



King County

Dow Constantine

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August 19, 2021

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

Dear Councilmember Balducci:

This letter transmits a proposed Ordinance that would, if enacted, amend King County Code 18.17.020 to update green building and sustainable development practices for King County operations and countywide efforts. Enacting this proposed legislation would support the Strategic Climate Action Plan (SCAP) to reduce greenhouse gas emissions while integrating equity and social justice in county-owned capital projects.

King County's green building and sustainable development policy, prioritizing Leadership in Energy and Environmental Development (LEED) for County-owned facilities, was established in 2001. Since then, King County has taken a holistic approach to managing its capital portfolio to minimize the environmental footprint of County projects, add community benefits, and exercise fiscal stewardship. The proposed legislation would continue that approach and advance the goals of the SCAP by reducing greenhouse gas emissions, reducing water use, and advancing an equitable climate future by investing in climate solutions for frontline communities.

King County capital projects have achieved significant progress in implementing green building practices. From 2017 to 2020, capital projects on average diverted 81 percent of construction and demolition material from landfills. In 2020 alone, 50,000 tons of recyclable and onsite materials, such as metals, concrete, asphalt, clean wood, rock, soil, and vegetation, were diverted from landfills. This contribution to greenhouse gas savings is equivalent to emissions from an average passenger vehicle driven 18 million miles or the carbon sequestered by 8,700 acres of forest in one year. The County's capital projects yielded high performance levels in 2020, with 88 percent achieving the Platinum certification level, the highest, using the Sustainable Infrastructure Scorecard.

The proposed legislation supports implementation of the green building focus area of the SCAP, as well as the Building and Facility Energy Use, Consumption and Materials, and Preparedness focus areas. It seeks to educate King County staff and the public around green building practices and will promote and encourage green building community-wide through regional partnerships and code development efforts that support sustainable development.

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Updating the green building policy would standardize the County's capital project management and green building practices across King County divisions. The updated policy will enable stronger oversight and greater accountability through clear approval processes, which include regular reporting to Council. Consistent with the King County Strategic Plan guiding principle of financial sustainability, projects must include an analysis of the costs and benefits of full compliance over the life of the project, including environmental and equity benefits.

The proposed legislation is consistent with the King County Strategic Plan guiding principle of "equitable and fair," by integrating equity and social justice into capital projects. The proposed legislation also supports the King County Strategic Plan goal of a healthy environment by reducing countywide greenhouse gas emissions by 50 percent by 2030. This goal can be met by requiring capital projects be designed using green building rating systems that reduce use of energy, water, material, and other resources. This in turn reduces operational and embodied greenhouse gas emissions. In addition, it advances the Equity and Social Justice (ESJ) Strategic Plan by requiring that projects demonstrate compliance through tracking and reporting implementation of ESJ credits, such as having an ESJ plan, designing to counter known disparities, and advancing economic justice.

Thank you for your consideration of this proposed Ordinance. This important legislation will help King County operations increase climate and equity priorities through sound investments in green building and sustainable development practices.

If your staff have any questions, please contact Nori Catabay, Green Building Team Program Manager in the Solid Waste Division of the Department of Natural Resources and Parks, at 206-477-5269.

Sincerely,



Dow Constantine
King County Executive

for

Enclosure

cc: King County Councilmembers

ATTN: Janine Weihe, Interim Chief of Staff

Melani Pedroza, Clerk of the Council

Shannon Braddock, Deputy Chief of Staff, Office of the Executive

Karan Gill, Director, Council Relations, Office of the Executive

Dwight Dively, Director, Office of Performance, Strategy and Budget

Christie True, Director, Department of Natural Resources and Parks (DNR)

Pat D. McLaughlin, Division Director, Solid Waste Division (SWD), DNR

Nori Catabay, Green Building Team Program Manager, SWD, DNR