King County Land Conservation Advisory Group

Homework #1 / Meeting 1 -- Collated Responses (16)

1. **Components of the proposal that I particularly like (and why):**

A commitment to preserve the beauty of King County for future generations.

- *The vision itself and the opportunity to create an amazing legacy for the region*
- *The sense of urgency and specificity*
- *The multiple values and beneficiaries*
- *Focus on climate, resilience and social/environmental justice*
- *The opportunity to engage the whole community*

Makes perfect sense, is comprehensive, thoughtful and with a long-term perspective.

- *The focus on preserving open space and natural habitat, and ensuring a more coordinated plan within KC toward that end. We support the goals of the Growth Management Act that seek to protect lands outside the urban growth boundary.*
- *This is a regional challenge with a regional solution. Land conservation and preservation benefits the region, so it is reasonable to approach it at the County (or broader) level; local jurisdictions alone cannot achieve as much as can be accomplished at a regional level*

I liked the balanced approach to funding, the involvement of the advisory group, and the range of perspectives brought by the advisory group.

- *The connections with the GMA and our shared values (finishing the job)*
- *Philanthropic – Public- Private Partnerships – components*
- *Inclusion of Equity/Health considerations*
- *Incorporation of anticipated carbon and TDR markets*

- Emphasis on preserving open space, resource lands, watersheds
- Creativity in identifying sources of revenue

I like the fact that extensive work has already been done to identify high quality conservation lands that need to be and will be protected long term; the funding mechanisms that are currently available to provide that protection; and the time frame in which they can be expected to be expended. I also like the fact that strategies have been developed to accelerate acquisitions, allowing us to ensure these lands are not lost to other investments. I'm particularly interested in the new strategies that are privately financed or garner greater private giving, taking the burden off taxpayers.

- I like the attempt to connect land conservation to broader issues of urban resilience and

human well-being. However, this adds an uncommon degree of complexity in terms of setting priorities for deploying funds, understanding tradeoffs, and so on.

- The potential inclusion of municipal open space priorities is interesting and adds an additional layer of scale.

- *I like the amount of work that has been done in advance.*
- *I like that the proposed acquisitions are based on carefully done scientific and stakeholder processes over a number of years and that this is not a new planning process but, rather a plan for implementation.*
- *I like the variety of funding sources – both public and private – being discussed*.
- *I like the group that has been brought together to discuss this. There are a wide range of backgrounds, knowledge and opinion*

- I liked the funding pie, the fact that several new sources were floated, and that people around the room who might have influence over those other sources seemed supportive.
- I like the potential presented by the REET 3 option.

I like the fact that multiple stakeholders are being considered in putting together this plan. I also like the fact that a strong rationale linked to quality of life in our state is clearly articulated in the plan. Conservation is a core value to a sustainable environment where there is every effort made to address the needs of multiple stakeholders.

The sophisticated approach to financing a big goal of 66,000 acres of conservation.

I was so impressed by the breadth and depth of this plan. The team did a particularly good job crafting comprehensive and well-framed conservation categories. The discussion of funding sources was also very impressive, both in the Plan and in the oral presentation. It is comprehensive and creative, and provides a stable foundation upon which we can build out this vision

- Compelling vision to preserve greenspace for future generations
- Bringing different parties together to solve problems – broad/inclusive.
- Bringing private philanthropic funding to the table.
- Public/private partnerships; including organizations with great experience in supporting collaborative partnerships to protect public lands
- Developing a conversation and dialogue based on data/modeling

The audacity and large future oriented nature of this effort.

King County residents do live here in large part because of the climate and variety of natural resources. We need to continue conservation work already done.

- *It seems to set a strategic vision that is a good starting place for action*
- *Focusing on expanding opportunities with carbon offsets. This could be a very big opportunity.*
- *Mission investing is also an option as this market is expanding both within philanthropy and within the investment worlds. We have many socially conscious investors in this region and on the west coast who are willing to give up a bit of return in order to invest money in mission.*

2. Things I have questions or concerns about (and why):

How do we ensure this effort does not negatively impact affordability in King County and disproportionately affect young people and those needing entry level housing? To that point, funding through REETs should be carefully considered. This effort (in my mind) does not rise to the level of immediate or emergency need so voluntary funding sources (levies or philanthropic) should be given higher priority. REETs are also a highly regressive source of funding that hits people buying/selling often harder such as young people moving up, as opposed to those who are already settled in their homes (older and established).

