

KING COUNTY SOLID WASTE DIVISION 2025 ANNUAL REPORT



Per King County Code Sections 10.14.080 and 10.24.020



King County

Department of
Natural Resources and Parks
Solid Waste Division

Message from the Director



Let me begin by saying what a privilege it has been to step into this work at the Solid Waste Division. When I joined in April 2025, I discovered a dedicated and resourceful workforce, an engaged community, and an evolving solid waste system. And although I have only been your director for a short time, I have already witnessed several impressive achievements.

First, I want to recognize our Operations team, who continued to deliver reliable services to the public despite shifting and unpredictable circumstances, including a 5-Day Hauling and Tipping Pilot, a strike by one of the commercial haulers, and the historic flooding events at the end of December.

We also welcome the opening of the Cedar Hills Renewable Gas to Energy Facility, or “CHARGE.” After acquiring this landfill gas plant from Bio Energy Washington, the Solid Waste Division has successfully rebranded the facility under the County umbrella and is now processing landfill gas into pipeline-quality biogas and electric power. This is a measurable accomplishment in our resource recovery work, which aims to reduce the amount of overall waste generated. It also creates a valuable source of additional revenue for the Division, which will be critical as we prepare for the ever-rising cost of operation.

As we enter 2026, my focus sharpens on the priorities that will guide us.

We will strengthen our financial foundation by taking a hard look at the business side of our work, including a comprehensive analysis of our rates and capital project expenditures. We will also reevaluate our resource recovery streams to ensure they support our business model and deliver value.

Operational stability is another top priority. Our goal is zero unplanned facility closures, and we are rallying support around Operations to reduce delays and disruptions. Achieving this will require everyone’s partnership, particularly in supporting planned work that may temporarily impact services.

We are equally focused on leadership development and rebuilding trust. The staff engagement survey highlighted a lack of trust in leadership, and we will be implementing an employee engagement action plan to address this head-on. This includes strengthening communication at all levels and regularly tracking and sharing updates on the actions we commit to.

As we move into the coming years, we will need strategic thinking and collaboration. This includes the Comprehensive Solid Waste Management Plan, refining our long-term disposal strategy, and strengthening partnerships between King County, our cities, commercial haulers, and the communities we serve.

Finally, we need to better articulate where we are headed. The Division has a positive and compelling story to tell, highlighted by intentional engagement with our partners and a collaborative approach to building our shared future.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Rebecca Singer". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Rebecca Singer, King County Solid Waste Director



About the Solid Waste Division

The Solid Waste Division (SWD) of the Department of Natural Resources and Parks (DNRP) is guided by its vision to achieve zero waste of resources by 2030 and to enhance the environment through collaboration and innovation. The Division operates eight transfer stations, two rural drop boxes, and the Cedar Hills Regional Landfill – the only operational landfill in the county. We work with residents and business owners in unincorporated King County and 37 cities throughout the county (all except the cities of Seattle and Milton, which are part of separate solid waste systems). Our mission is to deliver value to our customers, and to continuously improve waste prevention, resource recovery, and waste disposal.

King County is committed to reducing the waste we send to our regional landfill. The Division’s waste prevention programs range from curbside and transfer station recycling to environmental education for local students to offering local community repair events and much more. All this work supports the County’s long-term goal of zero waste of resources.



Waste Prevention and Recycling

Recycling collection by the numbers

In 2025, SWD collected 28,873 tons of recyclable material at its transfer stations and drop boxes, a 9 percent decrease compared with 2024. Yard waste continues to be the most recycled material, with 13,512 tons collected, followed by scrap metal (6,234 tons), cardboard (2,762 tons), and clean wood (2,622 tons).

The Division continued its “Sort it Out” program for its recycling and transfer station employees, which take a more proactive role in helping customers sort their materials to increase recycling. The project focuses on helping customers recycle even more scrap metal, yard waste, cardboard, and clean wood at facilities in which they can be recycled, and alerting customers to designated bins that make it convenient to recycle these types of material. This program led to the implementation of mattress recycling at Bow Lake, Enumclaw, Factoria, Shoreline, and Vashon transfer stations with a new mattress handling fee, and implementation of scrap metal recycling at the Houghton, Renton, and Algona transfer stations. SWD continues to seek expansion of recycling services at stations and seeks to improve collection and processing efficiencies through resource recovery and innovative hauling efforts. Lessons learned have contributed substantially to the design and construction of the new South County Recycling and Transfer Stations (SCRTS).



Customer Scrap Metal: Designated bins for readily recyclable materials, such as scrap metal, make it easy for customers to sort it out and recycle more.

Educating the next generation with Re+ Green Schools Program



Classroom Workshops and Assemblies

Part of the [Green Schools Program](#), [this program](#) provides a no-cost assembly for elementary schools and classroom workshops for grades 1 through 12. The program builds early understanding of waste reduction, recycling, and composting, while helping students develop lifelong sustainability habits. By fostering this cultural foundation, schools are better prepared to adopt and maintain the behavioral and infrastructure improvements demonstrated through the County's hands-on technical assistance. This enables schools to turn learning into action.

The program is offered and delivered to schools by request throughout King County, except the cities of Seattle and Milton. During the 2024-2025 school year, the Re+ School Program reached 64 schools, 474 classrooms, and 19,266 students across 13 school districts.

Technical Assistance

[The technical assistance program](#) helps with recycling containers, signage, recognition given to K-12 schools and school districts, and assistance to student environmental clubs or Green Teams. Assistance is provided to schools that sign up to participate throughout King County, excluding Seattle and Milton. In 2025, the Re+ Green Schools Program provided 319 schools across all 17 school districts in King County with information, recommendations, and resources, such as recycling and composting collection containers and tailored graphic signage needed to start or expand recycling practices.

Technical assistance provides structured support that helps schools strengthen their waste-reduction and resource conservation systems. With an average school recycling rate of 49 percent, the program offers a clear pathway for schools to improve their performance through targeted actions, recognition, and ongoing collaboration.

The Re+ Schools Program also expanded the number of Green Teams to 245, an increase from 224 the previous year. During the 2024-2025 school year, a total of 137 recognition badges were awarded to 53 schools in 11 districts.

Re+ School Vouchers

To further support schools in implementing these improvements, the Re+ Schools Program also offers direct financial resources through its Voucher Program. Vouchers continue to help fund conservation and waste diversion projects. Together, in-person assemblies and workshops create the foundational awareness and engagement that allow technical assistance and vouchers to be more effective, ensuring schools have both the knowledge and tools needed to achieve lasting waste reduction outcomes.

