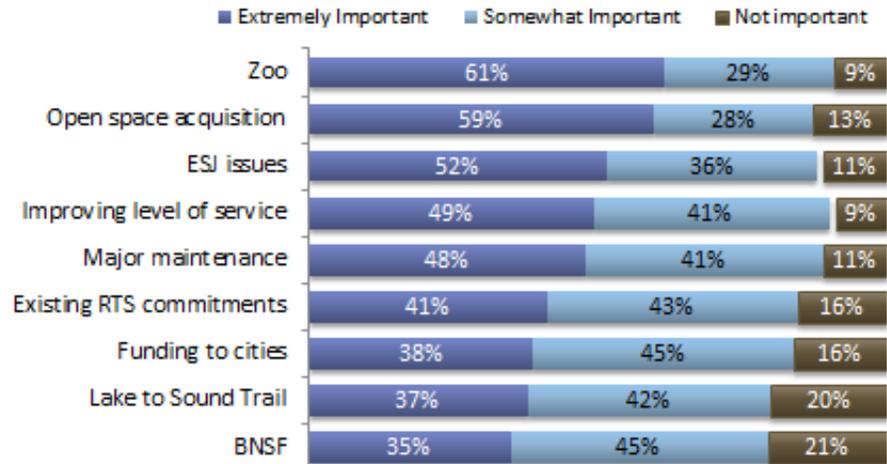
King County Parks Survey | EMC 12-4725

13

## Investment Priorities – Residents Over 50



### Investment Priorities for King County Residents Over 50



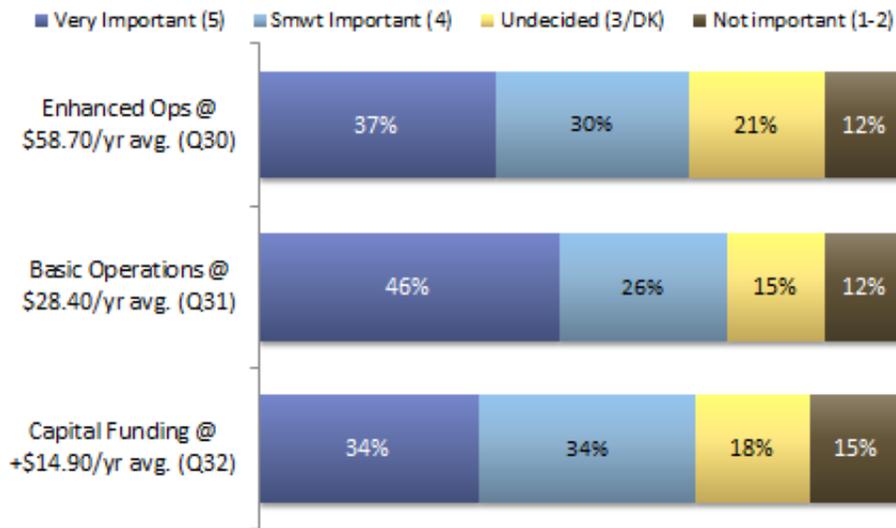
King County Parks Survey | EMC 12-4725

14

## Operations & Capital Imp. w/ Cost



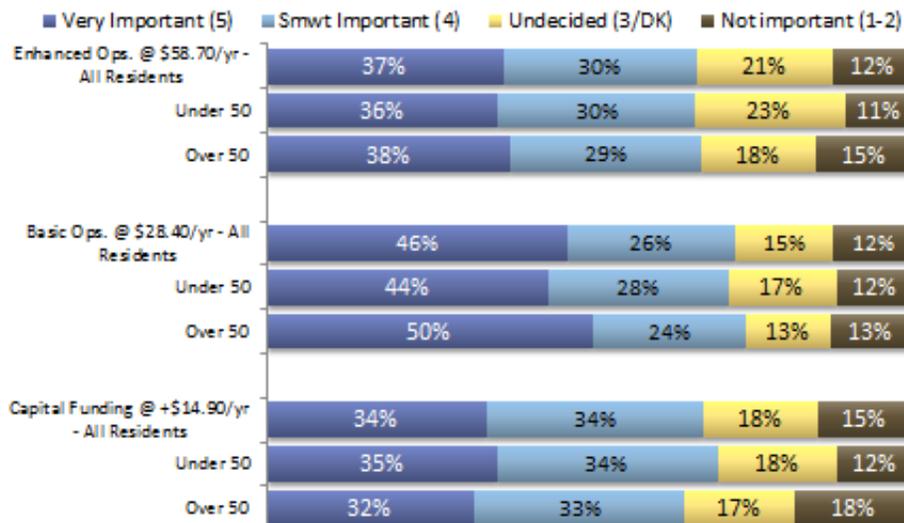
### All King County Residents



## Operations & Capital Imp. w/ Cost



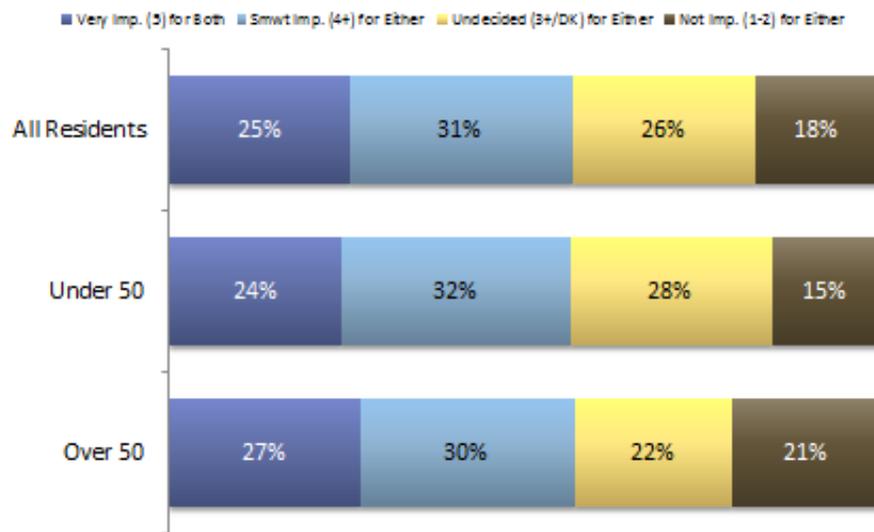