- *Inclusion and messaging as related to the vision itself and the determination of what lands are valuable and why. We need to be transparent and inclusive from the beginning, including in shaping the vision and defining the benefits and beneficiaries of the work. Being open about criteria and decision making. Otherwise, we risk losing the broad and diverse base of support this effort requires.*
- *We need to be specific and consistent about what we can accomplish in the next 4 months and what pieces of work need to be reserved for 2017. Better to do a few things well and set the stage and then use that momentum and energy to get into more detailed pieces. For example, we will not be able to develop a specific business plan and this group is too big to do that anyway. What really is the purpose of the advisory group? What value do we need to deliver? We need to distinguish between the technical and political aspects of our work and plan our time this fall accordingly.*

Success seems to be heavily dependent on tax revenue and philanthropy grants rather than self-sufficient income generation (E.g. eco-tourism, carbon credits).

- *Ensuring that Seattle is well represented in this process and benefits from this ambitious vision for KC. We need to ensure that we are creating livable and desirable places throughout the County and especially in our dense urban growth areas.*
- *Distribution of new funds need to be done in a manner that benefits all residents.*
- *What is the timeline for REET 3? Will the proposal include a mechanism that will allow REET 3 to fluctuate with the real estate market?*
- *If the County moves forward with REET 3 for conversation, how will it impact statewide REET 3 proposals for affordable housing (a statewide proposal is dependent on passage by*

the Legislature)?

- *Size of the potential revenue sources could strain local jurisdictions' ability to prioritize their own critical needs for which they also need tax payers to fund.*
- *Level of funding needed is significant, and for the three property tax revenue options in particular, this increased cost will exacerbate the region's affordability challenges.*
- *Cost likely to be borne by communities with large populations and/or high property values, but many of these residents are being priced out due to affordability challenges. Because of this, support is only likely to happen if local jurisdictions see a commensurate benefit for residents. This will likely require more conservation of urban lands/shorelines.*
- *Regarding revenue options, particular concerns with the three options relying on increases in property taxes*
- *How is this plan furthering access to open spaces or improving quality of life for minority and low-income residents?*
- *The plan mentions race and social justice considerations, but we'd like to know more about how you propose to make it a meaningful factor in determining how and where funds are spent, as well as what funds are raised (i.e., is the taxing source regressive). This is an important issue for us.*

- The ability to obtain the necessary funds given the competing demands and constraints of the County; need a better understanding of the land conservation values (criteria, who involved, prioritization, etc);
- how the land preservation plan integrates with competing societal issues (availability, affordability, agriculture/commercial/industrial demand, etc)
- the process by which the advisory councils recommendations will be carried forward.

- *TDR – and carbon market process*
- *Comprehensive vetting of High Valued lands I'd like to see an info graphic.*
- *How do public and cities currently have the opportunity to weigh in?*
- *Can we describe what failure to act has cost us in habitat, forest (prime opportunity) river degradation, salmon, pollution, I'd like to hear what's at risk? (area –examples)(vision 2040 population projections)*
- *Themes from County Council members regarding work plan.*
- *Why is King County – Regional government uniquely situated or not to facilitate this important work?*

- Will this effort restrict flexibility to obtain other lands for more active uses – will this disable the county by tying up more than just monetary resources.
- Will partnerships emerge and hold over the planning horizon – 30 years is a long time, will we end up with forward thrust pools which are then neglected (O&M pressure on the County's budget)
- What impact will this have on cities – if the plan is to take revenue from cities, how are they being included in the project/site selection (both in their jurisdictions and the

county).