In 2025, the Re+ Schools Voucher Program supported 140 schools in 16 districts, including three private schools, with \$148,754 in vouchers.



Students at Olympic Middle School in Auburn created 3-D signs and monitored a cafeteria sorting station.

Green Building Program provides valuable sustainability resources for King County

The [GreenTools Program](#) encompasses SWD’s green building work and construction and demolition material (C&D) diversion efforts. The program is focused on enhancing the built environment while addressing environmental concerns, such as climate action, habitat restoration, waste reduction, and community planning. The program’s collaborative approach integrates equity for people, economic vitality, and environmental well-being. It engages with communities to ensure present needs are met, while working to benefit future generations. GreenTools offers technical assistance, hands-on training, and policy development around sustainable building, green building certification, construction material recycling, and more.

In 2025, the Green Building Programs provided resources to builders to reduce the environmental impacts of construction, demolition, renovation, and maintenance of buildings in King County. In compliance with the [Green Building Ordinance](#) (GBO) and the [2025 Strategic Climate Action Plan](#) (SCAP), the County’s GreenTools program reviewed 504 county-owned capital projects for which annual green building reports were submitted, 15 percent more than the previous year. Of the 75 completed capital projects, 97 percent achieved a Platinum-level rating in green building—up from 83 percent in 2023—resulting in 353,449.29 tons of C&D waste diverted from landfills.

In 2025, SWD completed a total of 62 green building reports, up from 39 in 2024. This increase is primarily due to the Major Asset Rehabilitation projects being moved from their previous maintenance program funding to Capital Improvement Program funding, where they are subject to GBO reporting requirements. The two programs included 45 sub-projects and spent \$11.8 million in 2025. SWD staff supported capital project teams to hold Eco charrettes to optimize implementation of sustainability and Equity and Social Justice (ESJ) priorities.¹ Thirteen engineers responsible for managing the programs were trained in GBO requirements.

To support capital project managers and engineers, and in partnership with the Division’s Strategy & Performance staff, two green building implementation manuals were developed to help project managers understand and follow the steps necessary to remain compliant with the GBO. Implementation will begin in February 2026.

The program launched the County’s second interactive e-Learning course on the GBO, focusing on implementing ESJ actions in all county-owned capital projects. The program is also responsible for providing green building technical assistance to King County divisions to implement the GBO and SCAP requirements. Examples in 2025 included Eco charrettes for the Parks Division’s Skyway Community Center and Harborview’s Bond Development Plan and LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) projects, and standard specifications for lower embodied emissions catered to each division’s needs.² The program also provided training opportunities for County staff and cities by providing access to attend the Green Infrastructure Summit, the American Society of Heating, Refrigerating, and Air-Conditioning Engineers Energy Efficiency Conference, and Solar Washington. Staff also developed protocols for annual reporting to be done more efficiently, allowing capital project managers to optimize their energy and time spent on project delivery.

¹ Eco charettes are meetings of design teams and internal interested parties that are focused on identifying ways to increase sustainability and address equity and social justice in project design.

² Embodied emissions are the greenhouse gas emissions generated across a product's entire lifecycle, from raw material extraction, manufacturing, transportation, construction, renovation, and demolition/disposal.

NextGen Internship and Just Label

The County's [NextGen Climate Internship Program](#) helps young people gain experience implementing climate action initiatives in local government. Through climate-focused work, the program provides interns with professional development and networking opportunities. The NextGen Intern sponsored by the GreenTools Program submitted the Just Label certification for SWD's South County Recycling and Transfer Station (SCRTS) project. [Just Label](#) helps organizations optimize policies that improve social equity and enhance employee engagement, focusing on employee experience, health, well-being, and meaningful community connections; it is a voluntary disclosure tool for organizations to promote their equity efforts. Just Label also supported SWD's pursuit of Living Building Challenge Energy Petal certification for the SCRTS Project to demonstrate one of the first recycling and transfer stations to achieve carbon-neutral development performance, achieved in an equitable and just way.

SCAP greenhouse gas policies and regional impacts

With adoption of the 2025 SCAP and its [greenhouse gas \(GHG\) policies](#) comes a new and clearer road map for climate work in King County. The updated green building priority actions focus more intently on regulatory compliance rather than incentives, as regulation facilitates action and equitably gives all users access to healthier buildings with reduced utility bills. Education around green building is critical for those designing and building structures as well as those who ensure that design and construction are green-building-compliant. Policies GHG 34 and 35 focus heavily on educating the public and permitting staff. GHG 37 focuses on removing barriers to healthy, affordable housing through the permitting process and also creates a pathway to find funding sources so these projects can be built with elements that go beyond building codes.

Throughout 2025, GreenTools and SWD staff helped the Executive Climate Office secure certification in LEED for Cities. This involves documenting how the County sustainably operates and provides infrastructure for the community to demonstrate strong climate and equity practices throughout its buildings, infrastructure, and community services. In December 2025, the [US Green Building Council](#) recognized King County's efforts by awarding the County LEED Platinum certification.

King County continues to influence green building through the development of codes. Staff are working with partners on the adoption of strong state codes through the Washington State Building Code Council process. One success has been the approval of a cool roof requirement, which will require all low-sloped roofs in single-family structures to meet a certain solar and thermal emittance rating, thereby reflecting heat back into the atmosphere and mitigating the heat-island effect. The [Green Building Handbook](#) (GBH) is the County's primary tool to teach



Bus advertisement of Green Building Handbook. Promotion was done in multiple languages to connect with frontline and Black, Indigenous, and People of Color communities.

readers how to make a home improvement project more sustainable and healthier to occupy, and provides potential rebate information. The GBH is now offered in English, Amharic, Simplified Chinese, Khmer, Korean, Russian, Spanish, Ukrainian, and Vietnamese, as well as braille transcription. All iterations of the handbook are offered online and will soon be available through the King County Library System.

In March 2025 SWD staff participated in the Washington-Oregon Higher Education Sustainability Conference, providing an interactive workshop focused on attracting young professionals to work in government in the environmental field, and illustrating how to prepare a successful resume and cover letter. Staff shared information about their climate and equity roles at the County and fielded questions on how to apply to a government agency to get involved in this important work.

2025 Green Globe Awards: Homestead Community Land Trust – The Southard

GreenTools nominated [Homestead Community Land Trust](#) for its ongoing carbon-neutral development approach to providing affordable, culturally inclusive home ownership housing in King County. Homestead developed [The Southard](#), providing transit-friendly, high-quality homes made permanently affordable through its community land trust. It will provide 11 families homes at subsidized prices that are affordable for low- to moderate-income buyers, and two additional homes to adults with disabilities.

