

## KENT CITY COUNCIL 2019 ANNUAL STRATEGIC PLANNING MEETING

Friday, 1 February, Noon – 4:45 p.m. / Saturday, 2 February, 8 a.m. - 4 p.m.  
Lake Wilderness Lodge / 22500 SE 248<sup>th</sup> Street, Maple Valley

# FINAL SUMMARY

## OF THE MEETING'S KEY DISCUSSIONS AND AGREEMENTS

**Friday's Attendees:** Mayor Dana Ralph; Council President Bill Boyce; Councilmembers Marli Larimer, Brenda Fincher, Dennis Higgins, Satwinder Kaur, Les Thomas, and Toni Troutner; Chief Administrative Officer Derek Matheson; Executive Leadership Team (ELT) members Mike Carrington, Marty Fisher, Pat Fitzpatrick, Kurt Hanson, Kim Komoto, Tim LaPorte, Dana Neuts, Julie Parascondola, Raf Padilla, and Margaret Yetter; Council Administrative Assistant Cathie Everett, and facilitator Jim Reid and note taker Jake Delbridge; Kent residents Bruce and Erica Anderson, TJ Peterson, and Awale Farah

**Saturday's Attendees:** All of the attendees from Friday plus Finance Director Aaron BeMiller; Police Commander Mike O'Reilly; Human Services Manager Merina Hanson; Parks Superintendent Garin Lee; Human Services Staff Member Christine Cain; and Kent residents Tim Clark, and Bailey Stober

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The primary goal of this year's City Council strategic planning meeting was to discuss the issues of greatest interest and importance to the Council and Mayor and what needs to be done to advance the City's vision for the community's long-term future.

### *Friday Afternoon Sessions:*

## COUNCIL AND MAYOR IDENTIFY MAJOR ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF 2018

To lay the foundation for the discussions about the present and future, Councilmembers and Mayor Ralph began the retreat by reviewing 2018 to identify the accomplishments of last year of which they are proudest.

1. *Solving the fiscal cliff:* The Administration and Council worked collaboratively and diligently to achieve a fiscally sound budget, which paved the way to address other important issues. In addressing the fiscal cliff, both the Council and Mayor demonstrated nimble leadership and fast-acting decision-making to address and solve an issue of mounting importance and urgency.
2. *Communications:* The City improved communications and its social media presence. As a result, Kent is more effectively informing its residents about upcoming events to expand participation in

them, increasing the ability to “tell our own story,” and improving the public’s understanding of our vision and “brand.”

3. *Updated the Council vision and goals.*
4. *Departmental creativity and innovations:* These examples were cited:
  - The Parks Department’s development of a recreation strategic plan, deployment of staff, and changes in the management of the golf course.
  - The Public Works Department’s Transportation Master Plan, projects to improve traffic flow, such as the 228<sup>th</sup> Corridor Project, and its proactive and successful pursuit of grants funding.
  - The Police Department’s investments in staffing and operational improvements.
  - The Economic and Community Development Department’s innovations in economic development, including “Meet Me on Meeker,” implementation of Zoning Code reforms to liven up downtown, and efforts to build support for the vision to strengthen Kent’s economy (and the City’s budget) by attracting more manufacturing jobs (“Rally the Valley”).
  - Improvements in engaging neighborhoods.
5. *Taking advantage of everyone’s ability to contribute:* The unique perspectives of the elected officials combined with the talents and dedication of staff and the cohesive decision-making of the Council and Administration helped the City address key issues and resolve difficult challenges. Important elements in our success were Council President Boyce’s leadership, Mayor Ralph’s collaborative style, the leadership of Derek Matheson, and the support Council received from Cathie Everett.
6. *Kent’s stronger presence at regional forums:* The City’s expanded presence at South King County and countywide forums, and its coordination with both the state and King County improved the City’s ability to advance its vision and interests.
7. *Legislative accomplishments and launching key programs:* Examples cited were: a) the passage of the Rental Housing Inspection Program; b) implementation of the body camera program; and the expanded use of school zone safety cameras.

