



**strategic**

# CLIMATE ACTION PLAN



November 2015



**King County**

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## Overview

Climate change is one of the paramount environmental and economic challenges for our generation. The 2015 Strategic Climate Action Plan (SCAP) is a comprehensive update to the 2012 SCAP. The SCAP is King County's blueprint for climate action, and provides "one-stop-shopping" for county decision-makers, employees, and the general public to learn about the County's climate change commitments.

The 2015 SCAP charts a clear pathway to achieve a clean energy future, where the region's local governments, businesses and communities are working together towards an equitable, sustainable and thriving King County for all who live, work and play here. The SCAP builds on technical assessments of what actions and commitments, when taken together, ensure that climate targets are met. Through the integrated strategy presented in the 2015 SCAP, King County identifies priority actions that will lead to significant progress in achieving regional GHG reduction targets and conveys opportunities to act on climate solutions that achieve additional social, economic and environmental benefits for King County residents.

## Climate Change Impacts

King County is already experiencing the impacts of a changing climate: warming temperatures, acidifying marine waters, rising seas, increasing flooding risk, decreasing mountain snowpack, and less water in the summer. Climate change will have long-term consequences for the economy, the environment, and public health and safety in King County. Impacts of a changing climate will be experienced differently by King County residents, influenced by factors such as income, age, health, and where they live. However, by working collaboratively to develop and implement strategies to prevent, respond to, and prepare for climate change, King County has many opportunities to address broader inequities.

## GHG Emissions in King County

In King County, the top two sources of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions are (1) from fossil fuels used for transportation, and (2) from energy used to heat, cool, and power our homes and buildings. An additional significant source of GHG emissions is local consumption of goods and services, including the energy needed to produce, transport, use, and dispose of goods and services supporting county residents and businesses. The largest local sources of GHG emissions frame the five GHG emissions reduction goal areas of the SCAP.

Although the GHG emissions from the operations of King County government are a relatively small part of the communitywide and global picture, the County is committed to reducing its operational GHG footprint to model best practices and demonstrate that climate solutions have broader environmental, economic and health benefits.

## GHG Emissions Reduction Targets

King County is committed to countywide GHG emissions reduction targets adopted as Countywide Planning Policies by the King County Growth Management Planning Council in 2014, to "reduce countywide sources of GHG emissions, compared to a 2007 baseline, by 25 percent by 2020, 50 percent by 2030, and 80 percent by 2050." Internally, King County has committed to reducing GHG emissions from its operations, compared to a 2007 baseline, by at least 15 percent by 2015, 25 percent by 2020, and 50 percent by 2030. The County has further committed to achieving net carbon neutrality for the Department of Natural Resources and Parks

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by 2017, with the Wastewater Treatment Division and the Solid Waste Division each independently achieving carbon-neutral operations by 2025. The 2015 SCAP outlines the results of technical analysis that established specific, quantifiable pathways to achieving the overarching GHG emissions reduction targets at both the countywide and government operations scales.

## 2015 SCAP Commitments

In addition to establishing targets and performance measures to track and assess the County's progress, the 2015 SCAP details more than 70 Priority Actions that King County will carry out between now and 2020. These actions cover diverse strategies including transit, renewable energy, green building, recycling and preparing for local climate impacts, such as increasing flood risks and extreme weather. Actions to reduce GHG emissions and prepare for climate impacts are embedded and integrated into the operations, services, and capital plans of all County agencies.

As detailed in the 2015 SCAP, King County continues to make progress towards diverse commitments outlined in the 2012 plan, including to:

- Double transit ridership by 2040.
- Reduce energy use in County buildings and facilities by 15 percent by 2015 (with new targets set in the 2015 SCAP).
- Achieve a 70 percent recycling rate in the King County solid waste service area by 2020.

Additionally, the 2015 SCAP commits King County to ambitious new actions and targets that will help the region meet countywide GHG emissions reduction targets and adequately prepare for the impacts of climate change, including to:

- Partner with utilities and others to phase out coal-fired electricity by 2025 and support development of increasing amounts of renewable energy resources.
- Use 100 percent GHG-neutral electricity in government operations by 2025.
- Update and implement green development codes by the end of 2017 for unincorporated King County.
- Permanently conserve remaining high-priority farm, forest, and other open spaces throughout King County within 30 years.
- Plant at least one million trees in King County by 2020 in cooperation with public and private partners.

The 2015 SCAP builds on the 2012 SCAP, but goes further by:

- Engaging stakeholders through partnerships such as the King County-Cities Climate Collaboration, as well as outreach and engagement specifically focused on shaping the 2015 SCAP.
- Quantifying GHG emission reduction strategies.
- Piloting a model for assessing the cost effectiveness of select SCAP GHG emissions reduction strategies.
- Defining how equity and social justice tools will be used as part of King County's climate commitments.
- Taking critical steps to plan for and coordinate regionally on climate change impacts on wastewater, stormwater, emergency management, public health, roads, flood risk reduction, and salmon recovery.

The 2015 SCAP also provides an update on the County's progress on implementing the 2012 SCAP through 2014 and serves as the County's annual environmental report.