Among their standard development practices is to divert a higher-than-standard percentage of their C&D material in all of their housing projects. What makes The Southard special is its commitment to being an environmentally sustainable neighborhood. Homes will be highly energy-efficient by using solar panels for onsite energy generation and other green features, including net-zero energy and Salmon Safe certifications. These features lower the cost of operating and maintaining the homes, making them more affordable to own, and making homes more resilient to climate impacts while protecting water quality.

Homestead’s affordable homeownership development in Tukwila was named to honor SWD’s longtime Green Building Program Manager, Patti Southard, who passed away in 2019.



Homestead Community Land Trust won the County’s 2025 Green Globe Award for Leader in Green Built Environment.

C&D material diversion

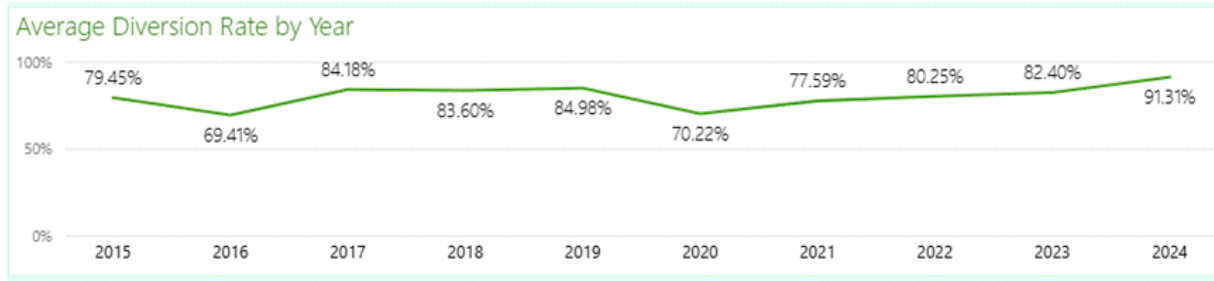
Over one million tons of construction and demolition materials are generated annually at job sites in King County. SWD's construction and demolition (C&D) team is tasked with making sure the waste materials from these job sites do not have a negative impact on humans or the environment. A large amount of this material goes directly from job sites to single-commodity recycling facilities and does not require close oversight. However, over one-quarter of the total material (264,000 tons) goes through C&D waste transfer facilities and C&D materials recovery facilities (MRFs). Roughly 34 percent of the materials going through those facilities is pulled out for recycling or (in the case of clean wood) used as fuel.



The Solid Waste Division is building a workforce trained in deconstruction, an effective alternative to demolition that dramatically reduces the amount of worksite material that ends up in the regional landfill.

King County requires that readily recyclable C&D materials, including metal, wood, concrete, and drywall, be recycled at single-commodity recycling facilities or at King County-designated MRFs. This effort furthers the Division's zero waste of resources goal and carbon emissions reduction efforts. As of 2025, there were seven King County-designated facilities accepting C&D materials for recycling, including one new comingled C&D processing facility, MCS Recycling, located in Seattle.

C&D waste that cannot readily be recycled must be processed at designated C&D waste transfer facilities and ultimately landfilled. There are currently three county-designated C&D transfer facilities. The Division charges a per-ton fee for C&D waste generated at King County job sites that is sent to the landfill. This fee creates an incentive for recycling and helps fund the County's C&D management program. In 2025, the C&D fee was \$13 per ton.



Green Workforce Development Training

In 2025, the C&D Program hosted its third green workforce development training with a focus on deconstruction—dismantling structures so materials can be salvaged and put back into the economy. The curriculum again included Roots of Success, a certified apprenticeship program that offers core job readiness skills and a general environmental stewardship skill set that helps launch participants into careers in the growing deconstruction industry. The four-week, on-site, hands-on deconstruction portion of the training was conducted at a large home near Cedar Hills Regional Landfill, which was slated for deconstruction to expand the landfill buffer. The training was provided in partnership with a community-based organization (CBO) called Community Passageways, which also enlisted the support of another CBO, Freedom Project. The training included eight trainees who successfully completed the course and were awarded certificates. This was the first cohort that included majority women, who, by the end of the training, were strong advocates of deconstruction and salvaging materials and can be effective proponents of the practice in the greater construction industry. In 2025, King County recognized the impact of this training by awarding the program with the [Best Run Government Award in Innovation for Equity, Race, and Social Justice](#).

Circular economy for salvaged lumber

This new program was launched to expand salvage lumber reuse efforts. The C&D team, in partnership with the former King County Executive’s Climate Office, hired a Senior Project Manager to begin implementation of the \$3.4 million effort to facilitate lumber harvested from old buildings being reused in high-value products. This funding is a portion of a \$50 million [Climate Pollution Reduction Grant](#) awarded by the Environmental Protection Agency to King County in 2024. The program includes the development of grant programs for salvaged lumber processors and final product manufacturers, as well as support for workforce development, product testing, and manufacturer quality control. This effort reinforces the importance of C&D material diversion, salvaged wood efforts, and increased equity and inclusion within the industry.

In aid of this effort, SWD and the Executive Climate Office hosted the first of a series of "Reclaim the Grain" events in November 2025 at the Earthwise Salvage Lumber Warehouse. There were over 50 attendees from built-environment nonprofits, deconstruction, salvage, building design, construction, and woodworking. Prior to that, two Salvaged Lumber Summits were held in January 2025 to convene interested parties ahead of the release of a Request for Proposals by Seattle Public Utilities (SPU) for an entity to establish and operate a salvaged lumber warehouse in the City of Seattle.

The SWD NextGen intern created a simplified digital survey tool to streamline the collection of data related to salvaged building materials. The tool supports users in accurately reporting reused or recycled materials and by enabling recognition of their contributions to emissions reduction.

The SWD C&D team provided support to the County’s Water and Land Resources Division to remove an old barn by having it cut into large panels and transported off-site for reuse. Almost the entire structure was reused to construct smaller outbuildings.

C&D outreach

In 2025, C&D enforcement staff conducted 421 site visits (about 35 per month) to demolition job sites, construction job sites, and C&D facilities. Site visits at permitted demolition and construction sites provide opportunities to engage with contractors and supply them with up-to-date information on C&D recycling options and requirements. The primary resource distributed during site visits is the [C&D facilities flyer](#), which shows where all the King County-designated (approved) C&D facilities are located in the area. These outreach efforts help ensure that C&D waste generated at job sites within King County goes to designated facilities and helps maintain flow control.