- How does this need (to conserve land) stack up with all the other priorities in the County
- How committed is the County to this and will it survive a change in leadership.
- How were the high conservation value lands identified – is there agreement that they represent the totality of the need.
- Is the list of lands prioritized – by whom and is the consensus.
- If funds are generated from within Cities how is they shared? Cities may be reluctant to cede taxing authority and/or revenue they need to pay for critical services.
- If we start adding city properties, how will that impact the overall funding needs and the gap – will the County contribute funds from all sources to city conservation value lands

I am concerned that we haven't made a strong enough connection to the reasons why this is important at this time, why we haven't done enough along these lines already, what the urgency is to conservation or the threats are to acquisitions if we don't act, and if we do act, how do we spread the financial burden to make a persuasive case to the voters. This is very important given the pending tax increases likely to occur for K-12 Ed and transit (ST III).

- Is there intent to set the value proposition for this King County proposal in a regional context? Growth management and open space conservation are two sides of the same coin and must be considered in a context that is larger than a single county jurisdiction.
- Is King County fully aware of everything already going on that may align with or otherwise complement this proposal? Where is the narrative that weaves all of it together?
- Is this proposal actually fully baked already, or is there an authentic opportunity for the Advisory Council to shape it? (Note: It feels authentic based on one meeting, but I've experienced the former before so it's always a concern).

- *I am concerned that acquisition appears to be the only tool to protect habitat. It will be dominant and for some things like missing links or inholdings that is obvious. But the Current Use Taxation is a very big piece of the pie and we should be looking at the possibility of expanding it or considering other ideas.*
- *I am concerned about King County owning too much land and want to be sure there is a balance between what gets added and the need to keep this affordable and sustainable.*
- *I am concerned about how we involve the cities. It is my hope that we can use similar criteria and focus on nearshore, river and stream corridors and forested areas.*
- *I am concerned about how we educate the citizens about this priority when so many things are of great concern and coming to the ballot for funding.*

- I have concerns about the potential impacts on junior taxing districts.
- I have concerns about the potential for opposition to REET 3, especially from the development community and from out of state.

I would like to better understand who currently holds the lands that the county is proposing to purchase. Might there be an alternative where these lands could be put into a trust but still maintain current ownership? This would save the county money and provide for an opportunity for current landowners to also invest in the future of our county.

How do we maximize this land asset to benefit our communities and the environment over the long term – I would like to hear more about the county's approach to this
I am concerned about the frame that was used to evaluate "high-value conservation lands." Stakeholders can (and often do) differ on the types of lands, and uses of lands, that they value most. To complicate that picture, different conservation uses may also conflict, for example where land may be preserved as a working farm, open space, or salmon habitat.

Another concern is whether conservation value takes into account very likely (but not certain) sprawl and development. For example, ST3 (if it passes) will completely change the way that people interact with the landscape on the eastside, and there will inevitably be sprawl around the new transit centers unless cities thoughtfully (and aggressively) modify their land use and planning regulations. We should try to clearly and completely define "high-value conservation lands" as the term was used here to quell those types of concerns.

- Does the advisory committee have a meaningful opportunity to provide input and shape the proposal or is it already "baked"? The modeling was helpful yet I am still interested in the assumptions underlying the model.
- What is actually in the proposal and why? What lands are included? How did you decide what a "high value land" was? There are a lot of unknowns that will need to be unwrapped for me to understand the proposal fully.
- How do we prioritize this effort against all the needs we already have: human services, homelessness, Best Start for Kids, education, and other local levies that are coming up, to name just a few. As cities, our dollars proudly support initiatives that connect the region and support equity, yet funding is diminished from the Federal & State level and City dollars are increasingly being used for broader, regional issues. I am interested in how we achieve balance between present needs and future growth as we go forward within this new framework.
- There is a significant public investment already being made as shown in your funding pie chart. How might we utilize the collaborative efforts of public and private dollars to develop a phased approach: for example, could we 'pilot' using our current funding to leverage private funding-i.e. to demonstrate to the public the shared commitment from different sources, and have them fill in the remainder instead of a big ask of public dollars up front?
- We have also seen a number of examples of regional collaboration in affordable housing and areas supporting transit oriented development, to name a few; there are successful

models in use regarding protecting public lands that we can learn from – how can all of these be incorporated?

