



King County Councilmember

Bob Ferguson

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2008 BUDGET UPDATE

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King County

Dear Neighbors:

It is an honor to represent you on the King County Council. This year, as Chair of the Annual Budget Committee, I led the Council in a new public outreach effort to hear your budget priorities and draft a budget that responds directly to what we heard. We implemented a mission statement for Council deliberations called Priorities for People, and created a fiscally responsible budget that meets those priorities.

The priorities expressed by the public were clear:

- Citizens ranked "Law, Safety and Justice" as the fundamental budget responsibility of King County government.
- Citizens expressed a strong preference for preventive budgeting. Public Health Clinics and drug diversion and mental health courts ranked highest among individual programs.
- Transit riders and non-riders alike ranked "greater frequency" as the number one way to make riding the bus a more viable option.

The Council unanimously adopted a \$4.9 billion budget which meets these priorities while maintaining strict budget discipline. I worked to ensure that:

- The budget stayed within the property tax limits of Initiative 747, even though that initiative was recently declared unconstitutional by the State Supreme Court.
- We reduced the budget the County Executive had proposed by \$40 million.
- We carved out a rainy day reserve fund that can only be accessed in an emergency like a natural disaster.

This newsletter provides you with a few key aspects of the King County budget for 2008 and how it responds directly to the priorities expressed by the public throughout the year. If you have specific questions about the budget, or any other issue, please contact me at any time.

I appreciate your feedback and look forward to working together in the coming year.

Sincerely,


Bob Ferguson

Highlights of the King County Budget for 2008

Priorities for People, the results of a rigorous citizen engagement process, shaped every aspect of the budget.

Citizens ranked **Law, Safety and Justice** as the fundamental budget responsibility of King County government.

- The courts were North King County residents' top priority. We added \$228,000 and 4 staff to address rising caseloads in King County District Court and to improve customer service in the people's court. Our budget also reserves a total of \$358,000 for District Court and Superior Court to implement a new court records management system that improves citizen use of the courts and overall system efficiency.
- We took action to protect public safety and to improve our system of justice by (1) re-establishing a gang suppression unit in the Sheriff's Office, (2) funding 32 new corrections officers, and (3) adding 19 new transit police officers to address the rise in assaults on Metro buses.
- We funded continued implementation of the Sheriff's Office civilian oversight proposal I helped develop last year.

Citizens expressed a strong preference for preventive budgeting. **Public Health Clinics** and **drug diversion** and **mental health courts** ranked highest among individual programs.

- The 2008 budget establishes \$54 million in additional revenue to expand treatment for citizens with mental illness and substance abuse, including programs like drug diversion and mental health courts. The programs and services will be developed to work together to keep the mentally ill and chemically dependent out of costly jail and emergency room visits. The Council is requiring a three-phase oversight, implementation and evaluation plan for the programs supported with the new revenue to ensure that they directly benefit the citizens who need treatment while protecting public safety by reducing recidivism.

- Nearly 200,000 county residents lack health insurance and many depend on the county's public health clinics. A year ago, two clinics in our district (North Seattle and Bothell) were slated for closure. I worked with Executive Sims to maintain funding for these clinics in 2007, and the 2008 budget also keeps these clinic doors open.

Transit riders and non-riders alike ranked "greater frequency" as the number one way to make riding the bus a viable option.

- As a daily commuter on the #41 between Northgate and downtown Seattle, I am mindful of ways to improve Metro service and the security and comfort of Metro riders. The 2008 budget includes funding for more than 160,000 new Metro bus service hours, eliminates advertising wraps over bus windows, adds transit police officers to address security issues, and increases the rate that new bus shelters will be installed throughout the county.

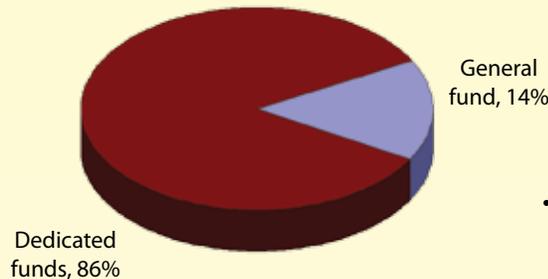
The budget also funded two important priorities citizens expressed throughout the year:

- **Open Space and Regional Trails:** The budget implements the voter-approved parks expansion levy to provide funding to acquire land and develop missing links to regional trails, as well as for cities to expand their trails and open space.