## ELT MEMBERS IDENTIFY ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF 2018 AND CHALLENGES FOR 2019

The next discussion on Friday afternoon was the presentation of each department’s major accomplishments of 2018 and the ELT members’ insights into their departments’ likely challenges in 2019. The accomplishments and challenges are presented here in the order in which the ELT members spoke.

### **Margaret Yetter, Court**

- Accomplishments:
  1. Transitioning of the new judge.
  2. OCourt management system: The department is successfully going paperless; and an online scheduling system that coordinates with Laserfiche is coming soon.
- Challenges:
  1. Continued funding for DUI court: sustaining the program when grant funding is exhausted; the addition of red light cameras may create challenges and increase workload.
  2. Departure of Judge Phillips in late November 2019 due to retirement.

## **Pat Fitzpatrick, Law**

- Accomplishments:
  1. YMCA project: success attributable to great legal team efforts, extreme attention to detail, and collaboration between the City Attorney's Office and the Parks and Recreation Department.
  2. Transition in the filing cases in the Prosecuting Attorney's Office:
    - Criminal Division: Shifted attention away from probable cause method of case filings, resulting in many fewer officers and civilians being subpoenaed to Court. Currently applying the new system to older cases.
  3. Civil Division: efforts on the 228<sup>th</sup> corridor work; review of the IT contracts; and review of Sound Transit contracts.
- Challenges:
  1. Every prosecutor has been with office 10 years or more, making process change difficult.
  2. Increase in case filings, but it is manageable.
  3. Body cameras are coming online, which makes cases stronger but increases workload.

## **Kurt Hanson, Economic and Community Development (ECD)**

- Accomplishments:
  1. The new permit process system has dropped wait times by 60%, which is even more impressive given that 2018 was the second highest year for permitting year in both valuation and numbers.
  2. Restructured entire department and six of seven leadership team members are new leaders.
  3. Sound Transit developments.
  4. Rental housing inspection program.
  5. Lodging Tax: now greater flexibility in use of funds to permit marketing and promotion of Kent for advanced manufacturing, engineering, aerospace developments, conferences and symposiums.
- Challenges:
  1. Technology is both a challenge and a motivation that will push us further along.
  2. Implementing the permit tracking system highlighted the challenges we still face.
  3. The restructuring of the department will create some organizational development challenges.

## **Dana Neuts, Communications**

- Accomplishments:
  1. Increasing and improving City-resident engagement, including: Coffee and Conversation with the Mayor; "Ask me Anything," a new Facebook forum held every other month to answer residents' questions; and "Kent Now" videos, such as the one on the property and sales taxes, which were huge hits with lots of viewership. – huge hit, lots of views
  2. Mayor Ralph's budget roadshow
  3. EConnect
  4. Started a blog and Instagram; grew Facebook audience by 44%, all through organic growth.
  5. Adding 8 new neighborhood councils.

- Challenges:
  1. Streamlined Sales Tax: The loss of revenue has been damaging to the City and in the department's case.
  2. Working to maintain the new tools that have been created and enacted.

**Kim Komoto, City Clerk**

- Accomplishments:
  1. Deployed electronic agenda management system for City Council committees; now using the system more effectively.
  2. Deployed the same system for City Council already in 2019.
  3. Working with IT on Laserfiche.
- Challenges:
  1. High volume of public records requests creates workload challenges.
  2. The growth in the use of body cameras will also increase the workload.
  3. Budget constraints.

**Marty Fisher, Human Resources**

- Accomplishments:
  1. Employee labor relations: successful negotiations with Kent Police Officer's Association (KPOA) resulting in a new three-year contract; preparation for collective bargaining sessions with AFSCME and the Teamsters.
  2. Ongoing labor-management meetings: discussing issues proactively to prevent crisis management or damage control.
  3. Filled 110 requests for employees this year, many of which were for internal promotions.
  4. Developed more comprehensive new employee orientation program.
  5. For non-represented employees, working hard to make sure pay is competitive and job descriptions updated
  6. Risk management team has been doing great job defending the City against two major lawsuits.
  7. Training: held effective supervisory training to strengthen skills of supervisors; advanced online training with new learning management system; developed and led new citywide anti-harassment training, which will be repeated in the first quarter of 2019 (every employee is required to complete it); hosted and will host a multi-cultural training program for all employees to learn more about culture, customs, and needs of diverse communities; and designed and implemented the LEAN innovation and improvement program.
  8. Wellness and Benefits: brought on Alliant (Employee Benefits) to provide employee benefits and wellness programs with a strong emphasis on promoting and maintaining wellness.
- Challenges:
  1. Upcoming collective bargaining negotiations
  2. Working with IT to improve management systems