The C&D flyer listing designated facilities was previously available in Spanish, Russian, and English. In 2025, Vietnamese was added. The Vietnamese C&D flyer was distributed to small Vietnamese-owned construction/demolition-related businesses as an effort to engage more communities in the work to increase C&D material diversion in King County.

King County ‘fixers’ help communities conserve resources

The King County free [community repair events program](#) held nine events in 2025 at community centers and libraries in Burien, Redmond, Mercer Island, White Center, Skyway, Bellevue, Tukwila, Sammamish, and Renton. These events reduce waste, conserve resources, and build community. Skilled general and sewing “fixers” from a variety of communities and cultures work together, seeking to repair items the public brings in, including small kitchen appliances, electronics, small furniture, tools, toys, clothing, and more. The program, which began in 2016, has held a total of 96 repair events, in 28 different King County cities and unincorporated communities. More than 4,800 items have been worked on, and most have been fixed or helpfully diagnosed. The program has also served as a model for numerous repair events programs throughout western Washington.



Repair events: King County residents can bring small household and personal items to be repaired and mended by “fixers.”

Glass recycling

In King County, glass is mainly collected in commingled curbside recycling and taken to an MRF, where the glass is separated from the other recyclable materials. Because the glass from MRFs is more contaminated than glass collected separately from other recyclables, it is generally sent to Strategic Materials, Inc./Sibelco (SMI) to be cleaned and sorted so it can be used in new glass products.

In July 2024, Ardagh Glass, Inc. closed its Seattle wine bottle manufacturing plant, which had made new bottles from recycled glass; its closing posed a challenge for glass recycling in the region. In response to Ardagh’s closure, SMI limited the amount of glass they accepted and began stockpiling glass. SMI struggled to find alternative markets for its glass and had to ship it out of state. SWD and SPU set up a Regional Glass Recycling Roundtable with SMI, local and state government partners, waste management service providers, and the glass industry, which convened monthly from September 2024 to May 2025 to provide information on the latest developments and address issues with glass recycling in the region. Thanks to these coordinated efforts, glass recycling has been sustained throughout King County.

Designated recyclables in King County

As specified in the [Final 2019 Comprehensive Solid Waste Management Plan](#), King County’s list of designated recyclables is defined and updated by the Washington State Department of Ecology’s annual statewide survey of materials that have been recycled in Washington. Designated recyclables in King County include:

- Carpet and pads
- Clean wood
- Construction and demolition debris
- Electronics
- Furniture
- Glass
- Metal
- Moderate-risk waste (all-purpose cleaners, batteries, pesticides, used motor oil)
- Organics
- Other materials (latex paint, toner and ink cartridges, photographic film, tires)
- Paper
- Plastic
- Textiles
- Gypsum



Recycling guide at the Shoreline Recycling and Transfer Station.

Recycling Reform Act

In May 2025, the Washington State legislature passed the [Recycling Reform Act](#) (Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) for Packaging and Paper Products), a comprehensive law that modernizes the state’s residential recycling system and promises to reduce waste while boosting reuse and recycling rates.

The new law requires companies that make consumer products to fund the recycling system and ensure that their packaging and paper products actually get recycled. It will create a coordinated, transparent, statewide system for residential recycling that is partially funded by producers—at least 90 percent by 2032. Starting in 2030, residents will pay much less for recycling, and local governments can seek reimbursement for their recycling services.

The law will establish a statewide residential recycling program with performance targets that will reduce plastic packaging and increase reuse, return, recycling, and composting rates. There will also be a financial assistance program to support the development of reuse and refill systems. In 2026, the Department of Ecology will begin rulemaking, establish an Advisory Council, and start work on a preliminary needs assessment. They will also develop statewide collection lists.



Waste Disposal

Transfer Stations

Providing customers with safe, efficient, and responsible waste disposal and transfer is a key service of the Solid Waste Division. In 2025, SWD continued its work to modernize its transfer station system.

Progress in updating the transfer system in south and northeast King County

In 2025, the Division continued work on the South County Recycling and Transfer Station Project, which will replace the aging Algona Transfer Station in 2026. The Division completed the final environmental impact statement for the Northeast County Recycling and Transfer Station Project, set to replace the 60-year-old Houghton Transfer Station in Kirkland by 2029. Both facilities will be designed to meet modern green building standards, providing improved access to waste disposal and comprehensive recycling services.

Construction continues on South County Recycling and Transfer Station

Last year, construction was completed on all foundations and envelopes. Paving was completed for 80 percent of site locations and mechanical, electrical, and plumbing systems reached 90 percent completion. Other activities included the installation of utilities along West Valley Highway South, an upgraded sewer line on 11th Avenue North, and continued stream realignment and habitat improvement.



Construction continues on the South County Recycling and Transfer Station project.

The new facility will include compacted waste collection, commercial and public recycling drop-off areas, household and moderate-risk waste disposal areas, and an administrative office. King County will keep the existing Algona Transfer Station open throughout construction of the new facility, which is scheduled to open in summer of 2026.

Northeast Recycling and Transfer Station Project completes environmental review

The Division completed the State Environmental Policy Act process with the issuance of the Final Environmental Impact Statement in early 2025, following an extensive public engagement process. The new facility will replace the aging Houghton Recycling and Transfer Station. It will offer convenient, accessible recycling services for a variety of items and materials and will be fully enclosed to control noise and odors. The community will continue to have opportunities to help shape decisions on station design, amenities, and services.



Interior of current Houghton Transfer Station.

Nearly 1.8 million pounds of hazardous waste safely collected

Properly disposing of hazardous products that contain toxic, corrosive, flammable, or reactive ingredients can be difficult. The Haz Waste Program provides convenient hazardous waste collection services, as well as prevention and education resources, for residents and businesses in King County.

The Haz Waste Program makes it easy to dispose of a variety of hazardous materials, such as cleaning products, motor oil, and pesticides. In 2025, the two modes of Wastemobile services—the roving and Auburn Wastemobiles—provided safe disposal services to nearly 19,000 residents, businesses, and organizations. In addition, the hazardous waste facility at the Factoria Recycling and Transfer Station assisted nearly 20,000 residents, businesses, and organizations to safely dispose of their hazardous waste. In total, nearly 1.8 million pounds of hazardous materials were safely disposed of in 2025, protecting both the environment and public health.



