

Looking to the Future

King County, similar to most local governments today, is experiencing the dual challenges of increasing public expectations while the cost of services outpaces revenues. Over the past decade, the Parks and Recreation Division has responded to these challenges by transitioning from a traditional general-tax funded agency to an organization that is more entrepreneurial, accountable, and performance-driven.

The Parks and Recreation Division has a refocused mission of stewarding regional passive and active parks, regional trails, natural area parks, rural local parks, and working forest lands that provide multiple benefits to the residents of King County, but that mission also raises a new challenge of balancing conservation and recreation needs with a shrinking base of direct revenue-generating assets. Although the division remains committed to its innovative partnership and business-oriented approach, this model presents increasing challenges. Moreover, both six-year operations and capital expansion levies expire at the end of 2013. Funding the open space system beyond 2013 will require significant effort on the part of the King County Executive, the King County Council, the Department of Natural Resources and Parks, the Parks and Recreation Division, its partners and the public. Maintaining relationships with civic, corporate and community partners will continue as a central tenet, as the agency remains committed to stewarding and enhancing the parks and trails that make up King County's remarkable open space system.