## Mike Carrington, Information Technology

- Accomplishments:
  1. More than 8100 service tickets were closed.
  2. More than 3400 multimedia requests were fulfilled.
  3. Completed nearly thirty major IT projects.
  4. Mug shot Booking program (Enrollment in RBPC/Regional Booking Photo Comparison)
  5. ShoWare Center's point of sales system replaced
  6. Evidence Capture to Mobile (VeriPic)
  7. B&O Solutions Releases
  8. Jail Control System Upgrade
  9. Information Security Program improvements and training
  10. Data Center Hyper-Converged Infrastructure Upgrade
  11. Network optimization
  12. Golf System replacement
  
- Challenges:
  1. Trying to stay ahead of cyber security threats that seem to grow exponentially.
  2. Managing a complex "hybrid" (servers vs. Cloud) environment while migrating systems and data to the Cloud.
  3. Respecting department service calendars while still "forging ahead."
  4. Enterprise Considerations for New GIS Centric Systems: important to utilize GIS as a core element of doing business in the future; regulatory compliance requires us to support things like end of year, beginning of year and payroll processing
  5. Staffing: gratitude to Council and Mayor for supporting staffing of IT department. For example, because of support IT office is now able to have new technological deployments and have proactive and advanced tech efforts.
  
- An Accomplishment and Challenge:
  1. Trojan Virus (TrickBot) acts as a data thief and is now the top ranked threat to businesses. We found it in our system, causing staff to remediate every single computer infected by the virus, which is costly in terms of time and resources. Staff was instrumental in avoiding multi-day or multi-week outage. Kent has been successful in preventing mass outages through proactive, strong measures and immediate remediation when virus detected

## Tim LaPorte, Public Works

- Accomplishments:
  1. Increased staff training and development has improved the department's outcomes.
  
- Challenges:
  1. Transportation: Sound Transit's new stations and new garage present an incredible opportunity on the West Hill; the City needs to consider the infrastructure that will be needed around them.
  2. Staff development and training: it is difficulty to offer competitive salaries for top engineer positions; thus, key vacancies remain. We should be developing staff and promoting from within to balance external recruitments.

## **Julie Parascondola, Parks and Recreation**

- Accomplishments:
  1. Provided services to millions of people all while facing a \$1.1 million budget cut. We worked to minimize the impacts on residents and staff.
  2. Success of YMCA/Morrill Meadows Development projects : team effort with ECD, the City Attorney's Office, and Public Works.
  3. Reorganized Parks Operations Division and improved data tracking to ensure equitable maintenance and support across the City's parks.
  4. Kent's "Call to Action:" prevention program that provides positive and healthy activities for youth, including homework help and job offerings.
  5. Broad, comprehensive constituent engagement with three formal and five informal commissions, demonstrating the department's commitment to making decisions with substantive community input.
  6. 100% in compliance with having full performance evaluations.
- Challenges:
  1. Managing the \$1.1 million budget reduction while minimizing impacts on residents and staff was extraordinarily difficult, but we continue to meet the challenge.
  2. 2019-'20: Focus on community marketing and low-barrier recreation programming to better engage and support communities of color and vulnerable populations across the community.
  3. Working with natural resources in Green Kent.
  4. Working to maintain staff morale in light of budget cuts.
  5. Need to conduct extensive planning and evaluation in the future to proactively address expected changes in the workforce that will partially caused by upcoming retirements.