- I appreciate Bellevue being included in this conversation – and am interested in how other cities and their perspectives (outside of Redmond, Bothell or SCA) will also be included?

  - *The equity piece*
  - *competing fundraising efforts (UW 4B campaign; the Waterfront's eventual multimillion dollar years long effort; other bond measures that have to do with open space and parks…*
  - *How well does this effort fit into other efforts like the ROSS, PSRC, Puget Sound Prtnership's Action Agenda;*
  - *How do we fit into and across to efforts in the neighboring counties*
  - *Do we have the bandwidth and expertise to fund raise, and do the political work necessary to run or help a campaign to go to the people to raise taxes;*
  - *Will 'government' have the resources and creativity to communicate this effectively to 'the public' and\or how will we segment the many publics that whose support we need.*
  - *Should we expand the group to include some financial folks.*

Much of the land we are trying to conserve is in small cities that are trying to increase their tax base by developing land and increasing their urban growth boundary. Should we create incentives or assist with programs (tourism, recreation opportunities) to utilize these green spaces?

Farmer succession is going to be a huge issue in the next 10 years. King County owns development rights on many large (100 acres or more) parcels that were or are dairy farms. For many of these parcels, they are in their last generation of being a dairy and their owners will be wanting to sell, but finding a new farmer with enough capital and ambition to purchase a large farm and be successful is nearly impossible.

- *Why are these chosen parcels the highest value lands? Which parcels might be missing and why?*
- *You jumped from 4400 parcels to 5500 seemingly overnight. Why? Also, I would like to see a list that prioritizes these parcels and gives us a much clearer picture of which parcels can be acquired and in what priority. How many can be acquired today or in the next 5-10 years rather than over a 30-year period. How about moving up the timeline so we don't miss out on opportunities—especially with as quickly as our region is growing and sprawling. What is happening right now with some of these properties? How many can be conserved through means other than a direct purchase. Which parcels?*
- *The mission talks about King County, but the model apparently excludes city land and RE excise taxes from sales of RE within city boundaries. Does the mission statement need to be revised to include only unincorporated King County? It seems this committee will not*

have the time or opportunity to add in city lands so let's call it what it is. OR if we are to add in city lands to the discussion then we need to add city resources (RE excise taxes) into the funding equation. In fact, I am curious about the city RE excise taxes. Your presentation says that currently $10 million a year is generated from REET but that most of that money is used for Parks Capital Improvement projects? Is that somehow mandated? So, you dedicate only $1 million a year for 30 years in your model. You state that REET has historically been an important funding source for land acquisition, but it no longer is? I am struggling with this item and wondering if perhaps there could be much more available each year from this source if you were really pushed to more quickly acquire important lands in the near future.

- *I appreciate the need to consider new funding sources and encourage more focus on using carbon offset opportunities as a new funding sources. However, how tapped out are we really with existing funding structures? For example, with interest rates so very low, I think leverage provides a great opportunity especially when it seems our long term revenue supply is pretty strong. I don't know how leveraged you currently are and if this could provide a solid solution for some near term acquisitions? Are you currently modeling this as an option to get you to your goal?*
- *If the committee said "no" you have to use the funding you have and really pushed you to try to move more quickly than 50 years on acquiring this land, what suggestions would you make? I would like to see more on how much land of the 66,000 acres could you acquire in the next 10 years, for example.*
- *I realize this plan is a long-term strategic vision and I salute Dow for that, but if the committee is tasked with recommending implementation strategies and preferred public funding options, for example, I feel like we really need to have more of an understanding about the details of the budget and the action plan for actually acquiring (in whatever form) these 5500 parcels.*

3. **Information it will be important to review, or questions I think we should try to answer, in order to successfully complete our mission include:**

How to identify land parcels that would not be suitable for building anyway (wetlands, slope, etc.) but achieve the goal of maintaining the green canopy and buffering "urbanscapes".

- *criteria for evaluating land*
- *a compelling vision statement for the public*
- *case studies of how multiple funding streams get integrated to get projects funded*
- *site specific threat analyses of what needs to happen in what sequence*
- *models of similar efforts (with successes and failures) from around the country*
- *what lands or areas may not get included and why*

What are the economic possibilities for income from eco-tourism and carbon credits?