5-Day Hauling and Tipping Pilot Project

Beginning in January 2025, SWD initiated what was planned to be a year-long pilot program to cease weekend hauling and disposal operations at the Cedar Hills Regional Landfill. The intent of the 5-Day Hauling and Tipping Pilot was to better align landfill operations with the weekday period during which the majority of waste tonnage comes into our system. Many employees supporting hauling and tipping functions were transitioned from a seven-days-on/seven-days-off schedule to 40-hour, Monday through Friday schedules.

The pilot program was aimed at evaluating how we could reduce costs and adapt to new business practices as the revenue we receive from garbage tipping fees declines due to increased recycling and waste reduction efforts.

No changes were made to transfer station operations or services. While benefits of the approach included reduced operational expenditures, and, thus, the amount of future rate increases; reduced weekend impacts to neighbors of the landfill; and faster removal of garbage from stations on the weekdays.

Despite the significant change introduced in the pilot, SWD employees worked diligently to make the pilot a success. However, the scale of change, unanticipated service disruptions, effects of inclement weather, and complex planning around holidays created challenges that undermined our ability to provide a satisfactory level of service to our customers. In mid-April 2025, DNRP Director John Taylor and then-incoming SWD Director Rebecca Singer elected to suspend the 5-Day Tipping and Hauling Pilot and the Division reverted to the previous seven-day hauling and tipping schedule. It is possible that SWD will revisit the potential effectiveness of the five-day approach in the future.

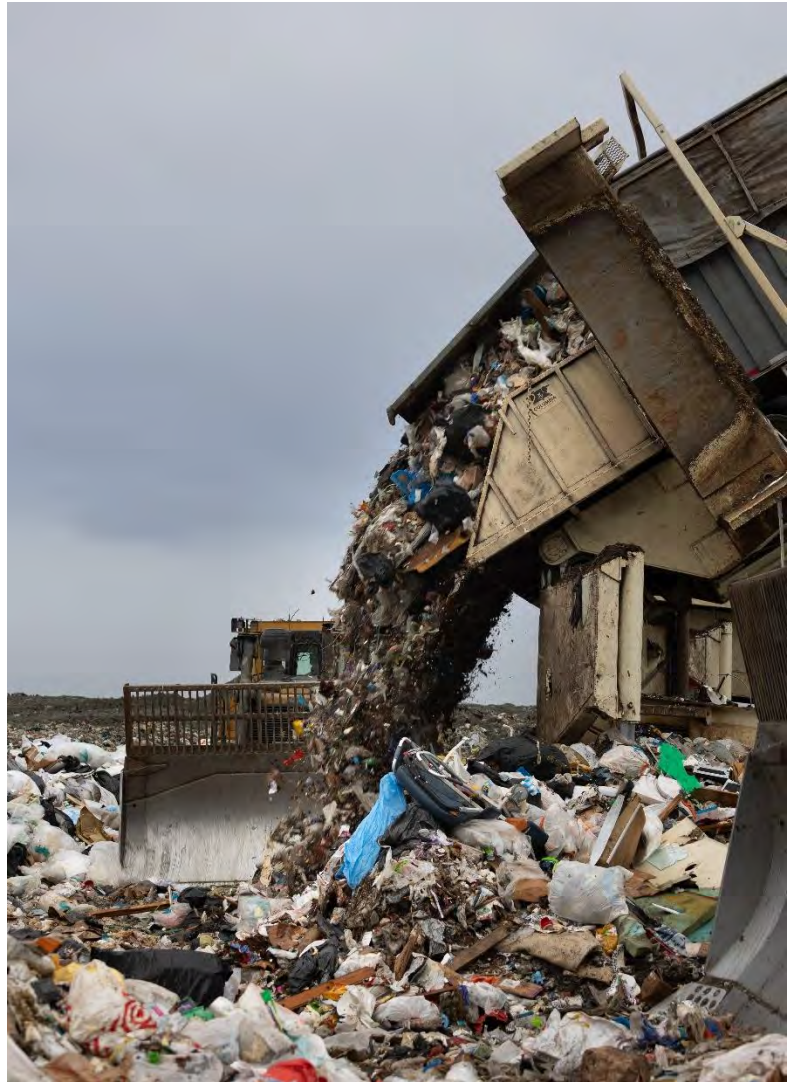
Cedar Hills Regional Landfill

The Cedar Hills Regional Landfill has been in operation since the 1960s and is the last operating landfill in King County. Every day, more than 100 trucks deliver tons of garbage to the landfill for final disposal. Area 8 is the current active area of the landfill, with the rest of the 920 acres devoted to operational components, administrative facilities, closed landfill areas, and new construction.

In 2025, Stage 1 Closure of Area 8 was achieved, with full closure of the cell anticipated to occur in the spring of 2027. Area 9 will be the final refuse cell. Excavation of Area 9 began in June 2025, and construction will continue for two more summers. To make room for the development, staff who were formerly working in offices at the landfill have been relocated to the Bow Lake Transfer Station and the new Renton Maintenance Facility, while trucks and trailers once domiciled at the landfill have been moved to a nearby property owned by Cedar Grove. Relocation of some staff to the area of the North Flare Station is still under way.

Areas 5 and 6, landfilled areas with remaining capacity that were under interim closure, are in varying phases of planning and preliminary design in preparation to receive waste ahead of Area 9.

The Byers odor control system, a plant-based odor mitigation system in use at the landfill since early 2022, has been deployed on the western portion of Area 8 and a new unit was added at the leachate ponds in late 2025.



Tipper at Cedar Hills Regional Landfill.

Disposal tonnages

In 2025, 833,688 tons of garbage were disposed of at the landfill, representing a 0.7 percent decrease compared with 2024. In 2025, about 82 percent (679,509 tons) of waste tonnage came from franchised commercial hauling companies, with self-haul tonnage accounting for the remaining 18

percent. Regional Direct tonnage (residual garbage from the recycling centers) fell by about 3,300 tons, or 30 percent, due to an agreement with SPU regarding flow control of these tons.

The Bow Lake Recycling and Transfer Station continues to be SWD's busiest facility, with 275,687 tons disposed of there, followed by the Factoria Transfer Station (139,365 tons), the Houghton Recycling and Transfer Station (119,980 tons), and the Algona Transfer Station (109,381 tons).