## **Raf Padilla, Police**

- Accomplishments:
  1. Body Camera pilot project is underway. Twelve cameras going full-time; they are ahead of schedule on knowledge, impacts report, and disclosure. Great leadership and cooperation made it happen.
  2. Funds savings: Purchased needed cars a year ahead at lower, older-model price.
  3. Implementation of car per officer program: fully trained and capable officers are now able to respond to incidents directly from their homes.
  4. Hiring and employee retention: twenty-eight officers were hired; Internal civil service rule reforms allowed us to get to top applicants faster; employee attrition rate dropped by double digits.
  5. Great improvements in outreach to homeless people.
- Challenges:
  1. Addressing the rise in homelessness.
  2. Regional growth is increasing demand for service.
  3. Demand for space runs up against office and storage space limitations.
  4. Managing the impacts of reforms in the King County Regional Justice System. For example, there is a lack of support for the County's decriminalization/"zero youth incarcerations" program. This complicates Kent's efforts to manage and reduce crime, even with effective enforcement practices.

5. Auto theft rate is one of the highest in the state; a lot of it is motivated by the opioid epidemic and consequences of drug addition.

### **Derek Matheson, Mayor's Office**

- Accomplishments:
  1. New municipal court judges and new elected officials.
  2. New leaders among City Staff; including: City Attorney Pat Fitzpatrick, Economic and Community Development Director Kurt Hanson, Police Chief Raf Padilla, the City's new lobbyist and its new liaison to Sound Transit.
  3. Negotiated key agreements with other local governments: the new agreement with the Regional Fire Authority (RFA), which helped the RFA establish its goal of network independence; and new franchise agreements with the water and sewer districts serving Kent, which resulted in greater equity in taxes and fee levels paid by people served by City utilities and those served by the Water and Sewer Districts.
- Challenges:
  1. Management of Kent Sound Transit stations and garage.
  2. Employee workload – avoiding burnout.
  3. Upcoming fiscal concerns: fiscal cliff resolution only pushed the structural imbalance out into the future; costs of doing business growing faster than the growth of revenues; the economic forecast is different than past budgets; and state laws create difficulties for cities to raise enough revenues to maintain proper fiscal soundness.

When the discussion of accomplishments and challenges was coming to an end, everyone acknowledged that the continuing and emerging challenges of the future will require partnerships and collaboration among the departments and the open dialogue and collaboration between the Council and Administration.

### **MAYOR RALPH REFLECTS ON HER FIRST YEAR IN OFFICE**

Having recently completed her first year as Mayor, Mayor Dana Ralph offered reflections about City government, the community, and her experiences in 2018. She cited these achievements:

1. Green Power passed through the Council.
2. Blue Origin is bringing good jobs with its new space.
3. Marquee on Meeker will be an amazing project and provide a perspective about what "Meet Me on Meeker" will look like as it is implemented.
4. Highway project to connect 509 to I-5
5. Apprenticeship Ordinance coming before Public Works next week; it exemplifies how we are supporting resident apprenticeships.
6. Sound Transit/Light Rail has been inspiring. Other cities are asking how we achieved the development agreement with Sound Transit.

The Mayor also cited a few of the important things the City needs to work on this year and into the future.

1. Community outreach: We should demonstrate to residents how their input is fundamental and integral to the City's decision-making.

2. Technology: Because the number of City employees is relatively small in proportion to the level of responsibilities and breadth of services, technology is uniquely vital to help the City provide high quality customer services to both the public and one another and to increase efficiency and effectiveness.
3. Regional conversations and working with other jurisdictions: The City's presence at regional forums advances our vision, goals, and interests. As we approach working with other jurisdictions, we need to keep the big picture and the long-term in mind.

## REVIEW OF THE 2018 COMMUNITY SURVEY

As a result of the discussion about the findings from the 2018 survey of Kent residents, the Council and Administration will brainstorm how the City could more effectively communicate the City's vision, goals, and long-term direction to the public. The interest in helping the public understand that City officials have a vision and are following it is based on the survey finding that many residents do not know or believe that the City has a vision for Kent's future and is working to implement it.