### Operations & Capital Imp. w/ Cost by Generation



## Combined Ops. + Capital Imp. w/ Cost



### Combined Ops. + Capital Imp. w/ Cost by Generation



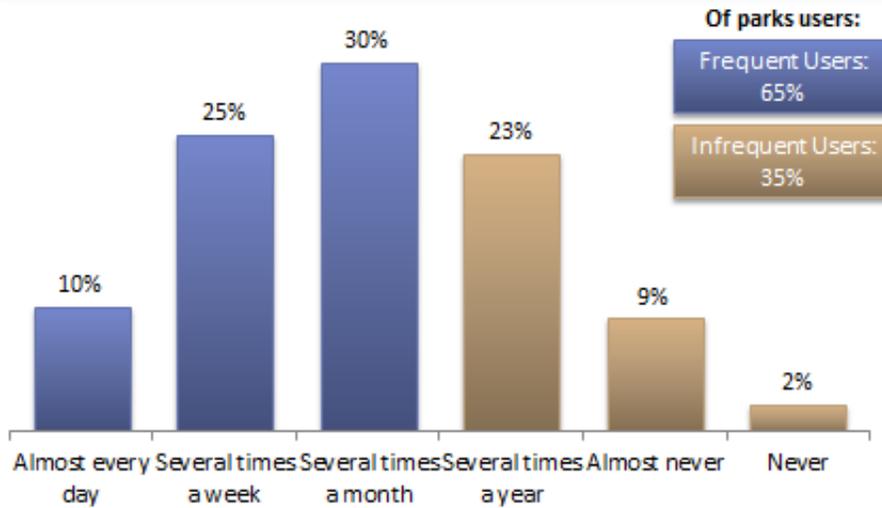
## Park Usage and Behaviors



## Frequency of Park Visits



On average, how often would you say you visit a park, trail or recreation facility in King County? (READ RESPONSES)