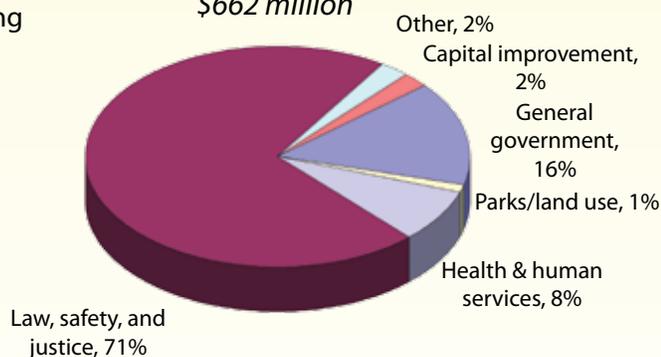
- **Elections Operations:** The Council divided the Records, Elections and Licensing Services Division into two divisions. One division will exclusively manage elections services. The other will manage animal care and control, vehicle licensing and records functions. This good government reform will allow the Elections Director to focus

solely on management of important elections systems. The measure was recommended by an independent audit of King County Elections I sponsored.

2008 Adopted King County Budget
\$4.9 billion



2008 Adopted General Fund Expenditures
\$662 million



2008 Budget shaped by Priorities for People

Our Priorities for People outreach effort to learn your priorities broke new ground. Here's how we did it:

- Over two months, 232 county residents were randomly selected from a cross-section of geography, income, age, and ethnicity to ensure statistical validity.
- Participants were paid a modest sum to participate in five workshops across the county and "voted" for their budget priorities. These workshops were led by a team from Elway research with extensive experience polling and guiding these discussions.
- Stuart Elway led two additional public forums in North and South King County open to everyone. We summarized the results from the workshops and received more input.
- Hundreds of County residents offered their budget priorities on the County website by completing an online survey.



- Our consultant compiled a detailed report on citizen priorities which the Council adopted into the Priorities for People framework that guided our budget deliberations.

The Council adopted a mission statement, Priorities for People, that included three priorities to guide the budget.

- Earning Public Trust
- Enhancing Quality of Life
- Protecting Public Health and Safety

The Council established specific guidelines under these categories after citizens provided us with their top budget priorities. This resulted in a solid framework for the 2008 budget.

Read more about the **Priorities for People Citizen Engagement Initiative** by visiting www.kingcounty.gov/council/budget

Bob chaired the 2008 budget process.

2008 King County Budget by the numbers

The \$4.9 billion budget is \$40 million less than originally proposed by the Executive.

The general fund budget totals \$662 million. The Council budget reduced proposed general fund spending by \$1.8 million and increased general fund reserves by \$15.7 million.

This is the fifth consecutive year in which the County Council unanimously adopted the annual County Budget.

Over the course of five weeks of review and deliberation more than 800 people offered testimony, by speaking at public hearings or submitting comments by letter or email.

Read the full 2008 King County budget at www.kingcounty.gov/council/budget.



Bob chats with constituent Sylvia Haven at the budget outreach forum at Olympic View Elementary in North Seattle.



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2008 KING COUNTY BUDGET UPDATE

Save the Dates for Town Hall Meetings

I schedule town hall meetings each year throughout the District so I have the opportunity to hear directly from you regarding local and county issues. We have already scheduled two town hall meetings in 2008:

- Town Hall Meeting with newly elected Seattle City Councilmember Tim Burgess, **Wednesday, March 5, at 7pm at Olympic View Elementary School**, 504 Northeast 95th Street in the Maple Leaf neighborhood of North Seattle.
- Town Hall Meeting with Lake Forest Park Mayor Dave Hutchinson, **Wednesday, April 2, at 7pm at the Third Place Commons**, 17171 Bothell Way Northeast in Lake Forest Park.

I will be scheduling other town hall meetings as well, so stay posted. Also, if you would like to receive my monthly e-news which contains information about County issues and upcoming town meetings, please visit my website at www.kingcounty.gov/ferguson.



Bob speaks with citizens who attended a Town Hall Meeting held in Kenmore.