To launch the discussion, Dana reviewed these facts about the process and outreach:

1. These results are based on 6000 requests sent out in Round 1 and a second set of 6000 requests sent out in Round 2.
2. The City received over 977 responses, nearly double the approximately 500 responses to the 2016 survey. Two reasons why the response rate may have increased so dramatically were: a) In 2018 requests to complete the survey were sent via email; and b) respondents were given a \$5 gift card to Starbucks.
3. The respondents to the 2018 were more representative of Kent's population than in 2016 as evidenced by these three factors: a) more non-white residents participated, which is consistent with the increase in the non-white population relative to the white population according to new census findings for Kent; b) survey respondents were younger than the respondent sample for 2016; and c) the survey experts made special efforts to oversample populations in order to ensure responses were representative of the city's population.
4. In addition, the survey was weighted by age and gender to adjust for the sampling bias, so 2016 and 2018 percentage comparisons are "apple-to-apple" comparisons.
5. Kent's residents for whom English is a second language (ESL) were well represented, according to tracking of the percentage of respondents who speak languages other than English. Thirty-one percent of respondents (weighted) spoke a language other than English, whereas 37% of Kent's population speaks a language other than English.
6. A limitation to the survey was that respondents could not answer "Not Applicable" or "I don't know." That was intentional based on the finding that when these options are offered, too many people opt out.

The survey's key findings and metrics included:

1. Kent continued to received a "3.5 Star Community" rating.
2. Livability, government performance, and the economy are three areas where respondents rated Kent "below average" and where the City should look to improve performance.

3. Compared to 2016, a smaller percent of residents feel “positive” about the allocation their tax dollars and the value received for the services those dollars pay for. This decline fell within the “neutral” category rather than “negative,” indicating that some of the respondents did not feel strongly one way or the other.
4. Kent scored high for the variety of housing choices and quality of commercial shopping districts.
5. Safety: Crime rates in Kent have decreased substantially (by double-digits), but survey respondents reported feeling less safe, fueling a perception that the community is less safe today. Could this be an issue of decreased or less visible police presence? Or might it reflect concerns about property crimes over personal safety? The survey results do not shed light on these questions because the survey question remained at a rather high level by asking about crime and safety in general. And because the preponderance of responses fell in the “neutral” category, residents may not feel that there is a crime problem.

Some of the themes from the survey were:

1. People are more in the neutral camp than before; that doesn’t necessarily mean that people feel unsupportive of direction the City is going, but instead may not feel strongly in one camp or another.
2. There are mixed feelings around the willingness to pay more in taxes to support City services, with a reduction in willingness from 2016 to ’18. Survey respondents may not understand that most taxes they pay are not imposed or collected by the City, but by the State of Washington and King County. It is more likely that they were thinking about the total amount of taxes they pay when asked if they are willing to pay taxes overall. Given this, could the City be more deliberate in how it messages City taxes to residents?
3. Kent meets expectations for overall quality of services; it is performing above the performance of other 3.5 Star Communities.

Listed below are strategies and ideas for the future that could help the City understand more precisely the needs, concerns, and interests of Kent residents. No effort was made to reach agreement on these ideas; they were the result of brainstorming during the discussion of the strengths and weaknesses of the 2018 Community Survey and its findings.

1. Conduct targeted or qualitative follow-up with the survey respondents. The purpose would be to gain further insights into the public’s feelings and perceptions. For example, understand more accurately why the feeling about the public’s safety during the daytime has worsened.
2. Rather than conduct a lengthy, broad survey in future years, conduct several shorter, more focused surveys on various subjects, such as public safety or parks and recreation. This could avoid asking questions for purely informational purposes and instead ask questions for which there is a plan to move forward.
3. Responding to some of the key findings about how the City communicates and where residents get their news, understand better why there was a decline in the use of certain information sources such as the Quarterly Parks and Recreation Guide, radio (FM, AM, or streaming), Kent TV 21, and information published by the Neighborhood Councils.
4. Might any of these ideas improve communications between the public and City?
  - Inform residents about the ability to view Kent TV 21 online.

- Educate people on the “brand” (identity) of the City by using utility bills or other such publications.
- Use visuals and images, which may be more digestible than large quantities of text.
- When the Kent Reporter fails to write a story on something of importance to the City, publish our stories using a variety of communications mechanisms.
- Issue a quarterly periodical like the one the RFA publishes.

### *Saturday Sessions:*

## COUNCIL DISCUSSES INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY VISION AND PATHWAYS

The Council’s retreat on Saturday morning began with a discussion, led by Mike Carrington, about the City’s vision for information technology and the strategies that are being implemented and will needed in the future to advance it. The discussion also included Mike’s assessment of the challenges that make achieving the vision more difficult.