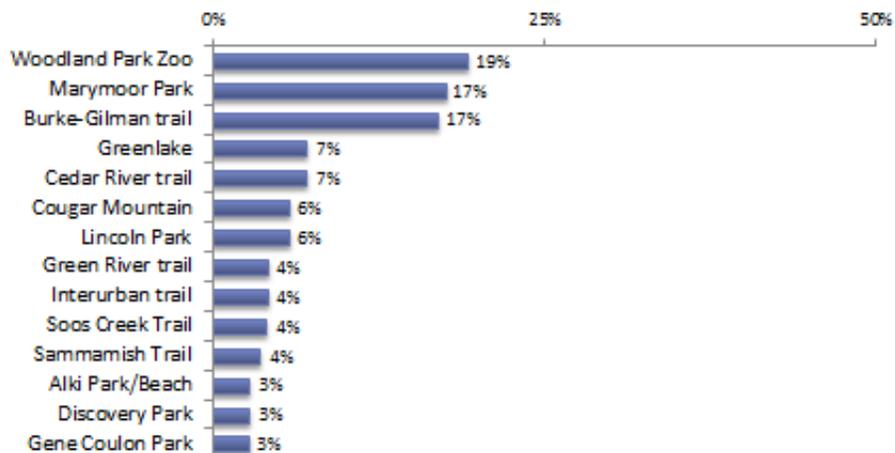


## Most-Visited Parks, Trails, Rec Facilities



What are the two or three parks, trails or recreation facilities you visit most often? (TAKE UP TO 3 RESPONSES)

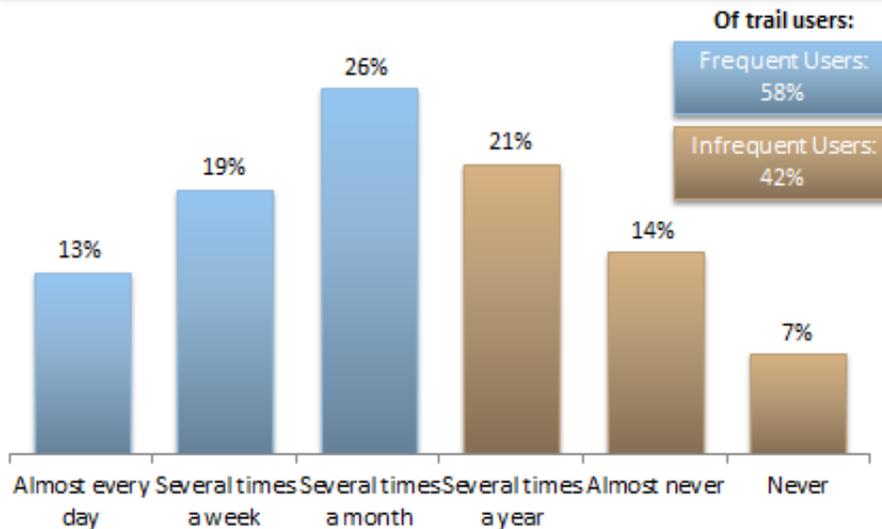
% of Parks Users Visiting Each – Top Mentions



## Frequency of Trail Use for Walking/Biking



On average, how often would you say you use a trail for walking or biking (READ RESPONSES)



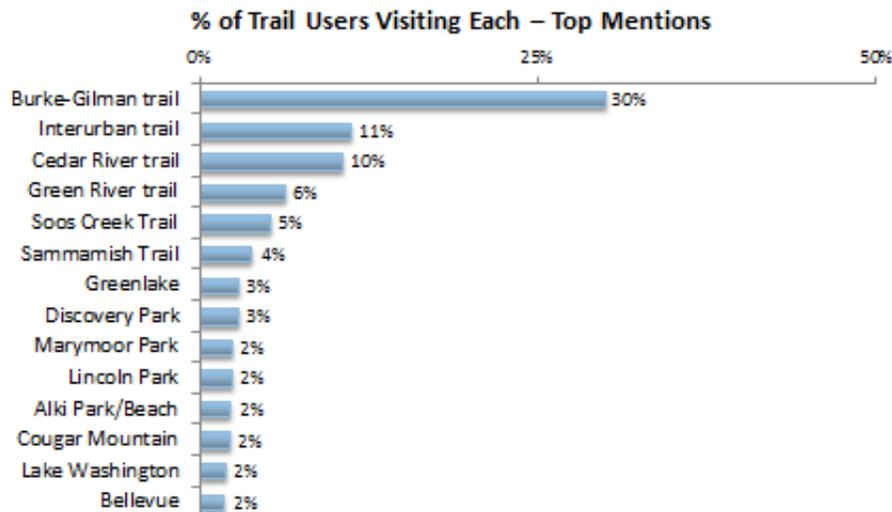
King County Parks Survey | EMC 12-4725

21

## Most-Visited Trails



What are the one or two trails you visit most often? (RECORD VERBATIM; TAKE UP TO 2 RESPONSES)



