



King County

Shannon Braddock

King County Executive

401 Fifth Avenue, Suite 800
Seattle, WA 98104

206-296-9600 Fax 206-296-0194

TTY Relay: 711

www.kingcounty.gov

September 30, 2025

The Honorable Girmay Zahilay
Chair, King County Council
Room 1200
C O U R T H O U S E

Dear Councilmember Zahilay:

This letter transmits a proposed Ordinance that, if enacted, would amend the King County Code (KCC) building and fire regulations for development in unincorporated King County. Approval of this proposed Ordinance will align the County's building and fire Code regulations with current editions of the building and fire Code adopted by Washington State (Chapter 19.27 Revised Code of Washington (RCW)) that went into effect in March 2024. The proposed Ordinance will also remove outdated sections of KCC and adopt amendments to the Washington State Energy Code (Chapter 19.27A RCW) to implement the 2020 adopted and 2025 proposed King County Strategic Climate Action Plan (SCAP) priority actions, reducing greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions in unincorporated King County.

In 2021, the Department of Local Services (DLS) hired both a new Building Official and Fire Marshal. With these key positions filled, DLS used this KCC update cycle as an opportunity to comprehensively recommend changes to KCC Titles 16 and 17 for the first time in decades.

Key amendments in the proposed Ordinance include:

- Adoption of the 2021 editions of the state building codes.
- Housekeeping revisions to align with updated state legislation, remove outdated code provisions, and improve readability.
- Modifications to permit expiration dates and allowable extensions, including revising standalone mechanical permits validity to six months and adding a one-time 60-day extension option for building permits where only a final inspection remains.
- Adoption of new appendices on construction and demolition material management and building deconstruction to reduce construction waste.
- Minor clarifications to work exempt from requiring a building permit.

- Updated regulations for parking garage and elevator hoistway drainage systems, domestic water piping, and deference to the Energy Code for minimum pipe insulation.
- Expanded criteria for plumbing permit applications, including comprehensive guidance regarding information required, plumbing permit issuance, and reinspection fee assessments.
- Clarifications for determining when a fire special event permit is required.
- Refinement of fire department access requirements.

The proposed Ordinance also includes amendments to the Washington State Energy Code for commercial buildings and multifamily buildings four stories and taller to facilitate the design and construction of buildings with consideration for the use and conservation of energy over the life of each building.

To accomplish this, the proposed Ordinance would, if enacted:

- Increase efficiency requirements for building materials including windows.
- Increase HVAC and water heating efficiency requirements.
- Reduce the allowed maximum lighting power density in most building space types.
- Modify the energy efficiency package credit section to reflect amendments to base code.
- Reduce the threshold to provide energy metering and energy consumption management.
- Reduce the threshold for providing a renewable energy generation system.

In developing the proposed Ordinance, the Permitting Division of the Department of Local Services sought input from the public and multiple stakeholders, including: the Regional Code Collaboration, the Master Builders Association of King and Snohomish Counties, Seattle King County Realtors, Seattle Building Trades, Puget Sound Energy, and the Housing Development Consortium of Seattle-King County.

Thank you for your consideration of this proposed Ordinance. This legislation advances the County's goals to reduce sources of GHG emissions in our built environment and will help to build a more resilient and sustainable King County.

If your staff have any questions, please contact Leon Richardson, Director, Department of Local Services, at 206-263-3332.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Shannon Braddock", written over a horizontal line.

for

Shannon Braddock
King County Executive

The Honorable Girmay Zahilay

September 30, 2025

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Enclosure

cc: King County Councilmembers

ATTN: Stephanie Cirkovich, Chief of Staff, King County Council

Melani Hay, Clerk of the Council

Karan Gill, Deputy Executive, Chief of Staff, Office of the Executive

Stephanie Pure, Council Relations Director, Office of the Executive

Leon Richardson, Director, Department of Local Services

Jim Chan, Permitting Division Director, Department of Local Services