### ***Vision:***

Becoming a “Smart City” is an aspiration. The video Mike showed at the start of his presentation illustrated the sophisticated strategies needed to reach that standard. It also highlighted that becoming a “Smart City” requires deep commitment and a high level of resources. A “Smart City” integrates the physical and digital worlds so that, for example, air quality is improved through the application of technological advances.

If Kent cannot become a “Smart City” in the near future, Mike laid out two pathways for the City to make strides toward achieving the vision.

1. Pathway #1: Invest in the infrastructure—hardware, software, and services—to strengthen and modernize the City’s internal information technology, and expand its use across all departments. Then, it to build technological connections between the City and the wider community, including businesses.
  - In response to a Councilmember’s question, Mike said that the City has made incredible progress in the last five years. Some current projects involve replacing older technologies, while some involve innovations to maintain technologies so that they don’t become outdated.
2. Pathway #2: Evolve from current accomplishments to future ones, from data to information, and from information to knowledge (sensors provide data to inform better decision-making), the result being knowledge-based measurable decision-making.

Mike commented that “enterprise solutions” and “business intelligence platforms” will allow the City to advance toward the vision of knowledge-based decision-making. He complimented the Police and Parks and Recreation Departments for already using these platforms.

Under the umbrella of this vision and the two pathways, Mike cited two tools that are representative of the tools that can move Kent forward. They were: 1) the Open Data Portal that gives the public easy and instantaneous access to all City records; and 2) the Technology Action Board (TAB), a subset of the ELT, that receives recommendations from the IT department project managers, and agrees on the City’s IT priorities.

## **Challenges:**

Challenges that Kent faces today include:

1. The percent of data storage that is occupied continues to grow.
2. The vast majority of emails that come to the City are spam.
3. Each week the IT staff deals with an average of 148 viruses.
4. The incidence of “malicious viruses” and “bots” is increasing.
  - Mike reminded everyone to look carefully at the sender’s email address if the message seems suspicious. It may contain unexpected numerals or letters within the address. If so, or if there is anything else that raises suspicions, forward the email to the IT help desk to deal with it.
  - Mike also mentioned that the TRAPS program is a sophisticated program that prevents the transmission of TrickBot attacks into servers. However, it can miss a threat. When you click on a suspicious link by mistake, turn off the computer and contact the IT staff.
5. The City is transitioning data to the Cloud and reducing “on premise” servers. But IT staff recognizes the pros and cons of this strategy. Cloud storage must be stable, reputable, and trustworthy because, for example, public records requests would be severely affected if somehow data stored in the Cloud were inadvertently eliminated.

Responding to a Councilmember’s question, Mike commented that the City keeps its eye on “getting the biggest bang for its buck.” For example, the City just negotiated with Comcast a ten-year franchise agreement. He also said that to meet the challenges of the future, the City has to stay current, and even a step ahead, of changes in technology.

## **Future Ideas and Strategies:**

The Council, Mayor, and ELT briefly reviewed these strategies that Mike presented:

1. Examine “Smart Cities” that have funding/revenue source limitations similar to Kent’s to learn how they are leveraging resources.
2. Ensure that projects are undertaken at appropriate junctures, which requires coordination with other City schedules and projects.
3. Configure Cloud systems to more effectively avoid problems associated with customizing systems.
4. As current projects are finalized, the IT team should be able to focus on refreshing and maintaining those systems as well as conducting comparisons between Kent’s and other cities’ technologies.
5. Like Tukwila, provide free Wi-Fi for students. In the past, the Kent Corridor hosted free Wi-Fi but it became too expensive when vendors raised rates significantly. But the Parks and Recreation Department is interested in exploring this strategy, so it may be worthwhile to learn from Tukwila and engage local vendors.

## **COUNCIL DISCUSSES HOMELESSNESS AT LENGTH AND IN DEPTH**

For this discussion of slightly more than two hours, Merina Hanson, the City’s Human Services Manager, and Police Commander Mike O’Reilly joined Julie, Raf, and Tim in presenting what Kent is currently doing to address homelessness, what other partners are doing, how homelessness impacts public health, City facilities, safety, and the environment, and what more might be done at the local, regional, and state levels to address the issue.