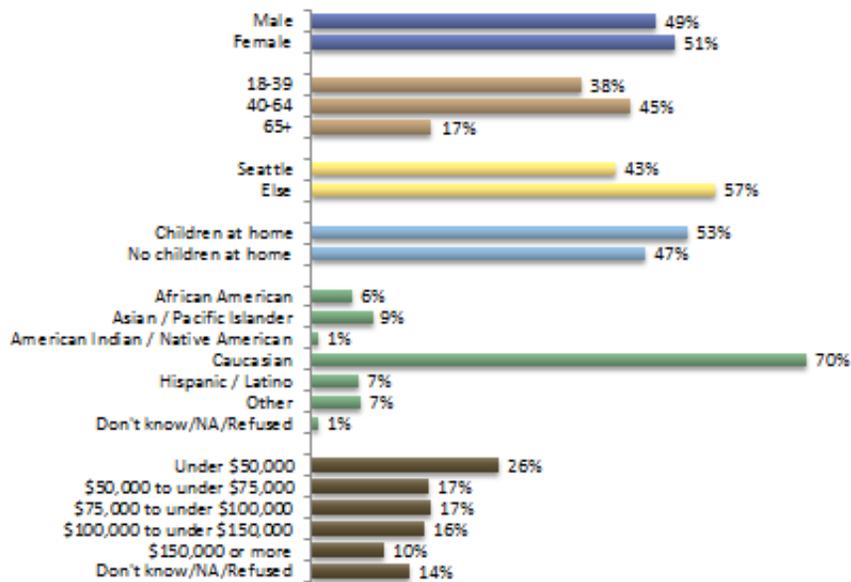
King County Parks Survey | EMC 12-4725

22

# Demographic Information



## Demographics



**Exhibit D**  
**Recommended Funding Package: Additional Details on Rates, Amounts Generated**

	<b>Component</b>	<b>Levy Rate (cents)</b>	<b>Annual \$ (millions)</b>	<b>\$ per HH (annual)<sup>1</sup></b>
Continuing Current Level of Effort 14.89¢	County Parks Operations and Maintenance	8.29	\$26.5	\$27.90
	Regional Open Space Acquisition	1.32	\$4.2	\$4.40
	Regional Trails System	2.48	\$8.0	\$8.40
	Community Partnerships and Grants	0.16	\$0.5	\$0.50
	Cities' Parks and Trails	1.32	\$4.2	\$4.40
	Woodland Park Zoo	1.32	\$4.2	\$4.40
Strategic Enhancements 4.12¢	Preserve/Protect BNSF Corridor	0.23	\$0.8	\$0.90
	4-H Program	0.03	\$0.10	\$0.10
	Community Partnerships and Grants	0.08	\$0.24	\$0.30
	Asset Replacement and Repair	0.80	\$2.6	\$2.70
	Bridges and Trestles	0.30	\$1.0	\$1.00
	Trailhead Development and Accessibility	0.20	\$0.6	\$0.70
	Regional Open Space Acquisition	0.68	\$2.2	\$2.30
	New Trail Corridor Development	1.80	\$5.8	\$6.10
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>19.01</b>	<b>\$60.9</b>	<b>\$64.00</b>

**Notes:**

- Assumes six-year, CPI-indexed levy lid lift for 2014-2019, OEFA forecasts from 2012 August, and cost growth rate assumptions approved by the King County Office of Performance, Strategy and Budget.
- Average home value based upon 2011 King County Assessor's Office estimates.
- Numbers may not total due to rounding.

## Exhibit E

### Other Items Presented

Items presented by the Division that, while worthy, are not included in the Task Force recommendation are set forth below.

