

King County Comprehensive Plan Excerpts

The King County Comprehensive Plan (KCCP) is the guiding policy document for all land use and development regulations in unincorporated King County, and for regional services throughout the County including transit, sewers, parks, trails, and open space. It includes many references to the importance of a strong food system that provides many opportunities for residents to eat healthy food. The complete KCCP can be found at <http://www.kingcounty.gov/property/permits/codes/growth/CompPlan.aspx>.

Comprehensive Plan excerpts related to local agriculture, healthy food, and opportunities to strengthen the local food system are copied here.

Introduction

Food is as essential to our health and well-being as air and water. For example, King County is experiencing a rise in the rate of obesity, and at the same time, an increase in food insecurity and malnutrition. Both can be caused by lack of access to adequate amounts of nutritious food, and both can lead to the same thing - a diminished quality of life that ends with premature death due to diet-related chronic disease. King County plays an important role in guiding and supporting system improvements that will result in King County residents eating local, healthy food. King County supports food systems that are ecologically and economically sustainable and that improve the health of the county's residents (page I-5).

Chapter 3. Rural Legacy and Natural Resource Lands

In addition to physical activity, another major determinant of health is what people eat. Everything from quality and location of food retail outlets and restaurants to food cost to school food choices influence the food choices of rural residents. According to recent USDA figures and research from the American Dietetic Association, almost 80 percent of adults are not eating the recommended levels of fruits and vegetables. There are people in every community for whom hunger is a daily issue. Land use planning can play a role in providing and improving access to healthy foods. Garden plots located in neighborhoods, parks, vacant lots, surplus public rights-of-way, and public utility lands in various communities can be used as places to grow fruits and vegetables, build community, and address hunger. Similar locations in the Rural Area of King County should be explored for this purpose (page 3-38).

R-517 King County should explore ways of creating and supporting community gardens, farmers' markets, produce stands and other similar community based food growing projects to provide and improve access to healthy food for all rural residents.

R-650 King County commits to preserve APD parcels in or near the Urban Growth Area because of their high production capabilities, their proximity to markets, and their value as open space. King County should work with cities adjacent to or near APDs to minimize the operational and environmental impacts of urban development on farming, and to promote activities and infrastructure, such as

farmers' markets and agriculture processing businesses, that benefit both the cities and the farms by improving access to locally grown agricultural products.

King County recognizes the importance of adding value to and direct sales of agricultural products as a way to keep agriculture viable in an urban landscape. King County's agriculture program works with farmers to encourage them to add value to their products by processing, packaging, and selling them directly to the consumer (page 3-58).

R-659 Agricultural processing, packing and direct sales are considered agricultural activities and should be allowed at a size and scale appropriate to the zone in which they are operating. King County shall work with local and state health departments to develop regulations supporting these activities.

R-660 King County supports the processing and packaging of farm products from crops and livestock, and will continue to work with farmers, ranchers, cities, neighboring counties, and other interested parties to address the infrastructure and regulatory needs to promote sales to consumers, institutions, restaurants, and retail enterprises.

King County's APDs have some of the best soil and conditions for growing food in the country. There is an increasing awareness among farmers about the potential for expanding local food production compatible with a variety of sustainability goals. Concerned about multiple threats to future food production, King County farmers are working with others to promote voluntary incentives that will increase the community of those involved in the local production of food (page 3-59).

R-622 The county should develop incentives that support local food production and processing to reduce energy use, increase food security and provide a healthy local food supply.

3. Agriculture and the Food System

King County has a year-round growing season, a strong farming tradition and local farming expertise, and proximity to major markets for local foods and food products. Many of the policies in the previous section are aimed at helping to overcome obstacles to successful farming in King County. With that direction and a focus on production of food, farmlands in King County could be even more instrumental in strengthening the food system for the benefit of all King County residents. Agricultural lands, farming practices and activities, and farmers are part of the local and regional food system. In addition to the growing of food, the food system includes processing, distribution, food availability, and disposal. As more people move to this region, King County recognizes the importance of planning for our regional food system to further a number of county initiatives and goals (page 3-61):

- Expand opportunities for local farms and enhance the rural economy;
- Promote healthy eating to improve public health;
- Improve access to healthy, safe, and affordable food, to all county residents; especially those with low incomes;
- Reduce energy use and greenhouse gas emissions; and
- Divert food waste from landfills.

With increased global trade, food is traveling more miles from farm to table. Reducing food miles—buying food grown closer to home—is one way to help improve the environment. There is increasing attention on how our current system of transporting food over thousands of miles is detrimental to the environment and may be a significant factor in global warming. University of Washington researchers have shown that a Skagit Valley apple requires about two-thirds less energy to be grown and shipped to local retailers than an apple from New Zealand. Studies have shown that 35% of garbage is food. Efforts to recycle food waste and divert edible food to hunger programs could reduce what goes to the landfill, reduce methane generated by landfills, provide food for hungry people and provide soil amendments. Food and nutrition are major factors in public health. The USDA's *2005 Dietary Guidelines for Americans* calls for significant increases in daily consumption of fruit, vegetables, milk products and whole grains. Efforts to increase the availability of these foods to King County residents should include encouraging an increase in food production on King County farms. Although it is not realistic for King County farms and farmers to provide the full complement of recommended foods in public health guidelines, there is the potential to increase food production for local and regional consumption, particularly in the first three categories (page 3-62).

R-671 King County should work with farmers and ranchers to better understand the constraints to increased food production in the county and develop programs that reduce barriers and create incentives to growing food crops and raising food producing livestock.

R-672 King County should prioritize its programs to help build and support a sustainable, reliable, equitable, and resilient local food system.

R-673 King County should consider adopting procurement policies that would encourage purchases of locally grown fresh foods.

R-674 King County should promote local food production and processing to reduce the distance that food must travel from farm to table.

Government funded food programs are increasingly relying on electronic cards for clients to purchase food. For example, food stamps have been replaced with electronic benefits transfer cards. Grocery stores can easily adopt new electronic technology to accept such cards. It is more challenging for farmers markets to do so as the majority of them are open-air events in parking lots without access to electricity or telephone connections. To improve accessibility of farmers markets for low income shoppers, a concerted effort needs to be made to develop the ability to easily accept electronic payment. This will help make fresh food more available to low-income shoppers as well as increase the customer base for farmers (page 3-63).

R-675 King County should collaborate with other organizations to further the development of programs that increase the ability of shoppers to use electronic forms of payment at farmers markets and farm stands.

Chapter 4. Environment

All parts of the county—from densely developed urban areas, to farm and forest land, to the Rural Area—have a role to play and a common interest in environmental protection. Responsibility for environmental protection cannot fall on one geographic area or category of citizens alone. **Tools for environmental protection**, for all residents whether in the Urban or Rural Area, **include buying locally grown produce at a farmers market**, taking care to avoid polluted

discharges to storm drains, riding the bus, investing in natural resource programs like those offered by the King Conservation District, complying with stormwater standards, controlling invasive plants, and protecting forest cover. For urban residents, environmental protection occurs through different means, including investing in wastewater treatment and stormwater improvements, protecting greenbelts and other remnants of native habitats, and living in densely developed areas. For rural residents, it means protecting aquifers used for drinking water, using development practices that slowly infiltrate stormwater, and using best management practices to protect water quality. On farm lands, forest lands, and lands in the Rural Area, stewardship plans provide a flexible tool for supporting long-term resource use while protecting the environment (page 4-1, emphasis added).