Waste Clearance Landfill Disposal Service

To protect public health, safety, and welfare, certain special wastes are not accepted at the Division's transfer stations and must be delivered directly to Cedar Hills Regional Landfill for disposal by permit. Special wastes include wastes that are regulated at the federal, state, and/or local level or those which are operationally challenging to handle. Waste Clearance Landfill Disposal Service provides customers with free consultation to determine whether their waste requires a disposal permit. Those who receive a permit deliver their loads to the landfill by appointment, where permits are checked and loads are verified to meet the required conditions of disposal. Customers are escorted to the appropriate landfill disposal location. Waste Clearance loads are observed and inspected during unloading. Handling of special wastes uses careful and controlled protocols to fulfill the Division's goal of delivering safe and environmentally sound disposal services.

Long-term planning for waste disposal and maximizing landfill capacity

SWD continues to advance plans to extend the life of the landfill for an additional 10 years beyond 2028, as outlined in the *Final 2019 Comprehensive Solid Waste Management Plan*. These plans included relocation of support facilities, discussed above, further landfilling in Areas 5 and 6, and construction of the last refuse cell, Area 9.

Resource Recovery

Landfill gas-to-energy provides revenue

Beginning in 2010, King County contracted with Bio Energy-Washington (BEW) to operate a gas purification plant that converts the landfill gas generated in the landfill waste into natural gas. Operating the landfill gas processing plant has significant environmental benefits. Converting landfill gas into renewable energy means that an equal amount of non-renewable energy—fossil fuels like natural gas, coal, or oil—does not need to be consumed. This reduces greenhouse gas emissions by about 85,000 metric tons of carbon dioxide equivalent (CO₂e) per year.



SWD staff walking through the landfill gas plant

King County and BEW went into litigation over disputes related to operation of the landfill gas plant. In February 2025, King County and BEW reached a settlement agreement that included provisions for the County to purchase the plant for \$70 million and pay \$5 million to settle the litigation.

In addition to environmental benefits, the plant has financial benefits for SWD and the ratepayers of King County. Selling biogas produced by the landfill gas processing plant is anticipated to be revenue-positive beginning in the 2026-2027 biennium. During that time, SWD anticipates a net revenue of \$5 million from operating the plant.



Equity and Social Justice

Cleanup LIFT continues to offer more equitable services

To make services more equitable for customers and to advance Equity and Social Justice (ESJ) goals in King County, SWD operates a low-income discount program called Cleanup LIFT—a discounted disposal fee for lower-income customers who bring their garbage and recycling materials to a King County disposal facility. That discount increased from \$16 to \$18 per transaction, effective January 1, 2025. The program had 28,151 transactions in 2025, an 18 percent increase over 2024 in use of the program. Usage of the program has grown every year since it was launched in 2019, with a marked increase in the last two years. From 2023 to 2025, the number of discounted transactions increased by 45 percent. These discounts resulted in customers saving nearly \$507,000 in 2025, providing monetary relief to the Division’s most financially vulnerable customers.

Incorporating equity and social justice into capital projects

To ensure capital projects are bid, designed, constructed, and operated equitably, SWD has been developing ESJ plans for all capital projects and programs. The review process identifies the potential benefits and impacts of a project and the community outreach needed to better understand and mitigate those impacts.

In 2025, SWD ESJ staff and other County ESJ staff developed the Equity and Social Justice Credits Training course, available on NeoGov. This series of self-paced courses introduces the ESJ component of the 2023 edition of the King County Sustainable Infrastructure Scorecard, including the County's values, policies, and plans that guide equitable development in capital projects. The series introduces each credit, why it's important, and relevant guidance and examples to help project teams apply the credits. Over 20 subject-matter experts from across King County contributed to the design of this course by providing and validating the course content. These training courses were designed to give teams the clarity and confidence needed to successfully weave equity and social justice through capital project planning and delivery.

Closing the Gap

Closing the Gap is an employee-led, cross-functional team effort focused on creating a more inclusive workplace for nonsupervisory employees who reported feeling less connected and valued than leadership-level colleagues in the 2022 Employee Engagement Survey. In 2025, the project team partnered with the Athena Group to host 32 division-wide listening sessions with staff and develop a report. This project is aimed at understanding the employee engagement gap between SWD's nonsupervisory and supervisory staff, centering frontline employee experiences to inform actions toward a more inclusive workplace. Over the past year, impacted employees, SWD leadership, and The Athena Group worked together to understand how people experience their jobs across different roles and workgroups. Phase 1 focused on building an honest understanding of current conditions, beyond the measurement of surveys, so the Division can make better decisions moving forward.



A draft report was delivered to the project team and will be shared with leadership in January 2026. This report is the result of 15 months of planning, navigating, and bridging between the workforce and management. It begins to explore the reasons behind the patterns that years of survey data revealed. The goal is to use the recommendations provided by the consultant to partner with leadership to build an improved culture at SWD.

Disposal support for residents who are victims of illegal dumping or on a fixed or limited income

The Disposal Assistance Voucher Program enables environmental site inspectors from County agencies and cities to request vouchers that can be used to subsidize limited disposal costs for residents who are either victims of illegal dumping or on a limited income. Site inspectors must be trained to access the program. In 2025, 123 disposal vouchers were redeemed, and an additional 11 site inspectors were trained, bringing the total of trained inspectors to 90 across 29 agencies. This service provides valuable assistance to individuals who, through no fault of their own, would have to bear full costs to dispose of illegally dumped waste, or those who may otherwise struggle to pay for some or all disposal costs.

Junk Vehicle Affidavit Service: assisting landowners across the county

[Junk Vehicle Affidavit Service](#) is a free service to establish an ownership document—an affidavit—for individuals without titles to vehicles or vessels on their private properties. With an affidavit in hand, the landowners can access disposal or recycling services for those items. Junk Vehicle Affidavits are issued, after inspections by Division staff, for vehicles or vessels that meet the Washington State Department of Licensing criteria for junk. Each year, the Division inspects and researches ownership of 600 to 800 vehicles and vessels across unincorporated areas and cities, excluding Seattle and Milton. Removing junk vehicles on private properties protects the environment, discourages illegal dumping, and helps landowners achieve compliance with property codes.



Junk vehicles damage the environment and often attract illegal dumping.

Advocacy: King County’s commitment to residents of unincorporated areas

In 2025, King County strengthened its role as an advocate for residents in unincorporated areas, with a particular focus on managing and mitigating cost impacts faced by households. This commitment was demonstrated through active participation in the rate increase proposal process, where SWD closely scrutinized proposed operational and cost assumptions submitted by the service provider and worked directly with the Washington Utilities and Transportation Commission to elevate resident concerns.