Component	2014 Levy Rate (cents)	2014 Dollars per HH
Increased volunteer program support	0.09	\$0.30
Increase in number of safety patrols	0.06	\$0.20
Increase in seasonal field employees/customer service	0.13	\$0.45
Other enhanced facilities maintenance funding*	1.2	\$4.20
Improved service standards/forest stewardship*	0.9	\$3.20
Other asset replacement and repair items*	1.8	\$5.90
Renewed King County Fair*	0.1	\$0.50

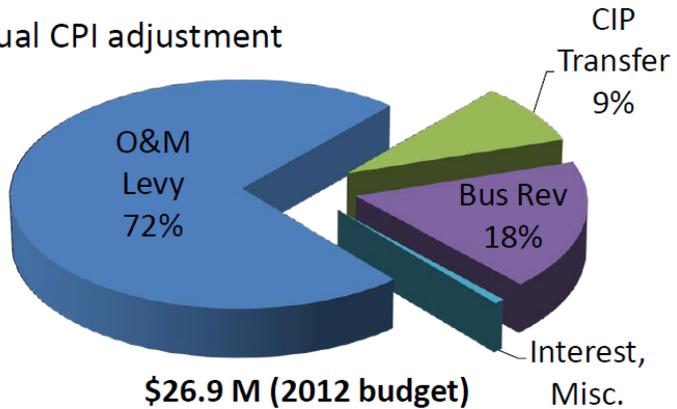
\*These items were not part of the Division's priority recommendations package.

Public comment requests for funding, and a summary of our findings with respect to those ideas, follows:

- University of Washington—Burke-Gilman Trail rehabilitation. While a compelling project, the Task Force believes that the U.W. generally has a much greater access to funding than King County Parks does. The U.W. could apply for a small amount of funding through the CPG Program.
- TOPS Center—an indoor tennis center serving disadvantaged youth in South King County. While an interesting concept, we were not presented with an operating model for this project. The Division has previously reviewed the general proposal. We would encourage the TOPS Center to apply for some funding through the CPG Program.
- Tateuchi Center—a performing arts center in Bellevue. The Task Force feels this project is not consistent with the core purpose of a regional parks and recreation levy.

## 2008-2013 Operations & Maintenance Levy

- Approved by more than 63%
- Initially 5¢ per \$1,000/AV; Annual CPI adjustment
- Initial HH impact: \$20/yr for owner of a \$400,000 home
- Funds routine O&M of King County’s regional and rural parks and the RTS
- Can’t be used for parks in UGA
- Provides approx 70% of agency’s operating funds



## 2008-2013 Open Space & Trails Levy

- Approved by 59%
- Initially 5¢ per \$1,000/AV; Annual CPI adjustment
- Initial HH impact: \$20/yr for owner of a \$400,000 home
- Can’t be used for major maintenance or facility enhancement by County or cities

<b>King County Parks 60% (= 3¢)</b>	<b>39 Cities 20% (= 1¢)</b>	<b>Woodland Park Zoo 20% (= 1¢)</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Open Space &amp; Natural Lands Acquisition (approx 1¢)</li> <li>• Regional Trail Acquisition &amp; Development (approx 2¢)</li> <li>• Community Partnerships &amp; Grants Program (≤ \$500k / yr)</li> </ul>	Proportional allocations based on <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Population (50%)</li> <li>• Assessed value (50%)</li> </ul> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Open Space &amp; Natural Lands Acquisition</li> <li>• Trail Acquisition &amp; Development</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Environmental Education &amp; Conservation Programs</li> <li>• Operations</li> <li>• Capital Improvement Projects, excluding parking</li> </ul>

## **Appendix 2: King County Parks Levy Task Force Mission Statement**

### **King County Parks Levy Task Force**

**June 2012**

#### **Mission Statement**

In 2007, the King County voters approved two six-year levies (2008-2013) to support parks and trails in King County, including the Parks Operating Levy, which funds operations and maintenance of King County's regional and rural parks and trails, and the Open Space and Trails Levy, which provides funds for King County to acquire open space and develop the regional trails system, as well as for open space and trails projects in King County's 39 cities and programs and capital improvements at the Woodland Park Zoo. The Parks Levy Task Force is charged by King County Executive Dow Constantine to make recommendations by September 2012 addressing the following issues:

- What should be done to preserve the County's 26,000-acre system of parks and trails after the current operating and capital levies expire at the end of 2013?
- What should be done to meet the future parks and recreation needs of King County residents?

The Task Force should outline the structure and scope of any funding options it recommends. The Task Force recommendations should promote the goals of the County's equity and social justice initiative to promote fairness and opportunity and eliminate inequities and should further King County Strategic Plan priorities, including service excellence, environmental sustainability, and financial stewardship.