- *How individual jurisdictions will benefit from the plan and how they will be included in the implementation and decision-making process.*
- *How will the proposal address the preservation of open space lands in urban areas?*
- *How does this proposal interact with the park levies that municipalities have passed?*
- *More should be done on reviewing City lands for conservation, including urban natural areas, rivers, Puget Sound shoreline and more.*
- *Clarity on how this work can help us achieve our goals on stormwater management – does this plan intend to solely preserve open space as is to achieve this goal or to build new GSI projects in urban areas or elsewhere to help manage stormwater?*

- See comments above.
- I think we need to understand what the County can do from an efficiency point to free up more funds from existing revenue sources;
- better understand the viability of a philanthropic campaign,
- there were some good questions raised during the closing remarks – we will need to ensure the advisory board process allows time to work through those.

- *Existing funding sources – their capacity and how do we deal with managing an emergency need that was not anticipated.*

- Other than the questions posed in the box above…
- Develop a better link to conservation lands in the County to how they will impact social equity and justice.
- How will conservation lands within cities be identified and prioritized as compared to County lands. Should we consider City Comprehensive and Park/Open Space plans to identify possible high value targets

The information around financing options will be critical, especially property tax implications for financing accelerated acquisitions. In particular, how to reach out effectively to private givers and private investment schemes to make many of the purchases. For instance, could we establish a "Challenge" Fund against which new public funding could be matched to acquire highly visible and valuable lands, trails, etc.

- What is the value the region will receive in return for the proposed financial investment? Return on investment is important – we need to articulate what it is. This value calculation must consider rapid changes associated with climate disruption AND unprecedented population growth and associated development pressures.

- *This work plan has been presented in many places and we are often told that we aren't thinking big enough on philanthropy and yet specifics that can be acted on and produce results seem hard to come by. We need detailed ways to move forward on this and other private sector funding methods.*

- *Another way to do some of this would be through regulation, enforcement, incentives and stewardship assistance and education and we wouldn't need to buy all the land.*

- How deep is our base of support?
- How strong is our opposition?
- Who will fund the campaign?

I would like to understand more about the people who currently own the lands we would like to acquire.

See above.

- *Maps of the parcels selected as high-value conservation lands, including a discussion of properties considered but not included, and why*
- *A discussion of the people and communities that live in and around these high-value conservation lands, including whether those communities have access to green spaces*
- *Examples of existing successful public/private/nonprofit partnerships around large-scale land conservation, including the messaging used to develop and promote those partnerships*
- *Discuss how goals for regional trail connections overlap with the funding and development goals of regional partners, such as the WTA, the Evergreen Mountain Bike Alliance, and the Mountaineers*
- *Discussion of lands <u>not</u> included in the plan because the County is engaging external partners. What type of commitments did the County obtain (if any) before removing a high-value land from the list?*

- Define included lands/high value lands.
- Need a cost/benefit analysis.
- How do we balance all the present needs that arise from growth and achieve equity and balance?
- How about a phased approach? Pilot some examples of public/private partnerships using existing funding before asking the voters for more.

[See my responses above]

- Is it in King County's best interest to lease land? This requires a lot of time, land managers to assure the land is being utilized with best management practices and also poses some risk of liability. However, the county does maintain control.
- Funding for acquiring these lands is addressed. But, we also should consider sources of funding for long term maintenance and King County staff oversight of these properties and programs.

- *Financial modeling and projecting out 30 years is very difficult and complex and I appreciate that a great deal of thought and work has gone into this so far. It is hard to convey it all to a committee and to help them understand the components. So, I just have to ask if we have pushed hard enough to understand if we have exhausted all current options? Especially when some of the options the committee might be considering have to do with additional taxes (REET 3?) I feel we have to understand if more taxes are necessary. I also don't want to upset the parks levy by asking for additional, new tax revenue.*
- *Much more discussion about the specific plans regarding the plan to actually acquire these parcels. When and how? How soon? What is actually happening today and in the next 5-10 years to acquire these parcels—even without this new 30-year plan*