

King County Land Conservation Initiative by Peter Rimbos, Corresponding Secretary

On Monday, April 3, 2017, the Area Council held its regular monthly meeting. Topics included: (1) Land Conservation and (2) Regional Economic Strategies.

Land Conservation Initiative

Bob Burns, Deputy Director of the King County Department of Natural Resources and Parks (DNRP), discussed the County's efforts to identify existing lands with high conservation value that also help complete natural river and wildlife corridors, as well as trail connections.

King County is one of the fastest growing regions in the country and is expected to see a greater than 25% increase in population by 2040. Consequently, the County seeks to act quickly to protect the most important remaining conservation lands before prices escalate as development pressure increases.

The County plans to work with jurisdictions to conserve more than 60,000 acres in the next 30 years including farmlands, forest lands, river valleys, natural areas, and trails. Mr. Burns mentioned some of the benefits of such land conservation include: Climate Change; Biodiversity; Social Equity; Human Health; Economic Development; and Competitive Advantage.

So far the County has: (1) Analyzed lands it seeks to protect; (2) Identified both existing and potential revenue streams; (3) Sought public/private partnerships; (4) Collaborated with jurisdictions to identify priorities for conserving land; (5) Encouraged Public input; and (6) Convened a multi-faceted Advisory Group -- including: Agriculture Commission, Rural Forest Commission, businesses, conservation groups, realtors, County and city councilmembers, citizens, etc. -- to provide input and recommendations.

The County estimates about \$1.5 to 1.8 million would be needed over a 30-yr timeframe to accomplish its goals. Fortunately, almost 75% of the dollars needed could come from existing funding sources such as the Conservation Futures Tax, Real Estate Excise Tax, and the County Parks Levy. Mr. Burns mentioned a potential need for \$383 million in new funding over 30 years or about \$12 million per year.

In February the Advisory Group issued its Phase 1 Report, which provided feedback on work to date and identified additional work for this year. The Advisory Group, supported by County Staff, will work throughout this year and issue a Phase 2 final report by December. Phase 2 includes: Community engagement; Private funding opportunities; Buildable lands impact assessment; Cost and funding model updates; and Targets and metrics development. For more information, please go to <http://www.kingcounty.gov> and search for "Land Conservation Initiative."

Regional Economic Strategies

The Puget Sound Regional Council (PSRC--www.psrc.org) is updating and expanding its Regional Economic Strategies (RES) to sustain the region's economic vitality and global competitiveness. The Area Council's Economic Development Committee has been reviewing early drafts of the RES.

The RES consists of four major "Goals": (1) Sustain a high-quality of life; (2) Open economic opportunities to everyone; (3) Compete globally; and (4) Connect the region to the world. There are a set of "Strategies" listed to achieve each goal, as well as a detailed description of "What Needs to Happen?" to followthrough on the Strategies.

Of particular interest is the PSRC's inclusion of Small Businesses and Start-Up Businesses in this update.

On April 14 the PSRC is planning to release its final draft. The Area Council will conduct a thorough review, prepare detailed comments, and submit them to the PSRC in mid May. At that time the Area Council's formal comments will be posted on our web site. The Area Council has been engaging with PSRC to ensure the Rural Area has a voice in a variety of regional planning activities including the update to the RES.

Next Area Council Meeting

Monday, May 1, from 7:00 - 9:00 PM, at the Fire Station located at the SE corner of SE 231st St & SR-169 intersection. All members of the Public are welcome to attend.

Meetings are held the first non-holiday Monday of each month. A Public Comment period at the beginning of each meeting provides an opportunity to voice issues of concern to Area Council members and government officials in attendance