## Appendix 3: Overview of King County Parks



### About King County Parks

King County Parks stewards 200 parks, 175 miles of regional trails and 26,000 acres of open space, including such regional treasures as Marymoor Park, Cougar Mountain Regional Wildland Park, and the world-class Weyerhaeuser King County Aquatic Center. By cultivating strong relationships with non-profit, corporate and community partners, King County Parks provides recreational opportunities for King County residents and protects the region's public lands, leaving a legacy for future generations.

More than 300 community and corporate partners help improve and maintain King County's parks, trails, and other recreational facilities. Community partners include hiking, bicycle, and other recreation organizations, 'Friends of' groups, and sports leagues; corporate partners include companies such as GroupHealth, Starbucks, and Whole Foods.

More than 8,500 volunteers provide 57,000 hours of service in King County parks and trails every year. From planting native trees and removing invasive Scot's broom to building trails and picking up litter, individuals, families, community groups, and local employers support King County parks and trails by helping care for these special places.

### Mission

To enhance quality of life and communities by providing environmentally sound stewardship of regional and rural parks, trails, natural areas, and recreational facilities, supported by partnerships and entrepreneurial initiatives.

### What can you do in a King County Park or Trail?

- Hike
- Mountain bike
- Skateboard
- Football
- Softball/Baseball
- Tennis
- Birdwatch/nature observation
- Swim
- Cultural/historical heritage appreciation
- Attend special events
- Cycle
- Roller blade
- Soccer
- Rugby
- Cricket
- Basketball
- Climbing
- Geocache and orienteering
- Float, kayak, canoe (hand-boat launch)
- Disc golf
- Walk your dog (on or off-leash)
- Playgrounds
- Paraglide
- Fly R/C airplanes
- Foot reflexology
- Horseback ride
- Picnic
- Camping (yurts, tents)
- Gardening / Habitat Restoration



## King County Parks, Natural Areas, and Open Space

- Ames Lake Forest
- Auburn Narrows Natural Area
- Bass Lake Complex Natural Area
- Bassett Pond Natural Area
- Belmondo Reach Natural Area
- Big Bend Natural Area
- Big Finn Hill Park
- Big Spring/Newaukum Creek Natural Area
- Bingaman Pond Natural Area
- Black Diamond Natural Area
- BN Peninsula Natural Area
- Boulevard Lane Park
- Bridle Crest Trail Site
- Bryn Mawr Park
- Camelot Park
- Canyon Creek Natural Area
- Carey Creek Natural Area
- Carnation Marsh Natural Area
- Cavanaugh Pond Natural Area
- Cedar Downs Site
- Cedar Grove Natural Area
- Cedar Grove Road Natural Area
- Cemetery Reach Natural Area
- Chinook Bend Natural Area
- Christiansen Pond Natural Area
- Coalfield Park
- Cold Creek Natural Area
- Cottage Lake Park
- Cougar Mountain Regional Wildland Park
- Cougar/Squak Corridor
- Covington Natural Area
- Crow Marsh Natural Area
- Dockton Forest
- Dockton Forest Lease Site
- Dockton Natural Area
- Dockton Park
- Dorre Don Reach Natural Area
- Duthie Hill Park
- Duvall Park
- East Norway Hill Park
- Ellis Creek Natural Area
- Evans Creek Natural Area
- Evans Crest Natural Area
- Fall City Natural Area
- Fall City Park
- Fall City Park West
- Five Mile Lake Park
- Flaming Geyser Natural Area
- Flaming Geyser Park
- Gold Creek Park
- Grand Ridge Park
- Green River Natural Area
- Griffin Creek Natural Area
- Hamm Creek Natural Area
- Hatchery Natural Area
- Hazel Wolf Wetland Natural Area
- Hollywood Hills Equestrian Park
- Honeydew Park
- Horsehead Bend Natural Area
- Hyde Lake Park
- Inspiration Point Natural Area
- Instebo Park
- Island Center Forest
- Island Center Forest Natural Area
- Issaquah Creek Natural Area
- Jones Reach Natural Area
- Juanita Triangle Park
- Juanita Woodlands Park
- Kanaskat Natural Area
- Kathryn C. Lewis Natural Area
- Kathryn Taylor Equestrian Park
- Kentlake Athletic Fields
- Klahanie Park
- Lake Desire 2 Natural Area
- Lake Francis Park
- Lake Geneva Park
- Lake Joy Park
- Lakewood Park
- Landsburg Reach Natural Area
- Levdansky Park
- Little Si Natural Area
- Little Soos Creek Wetlands N.A.
- Log Cabin Reach Natural Area
- Lower Bear Creek Natural Area
- Lower Lions Reach Natural Area
- Lower Newaukum Creek Natural Area
- Lower Peterson Creek Corridor Natural Area
- Manzanita Natural Area
- Maple Ridge Highlands Open Space
- Maple Valley Heights Park
- Maplewood Heights Park
- Maplewood Park
- Marjorie R. Stanley Natural Area
- Marymoor Park
- Maury Island Marine Park
- Maury Island Site
- May Creek
- May Valley 164th Natural Area
- May Valley Park
- McGarvey Park Open Space
- Middle Bear Creek Natural Area
- Middle Evans Creek Natural Area
- Middle Fork Snoqualmie Natural Area
- Middle Issaquah Creek Natural Area
- Mirrormont Park
- Mitchell Hill Connector Forest
- Moss Lake Natural Area
- Mouth Of Taylor Reach Natural Area
- Neely Bridge Natural Area
- Neill Point Natural Area
- North Green River Park
- North Shorewood Park
- Northilla Beach Natural Area
- Northshore Athletic Fields
- Novelty Hill Little League Fields
- Nowak Natural Area
- Paradise Lake Natural Area
- Paradise Valley Natural Area
- Patterson Creek Natural Area
- Patterson Creek Preserve Forest
- Peterson Lake Natural Area