The first thing to note is that while our part of the country is thought to have some of the most strategic and effective approaches to dealing with homelessness, the number of homeless people in the Puget Sound area is increasing. Our situation mirrors what is happening elsewhere, lending credence to the belief that homelessness is a nationwide problem.

To provide context to homelessness in Kent, Marina cited these statistics:

- In the annual regional count of the number of people who are homeless, the count in Kent was 177. But a more accurate number is likely to be 250.
- Eighty percent of students who experienced homelessness in 2016-'17 were students of color. Nearly all of them had experienced homelessness by temporarily living in hotels or motels, in transitional living situations, and by staying with friends. Very few of them (less than 10%) were unsheltered or living in a car.

### ***What Kent's Doing to Address Homelessness:***

The City is currently:

1. Engaged in both preventive and reactive efforts, and investing in the continuum of "wrap around" services that most effectively meet the needs of the community.
2. Balancing two interests that can seem in conflict: Ensuring public safety and operating with compassion.
3. Working at the local and regional levels.
4. Contracting with a variety of community partners for services, some of which are intended to prevent homelessness and some of which are focused on individuals experiencing homelessness. Kent also supports service providers who manage facilities and the services offered within them.
5. Managing a biennial funding application process that includes:
  - Community partners submit applications for funding.
  - Human Services staff comprehensively reviews and analyzes the applications.
  - Staff recommends which applications should be funded.
  - The recommendations are included in the Mayor's proposed budget.
  - The City Council reviews and approves them as part of the adoption of the budget.

### ***What Community Partners are Doing:***

There are many community partners that the City does not help fund but which the City depends on to provide homelessness services. Among them are: 1) CREW, which provides mental health substance abuse services; 2) The Salvation Army: conducts outreach to people residing in vehicles and has access to three "low barrier shelters" that have in total more than 600 beds per night; 3) Kent HOPE, a day shelter for women and children; 4) The Union Gospel Mission, which provides search and rescue to unsheltered people; 5) Vine Maple Place, serving primarily homeless women and children and providing access to jobs and financial empowerment; 6) Mary's Place, which recently opened a shelter in Burien; and 7) Shared Bread, which provides utility assistance, a safe parking program for people living in their cars, and hot meals.

Furthermore, Seattle and King County are joining forces to work on homelessness issues this year. In previous years, Seattle and the County had operated in separate silos. This partnership reflects significant

planning and cooperation at both the policy and operations levels, which should also benefit Kent and other cities.

***Additional Issues, Considerations, and Complications:***

1. There is not a well-planned network of service hubs throughout the region.
2. Churches and other providers of shelter have not wanted to participate in the “rotating shelter model,” which means this model may not be feasible.
3. Reducing restrictions on who may stay in shelters creates greater challenges for shelter hosting groups.
4. Placing people in permanent supportive housing results in better outcomes in the long term, but shelters are still needed to address short-term issues and challenges. Thus, the system must balance short-term and long-term needs and invest in both.
5. Catholic community services is developing an eighty unit permanent supportive housing project on Kent’s West Hill; 40% of the units will be set aside for homeless veterans, chronically homeless people, and homeless people who have been the hardest to reach.
6. Under the definition of “being housed,” the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) doesn’t consider tiny homes as suitable, acceptable, or in compliance. Because the City relies on HUD guidance and funding, we cannot afford to ignore or violate HUD’s very prescriptive housing guidelines.

***Public Safety Issues Around Homelessness:***

Police Commander Mike O’Reilly led this part of the discussion with the Council, Mayor, and ELT. He provided this overview of what the Police Department is doing to work with people who are homeless and to address public safety issues related to homelessness.

The Police Department’s goal is to connect homeless people to services, not arrest them. The department tries to balance support and enforcement. Today the Police Department spends approximately \$650,000 annually on homeless services. This figure only represents the cost of personnel, not other related costs. The department has little interaction with individuals and families facing the short-term crisis of homelessness. Police officers interact with people with mental health and substance abuse issues when there is a risk to public health and safety. Because their lifestyle is more solitary, the department’s interactions with them are not all that frequent. But there are homeless individuals who frequently demand the Police Department’s attention because they pose threats to public safety, including to other homeless people. They often adamantly oppose assistance and referrals to service. These individuals draw the largest portion of the Police Department’s time and resources that the Police would rather spend helping homeless people connect to services.

