

# Background Information for the 2022 Kingston Community Conversation

*Created collaboratively between Kitsap County and the Kingston community, updated March 28, 2022*

## **1. What is the vision for greater downtown Kingston?**

There are several documents that lay out a vision for downtown Kingston:

[Kingston Subarea Plan](#)

[Kingston Design Standards](#)

[Kingston Complete Streets](#)

Also, an update of the [Kitsap County Comprehensive Plan](#) is due in 2024. The process will be kicking off soon, which will involve a subarea plan to be developed with help from Kingston residents. An update will be provided at the May 11 Kingston Community Advisory Council meeting.

## **2. What can be done about the ferry traffic?**

Kitsap County, the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT), Washington State Ferries (WSF), and other partners have been working on this issue for many years. Commissioner Gelder convened a Highway 104 Working Group which made recommendations and advocated for funding for improvements.

Just recently, the **Move Ahead Washington** transportation package identified \$18.5 million of funding for the realignment of Highway 104. Representative Simmons and Senator Rolfe were key to the inclusion of the project in the package. The project will move the ferry access from Main Street in downtown Kingston over to NE 1<sup>st</sup> Street.

We also recently found out that a project to construct holding lanes at Lindvog Road and an automated traffic management system (ATMS) has been awarded money for 2023-2024. This project will hold traffic outside of the downtown area until there is space at the tollbooths for cars, without blocking business and road access downtown through the use of an automated traffic management system.

In the meantime, we have been advocating for WSF funding to pay for uniformed personnel to implement the tally system and direct traffic on busy weekends and holidays.

## **3. Is the Kingston infrastructure keeping up with the growth in our community?**

The short answer is yes. The sewer plant has plenty of capacity for new development. County roads do not experience significant capacity issues or traffic delays. The ferry traffic and state roads are another story but are not something the County has direct control over.

#### **4. Why don't we have sidewalks and consistent street configurations?**

The [Kingston Design Standards](#) help determine when sidewalks will be required. They were a product of the Kingston Community Design Study, conducted in 1993.

There are two kinds of developments relevant to the Kingston Urban Growth Area: platting and urban commercial.

For urban plats, it is clear frontage improvements are required. The interior of a plat also has frontage improvement requirements, though interior sidewalks are exempt for plats serving four or fewer lots.

The Kingston Design Standards apply to commercial development and on Page i, Paragraph 3 indicate that:

*Any existing structure or facility that does not conform to these standards is exempt from compliance unless the use or the structure is modified, upgraded, remodeled, or otherwise improved. All single-family residential structures are exempt from these design standards.*

One literal interpretation is that no commercial project is exempt from the design standards, except where a revised Certificate of Occupancy has no other permit associated with it (for example, no changes to the property except in business name only). However, there have been exemptions for permitted development in the past. Exemptions were given when it was not safe, nor feasible from an engineering standpoint, to construct sidewalks or other frontage improvements.

The Kitsap County Department of Community Development (DCD) takes its cue on these determinations from Public Works for County roads or the Washington State Department of Transportation for state highways. In the case of recent improvements to McDonalds, WSDOT did not want sidewalks encroaching into the ferry holding lane. DCD has not implemented a sidewalk requirement when the sidewalk would otherwise reduce a performance standard that is or was already required, typically related to landscaping or parking. For example, if a required parking area needed to be eliminated or reduced to make room for a sidewalk, DCD would not require the sidewalk.

#### **5. Why are there no trash bins in downtown Kingston?**

The history of the trash cans (or lack thereof) on Main Street along Highway 104 in downtown Kingston goes back more than a decade. Below is a timeline for a better understanding of previous efforts to provide this service.

##### **February 2009**

The Port of Kingston reported to the Commissioners' Office that trash cans in downtown Kingston along State Route 104 were overflowing. The Kingston Chamber's Revitalization Association had installed five trash cans years previously on state of Washington right-of-way.



Various agencies over the years picked up the trash including Waste Management and Kitsap County Parks staff. In Feb. 2009, parks staff stopped emptying trash cans due to severe staff reductions during the recession and because parks did not own the trash cans nor were the cans located on County property. Then Commissioner Steve Bauer encouraged downtown businesses to work together through the Chamber to maintain the trash cans. It was suggested that downtown businesses share the cost of a common dumpster for the trash, most of which was generated from their businesses. It was noted then that Kitsap County's Public Works Department Solid Waste Division does not empty public trash cans.

#### April 2009

The Port of Kingston worked with the Chamber to explore different options, including putting the trash in the port's dumpster. The port felt "business owners should take ownership of and pride in the space in front of their stores" and pledged to work closely with business owners on a solution.

Commissioner Bauer included a request for six Bigbelly solar compacting trashcans for downtown Kingston to replace the old ones, funded through President Obama's Department of Energy stimulus package. The County worked with the Chamber to determine the best locations for the receptacles. The hope was that the compacting feature would resolve some of the overflowing trash problem since much of the waste was Styrofoam food containers and coffee cups from nearby businesses.

There was unanimous support for the Bigbelly trash cans. Community members and the Chamber explored different options for trash collection. The most popular solution was to contract a local person or company to empty the trash cans. A memorandum of understanding was drawn up between the County and the Chamber, wherein the County retained ownership of the trash cans and the Chamber was responsible for maintenance (including vandalism), emptying them, discarding the waste, covering liability and training volunteers. The trash cans had optional ad panels the Chamber could install so they could sell ads if they wanted to create income to pay for the trash pickup service.

Meanwhile, prior to installation of Bigbelly receptacles, businesses were asked to empty the old trash cans in front of their businesses and drop bags in the port's dumpsters. Instead, several businesses unscrewed the cans from the sidewalk and took them away.