**King County Parks, Natural Areas, and Open Space, cont'd.**

- Petrovitsky Park
- Piner Point Natural Area
- Pinnacle Peak Park
- Point Heyer Natural Area
- Porter Levee Natural Area
- Preston Athletic Fields
- Preston Mill
- Preston Park
- Preston Ridge Forest
- Quigley Park
- Raabs Lagoon Natural Area
- Raging River Natural Area
- Rattlesnake Mountain Scenic Area
- Ravenhill Open Space
- Ravensdale Park
- Ravensdale Retreat Natural Area
- Redmond Ridge Park
- Renton Park
- Ricardi Reach Natural Area
- Ring Hill Forest
- Rock Creek Natural Area
- Shadow Lake Natural Area
- Shinglemill Creek Natural Area
- Sierra Heights Park
- Sixty Acres Park
- Skyway Park
- Snoqualmie Forest
- Soaring Eagle Regional Park
- South County Ballfields
- Southern Heights Park
- Spring Lake/Lake Desire Park
- Squak Mt/Tiger Mt Corridor
- Steve Cox Memorial Park
- Stillwater Natural Area
- Sugarloaf Mountain Forest
- Sunset Playfield
- Tanner Landing Park
- Taylor Mountain Forest
- Three Forks Natural Area
- Tollgate Farm
- Tolt River - John MacDonald Park
- Tolt River Natural Area
- Uplands Forest
- Upper Bear Creek Natural Area
- Upper Green River Watershed Forest
- Upper Raging River Forest
- Wetland 14 Natural Area
- Wetland 79 Natural Area
- Weyerhaeuser King County Aquatic Center
- White Center Heights Park
- White Center Pond Natural Area
- Whitney Bridge Park
- Windsor Vista Park

**King County Regional Trails System**

- BNSF Trail Corridor
- Boxley Creek Site
- Burke-Gilman Trail
- Cedar River to Lake Sammamish Trail Site (includes Fred V. Habenicht Rotary Park, Landsburg Trailhead)
- Cedar River Trail
- East Lake Sammamish Trail
- East Plateau Trail Site
- Foothills Trail
- Green River Trail (includes Cecil Moses Memorial Park)
- Green River Trail Site - Kent
- Green River Trail Site - Tukwila
- Green To Cedar River Trail
- Issaquah Preston Trail
- Lake Youngs Trail (includes Lake Youngs Park and Trailhead)
- Landsburg Kanaskat Trail Site
- Preston Snoqualmie Trail
- PSE Trail Site
- Redmond Ridge Trail (includes Redmond Watershed Addition Park; Redmond Watershed Trail Site)
- Sammamish River Trail
- Snoqualmie Valley Trail
- Soos Creek Trail and Park (includes Soos Creek To Lake Youngs Trail Site)
- Tolt Pipeline Trail
- West Sammamish River Trail