Through this advocacy, SWD helped drive meaningful reductions to proposed rate increases, resulting in lower monthly costs for residents. These efforts reinforced the County’s role in protecting community interests, improving transparency, and ensuring that resident perspectives were clearly represented in regulatory decision making. SWD remains committed to building on this work—continuing to advocate for affordability, accountability, and equitable representation for unincorporated communities.

Human Resources Talent Acquisition

In 2025, the Talent Acquisition Team continued to make process improvements in the recruitment and retention of employees, with updates in the scope document, hiring manager training, and hiring manager and candidate surveys to gain feedback for further improvements. It was a busy hiring season, with a record number of applications per open job position. We had an average of 78 applications per job, nearly 100 percent more than in 2023. We hired a total of 102 employees in 2025, excluding special duty assignments. Among the career service positions hired in 2025, 51 percent were internal promotional hires. We also saw a significant drop in the time to hire compared with previous periods.

Our team continues to evolve, with a new HR Supervisor position and some employees moving into different roles within the unit to enhance our effectiveness and efficiency.



Planning

The Division works with its 37 partnering cities, two advisory committees, the King County Council, and other interested parties to ensure it is delivering value and the utmost in waste prevention, resource recovery, and waste disposal.

New disposal rate supports essential services, invests in modernizing facilities

Beginning January 1, 2026, the solid waste disposal fees were raised, with an increase of 8 percent in the commercial tipping fee, 12.5 percent in the self-haul tipping fee, 12.5 percent in the yard waste fee, and 15 percent in the fixed annual charge. These increases are necessary due to rising costs to provide essential solid waste services, including recycling and waste disposal services at transfer stations, continued operations at the Cedar Hills Regional Landfill (CHRLF), recycling and waste-prevention programs, and to fund the department’s capital improvement program. The impact of the rate increases for a typical residential customer with a 32-gallon can, after commercial haulers pass along these costs, is forecasted to be \$0.71 per month in 2026.

SWD is in a period of significant capital investment that will last several biennia and will modernize aging solid waste infrastructure, which will result in increased efficiency and opportunities for diverting recyclable materials from the landfill. These capital improvements will help shift SWD’s paradigm from solid waste management to one that prioritizes the recycling and reuse of materials. This rate supports an estimated investment of \$865 million for critical infrastructure projects between now and 2031, yielding long-term financial benefits for rate payers, boosting the local economy, and reducing the impact of waste on the environment. The department is also investing in its Re+ Plan, aimed at diverting or recycling the 70 percent of useful materials that are currently being thrown away.

As rate pressure from the growth in capital spending has increased, SWD has been exploring ways to mitigate the impact to rate payers. One approach is to defer appropriate projects into the future to more evenly distribute spending over several years rather than have a spike in spending, with the associated high debt service. One such project is the Permanent Facilities Relocation, which would build a new permanent maintenance facility to replace facilities that will be demolished during the development of Area 9 at the CHRLF. The project was originally estimated to spend over \$100 million through 2029 but is being deferred to the early 2030s.

Re+

SWD has formally committed to reducing waste and greenhouse gas emissions of our solid waste system through the 2019 Comprehensive Solid Waste Management Plan, Strategic Climate Action Plan, and King County Code. This plan defines King County’s goal to keep approximately 70 percent of materials with economic value out of the landfill. Re+ is the Division’s approach to achieving these goals and represents a major shift away from the 20th-century approach to solid waste management and towards prioritizing waste reduction and prevention, recycling, and reuse. Re+ also prioritizes bringing together diverse communities to create a more equitable, waste-free King County. In 2025, the Division continued its progress by supporting important policy changes, providing funding for partners’ waste prevention efforts, engaging with community, and advancing many other important Re+ goals.

Ending of the Re+ Community Panel

The 12-member Re+ Community Panel provided insight and direction around the intersection of equity and solid waste policies in King County. The panel, which met monthly beginning in 2022, included residents, workers, and volunteers of King County who had lived experienced as frontline community members—those disproportionately impacted by climate change, and more affected by materials management decisions.

The Community Panel provided an opportunity for community members to help shape solid waste policies to best serve historically overlooked populations in King County.

The panel offered valuable input to inform the County’s approach to Re+ actions, including Extended Producer Responsibility, Re+ grants, mixed-waste processing, and the 2025 Strategic Climate Action Plan. Panel members also participated on evaluation committees for Re+ grants—including piloting a bilingual evaluation process to improve language access—and helped develop an Equity Framework to determine how King County and the Division can measure progress in meeting equity and social justice goals. With the guidance of the Community Panel, SWD created a subgroup focusing on tribal engagement.

At the end of 2025, the Re+ Community Panel came to a close after providing meaningful input on Re+ actions and helping inform the program’s approach to community priorities and implementation. As the Division evaluates and refines engagement practices, we remain committed to engaging with communities in ways that are sustainable, consistent, and supportive of long-term relationships.



The Re+ Community Panel was an opportunity for community members to help shape solid waste policies to best serve historically overlooked populations in King County.

Re+ Grants

The Re+ City Grant program provides support to King County cities (currently 26) that have signed on to the Re+ Pledge. In 2025, the Division awarded \$364,000 to help cities invest in, develop, and deliver on projects that help create a more circular economy. This second round of funding involved six projects and eight cities focused primarily on commercial organics: food rescue, composting, and helping businesses replace disposable items with durable service ware. In addition to preventing waste, Re+ City Grant projects align with the County's ESJ goals to ensure that all people can thrive in a healthy environment and have equal access to waste services and resources.

Along with launching a second cycle of the Re+ City program, [SWD distributed \\$2 million across 14 projects](#) under the Re+ Circular Economy Grant program, investing in nonprofits, small businesses, and other groups leading the transition to a circular economy. Re+ Circular Economy grants funded the creation of 46 green jobs and resulted in successful proof-of-concept and scaling efforts—for example, a Circular Economy grant funded the expansion of Shoreline Tool Library hours by 300 percent and enabled the organization to successfully join the City of Shoreline in securing a \$4.45 million federal grant for a Reuse Commons.

Organics Diversion

As part of the [2022 Washington Organics Management Law](#), commercial businesses and schools in King County are required to divert organic waste from the landfill to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. The SWD Commercial Organics Technical Assistance program was created to conduct outreach and help businesses access opportunities to conserve resources, save money, and comply with the new law. In 2025, the program wrapped up its second year of assistance in unincorporated areas to help local businesses save money and resources by diverting food waste away from the landfill. Ten businesses started new organic waste diversion services with the County's guidance—the equivalent of diverting 250 tons of waste from the landfill or 400,000 miles driven in GHG emissions. The program will continue its work in 2026 to serve business needs.