#### March 22, 2010

Memorandum of Agreement between the Chamber and County signed.

#### April 2010

Bigbelly compacting trash cans installed. A Chamber member agreed to set up and coordinate training and scheduling of volunteers with trash being dumped in the port's dumpsters.

#### August 2010

Local businesses began to complain trash cans were overflowing. The trash cans near the restaurants needed to be serviced a minimum of two to three times per week during the summer. Volunteers were having a hard time keeping up.

#### December 2010

Local food vendors were observed using the trash cans for disposal of their business garbage and sidewalk debris. The Chamber was encouraged to do door-to-door outreach to local businesses, explaining the trash cans are maintained by volunteers and a community effort and that they shouldn't be using them for their business waste.

#### February 2011

Chamber began exploring grants to fund a professional service to empty and maintain the Bigbelly trash cans but continued to either use port or local business dumpsters. The Chamber struggled to find enough volunteers to continue emptying the cans.

#### August 2014

The Chamber notified the County with 30 days' notice that they wished to withdraw from the agreement, as most of the business owners along the highway hadn't stepped up to assist. The County made plans to remove the Bigbelly receptacles and relocate them to park properties.

#### September 2014

Trash cans removed.

Kitsap County does not have the funds nor staffing to install new cans, or to pick up and dispose of garbage downtown. We do not have garbage cans anywhere else in the County outside of our parks or county-owned buildings. However, the County would support efforts of downtown businesses, community groups and volunteers to bring trash cans and service to downtown Kingston.

#### **6. Who is responsible for encouraging businesses to come to Kingston? Are there barriers preventing new businesses from coming to Kingston?**

Non-governmental agencies that encourage and support businesses are the [Greater Kingston Chamber of Commerce](#) and the [Kitsap Economic Development Alliance](#).

There are not any more barriers than any other local area. Possible perceived barriers could be zoning, permit requirements or rent prices.

#### **7. We pay our taxes to the County. How do we know that we are getting our fair share?**

Sales tax revenues are not possible to track by zip code. Kingston has received significant investments of public funds and will continue to. Upcoming improvements to Highway 104, including a holding area, automated traffic management system and realignment of the Highway.

There have also been significant investments in Kingston over the years: Washington Boulevard – both the downtown portion and the part hit by landslides, West Kingston and Lindvog Road improvements, Carpenter Creek Bridge and West Kingston Bridge, and approximately \$6 million in direct and indirect support of the Kingston Village Green project. As well, the Sound to Olympics Trail is moving closer to completion, and park acreage in the Kingston/North Kitsap area has increased by hundreds of acres in recent years. A regional stormwater system is being planned for Kingston as well.

**8. *Since we don't have a mayor or council, who is responsible for making decisions for Kingston?***

The Kitsap Board of County Commissioners. Kingston is represented by District 1 Commissioner, Rob Gelder at [rgelder@co.kitsap.wa.us](mailto:rgelder@co.kitsap.wa.us) or 360.337.7080. Major policy initiatives are usually presented at the [Kingston Community Advisory Council](#). The KCAC will be reviewing and making recommendations for the 2024 Comprehensive Plan, which will set the goals and policies for Kingston's future.

**9. *Why does Kingston need to continue to grow?***

The Growth Management Act of 1990 (GMA) required cities and counties in fast-growing areas to plan for growth. Kingston was designated as an Urban Growth Area – one of only two in North Kitsap (the other one is outside of Poulsbo city limits). As a ferry community, Kingston is designated as a high capacity transit community in the Puget Sound Regional Council's (PSRC) [Vision 2050](#). One of the main tenants of the GMA is to focus growth in UGAs and cities in a concentrated manner to avoid rural sprawl.

In the Comprehensive Planning process that is outlined in the Growth Management Act, each county is assigned a number of new residents that it must plan to accommodate. Representatives from each jurisdiction in each county must agree on how to divide up the new growth between cities and urban growth areas.

**10. *Does Kingston have a parking problem? Where can I park in Kingston?***

A lack of parking in Kingston is mostly a perception. During the Kingston Complete Streets study a parking inventory was taken that showed the number of spaces and their utilization, demonstrating adequate parking at that time.

Most of downtown Kingston has two-hour parking. Some residents and business owners complained about the lack of enforcement on the parking, so the Citizens On Patrol (COPs) volunteers of the Kitsap County Sheriff's Office increased their patrols and enforcement of the two-hour parking requirement through much of downtown Kingston. Covid has affected the volunteers and frequency of patrols, but they are still being done.

The enforcement helps prevent commuters from parking on the streets, but we have also received complaints from downtown business owners and employees about being ticketed for parking near their businesses or jobs.

Those who walk on the Washington State Ferries or ride the fast ferry are encouraged to use Kitsap Transit bus service to get to the ferry terminal. Their schedules during commute hours match up well with both ferry services. Other options include a park-&-ride lot within walking distance at nearby Bayside Community Church on West Kingston Road, and direct bus service from both the George's Corner Park & Ride and the North Viking Transit Center in Poulsbo. A bonus: the Kitsap Transit boats will wait for buses if they are running late.

For more information on park & rides, bus routes, or fast-ferry service, visit [www.kitsaptransit.com](http://www.kitsaptransit.com).

***11. Incorporation – why or why not? Should we be headed in the direction?***

That would be up to the community, based upon who they want to have their services provided by. Operating the infrastructure of a city is expensive from an operations and capital improvement aspect, with all expenses needing to be covered by tax revenues from the city only. It's not a matter of if, but when. The future city would need to make sure there are adequate revenues to cover the services required.

The Municipal Research & Services Center has comprehensive information about incorporation, including a Municipal Incorporation Guide at <https://mrsc.org/Home/Explore-Topics/Legal/General-Government/Municipal-Incorporation.aspx>.

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