SWD worked with consultants in 2025 to produce an organics systems mapping and policy report that comprehensively reviewed current federal, state, county, and city organics policies. The gaps in organic policy identified in the report will further inform SWD's ongoing organic diversion work.

Statewide policy and legislative achievement supporting Re+

SWD has been actively engaged in both state legislation and countywide policies that would reduce waste, increase recovery of valuable resources, and ultimately reduce negative impacts on our environment. Policies are often more effective on a statewide level, as that can provide additional funding and resources for actions that would be too costly for each individual jurisdiction to implement on their own. Examples of such policies are Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR), where producers are responsible for managing the end-of-life of their own products and packaging, and statewide education and outreach campaigns. Statewide policies can also provide clear guidelines and regulations that ensure harmonized health, safety, and environmental standards.

In 2025, the Division was successful in the following legislative advocacy:

- Helping pass the Recycling Reform Act (EPR for Packaging and Paper Products). The law will modernize the state’s residential recycling system and is expected to reduce waste while boosting reuse and recycling rates.
- Supporting the passage of legislation that will facilitate increased diversion of organic material from multifamily buildings and schools, update building codes to ensure sufficient space for collection containers, and align container colors across the state.
- Supporting the passing of Right to Repair for digital electronics, such as computers, cellphones, and home appliances, and mobility equipment, such as wheelchairs and mobility scooters. The law requires manufacturers to provide independent repair providers and owners access to necessary documentation, parts, embedded software, firmware, and tools on fair and reasonable terms and costs.
- Introducing an EPR bill for mattresses, which would require mattress producers to establish a takeback program that would increase the reuse and recycling of mattresses.

Strategic Climate Action Plan

The King County Code requires the Executive to develop an updated Strategic Climate Action Plan every five years in partnership with frontline communities. [The 2025 Strategic Climate Action Plan](#) (SCAP) is in its fourth iteration, building on progress made over the past two decades. It reinforces past commitments and breaks new ground by offering an updated, integrated vision of King County’s approach to climate action.

The updated SCAP addresses the urgent need for action and centers the voices of frontline communities—those most impacted by climate change—by charting a path toward nine flagship issues, which show that climate action is not a set of individual goals, but a coordinated effort to create lasting change. The flagships are:

- Put communities first
- Safe, Healthy, and Climate-Ready Homes and Buildings
- Connected and Accessible Transportation
- Economic Mobility and Career-Building Opportunities
- Fresh, Local Food for Everyone
- Design Out Waste
- Clean Air, Water, and Healthy Ecosystems

- Reliable and Future-Ready Infrastructure
- Collaborative and Community-Led Solutions

Information on the flagships and other aspects of the updated SCAP can be found [here](#).

King County Disaster Debris Management Framework

In August 2024, SWD finalized and adopted the King County Disaster Debris Management Framework. Through the planning process, SWD collaborated with regional partners to create a comprehensive, accurate, and functional regional plan. This plan provides guidance to prepare for and respond to a disaster debris-causing incident, with the goal of preventing health problems, protecting lives and property, and reducing environmental harm. It describes how the County and its regional partners will collect debris, sort it, and transfer it to its final disposition location. Having this framework in place enhances the County's ability to respond swiftly and efficiently to debris challenges, ensuring a quicker recovery for our communities.

In November 2024 and December 2025, severe weather and flooding events provided opportunities to apply the Disaster Debris Management Framework to real-world incidents. In response to widespread flooding on multiple area rivers in the 2025 event, SWD activated the debris management plan and coordinated eight debris collection events in Fall City and Ravensdale. SWD also accepted storm-related debris from self-haulers at no cost at several transfer stations, including Algona, Bow Lake, Enumclaw, Shoreline, and Skykomish. Additional debris collection events in the Snoqualmie Valley were planned for late January and spring 2026 to continue supporting impacted residents.

Following these events, SWD will incorporate lessons learned into the Disaster Debris Management Framework to improve operational readiness. SWD will continue working with cities and county partners to refine the framework and to encourage development of local debris management plans to support jurisdiction-specific responses to smaller-scale incidents.

Comprehensive plan

In 2025, the Division continued work to update the 2019 Comprehensive Solid Waste Management Plan (Comp Plan) with its solid waste advisory committees. Updates are being made to the chapters on circular economy, landfill management, solid waste system financing, and solid waste disposal, including the County's next disposal system after CHRLF closes. The consulting firm Tetra Tech provided SWD with their final report on long-term disposal in early 2025 and concluded that, of the five disposal methods analyzed, only waste export by rail or mass burn with ash export could meet the waste disposal needs of the County. Presentations on these findings were given to the city councils of Auburn, Renton, Kent, and Tukwila, with more presentations offered for 2026.



2026 Outlook

Looking ahead to 2026, the Solid Waste Division will continue to strive for excellence in waste prevention, resource recovery, and waste disposal.

2027 rate proposal

The Division is currently working with its advisory committees and the King County Executive Office to develop a rate proposal for 2027. This rate proposal will continue to support current services and make progress on Division goals, such as Re+ and carbon neutrality, and Comp Plan commitments, such as building the South County Recycling and Transfer Station, the Northeast Recycling and Transfer Station, and expanding the life of the landfill. It will also support increased recycling activity at the busiest transfer stations, provide staff to satisfy increased regulatory requirements at the landfill, better manage flow control, and improve employee retention.

Comprehensive plan updates

The Division will continue to update the Comp Plan into 2026. Work has already begun on the State Environmental Policy Act review process with a Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (SEIS) that includes two long-term disposal options. The SEIS process is expected to conclude in late 2026.

Re+: continuing progress towards waste prevention and climate goals

In 2026, the Division will continue to implement current Re+ actions and identify next steps to further policy and programmatic achievements supporting Re+. In addition, King County will align and update waste-related plans and codes, including, but not limited to, the Comprehensive Solid Waste Management Plan and Title 10, so that the entire solid waste system is moving comprehensively toward a more circular economy.

Capital projects progress

In 2026, the Northeast Recycling and Transfer Station project will continue to move forward with evaluation of best options for the future siting of the facility. The South County Recycling and Transfer Station project continues to make progress in construction, with substantial completion expected in the summer of 2026.

**KING COUNTY SOLID WASTE DIVISION
2025 ANNUAL REPORT**



King County

Department of
Natural Resources and Parks

Solid Waste Division

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