The department has tailored its operations to particular situations. For example, the bike unit has morphed into a team of officers responding to and providing services to homeless people. Another challenging situation is the department’s work with homeless camps. They can pose significant environmental and public health hazards from human waste, needles and syringes, and potential fires. Some companies who contract to clean up these encampments have found that some camps are too dangerous to abate. And some camps are reestablished even after they have been cleared. Because there is a wide array of complaints from Kent residents about the camps, the Special Operations Unit (SOU) prioritizes its work by the size and scope of the camps. Before making contact with a camp’s residents, SOU defines what personnel are needed to clean it up (the jail crew, public works staff, etc.). During the initial visit, SOU does not run the names of occupants through a database in search of offenders; rather, it focuses on connecting people to services. SOU staff also tries to educate and provide warnings about noncompliance with codes. The size of the camp determines the amount of time provided to the occupants to clean up and leave. SOU visits camps multiple times, providing service referrals or the opportunity for occupants to set up alternative housing arrangements.

Commander O'Reilly ended his remarks by listing these limitations on the Police Department's services:

1. The loss of the bike program has undermined the department's efforts.
2. The department staffs its marine operations solely on overtime.
3. Significant time and energy are devoted to contacting and coordinating with the owners of the encamped/trespassed lands.
4. The City pays for the cleanup of camps, but property owners are likely shouldering some of the costs, too.

***Public Works Issues Around Homelessness:***

Tim LaPorte summarized the environmental issues and challenges presented by homelessness. He described the environmental health problems created by the camps. For example, fecal and chemical contaminants are washed into creeks and rivers. This is creating for the Public Works Department, acting on behalf of the City, a challenge in complying with federal and state clean water and hazard abatement mandates.

***Parks and Recreation Issues Around Homelessness:***

Julie Parascondola described the major challenges facing her department in addressing issues related to homelessness. She said that the biggest conflicts result when homeless people camp in parks that are used by the public. The perception that parks are unsafe reduces public health and wellness and undermines public support for parks in general and recreation programs more specifically. This "conflict of use" problem also creates liability issues for the City.

In addition, Parks and Recreation employees and operations are affected. Staff may not feel safe or may not want to spend their time cleaning up parks and recreation facilities after being used by homeless people. Because the department is not receiving additional resources for these purposes, funds meant for other programs and services could be siphoned away. All in all, these conditions are a burden on City operations and may make working for the department less attractive.

***Next Steps and Future Ideas and Strategies:***

The next major step the City will take to address the issue will be the release in June of the Regional Action Plan. Merina is a member of the Regional Task Force that is sponsoring the report. In March the preliminary release of the report will illustrate how spending on homelessness has been tied to outcomes and may highlight new focused strategies.

Other steps the City is taking to address homelessness include:

1. Monitoring proposed legislation in Olympia regarding mental health services funding, including for homeless people.
2. Advocating that funding be channeled to prevention to help reduce the overall costs of addressing homelessness.
3. Encouraging other cities to increase their investments. Kent uses a per capita funding model, but other cities don't. Staff is trying to influence other cities to adopt the per capita funding model so that they begin to approach the funding level that Kent has attained.
4. The Police Department hopes to fully staff the SOU.
5. The Police Department also plans to establish a mental health response team, which would include a mental health professional, a caseworker and a police officer, to be able to respond more rapidly and comprehensively to situations involving homeless people in need of mental health services.

Councilmembers Larimer and Fincher reported that they have met and will meet with renters and property managers to possibly propose an ordinance to add protections for renters that are aimed at preventing evictions and homelessness. If this proposal moves forward, the City Attorney's Office will need to be involved in drafting it.

Some Councilmembers also expressed an interest in ensuring that housing, including rentals, is affordable for Kent residents. They want to see that residents of all income levels are served but that in particular residents with low incomes are not pushed out of the city.

It was also suggested that expanding the hours of the Community Engagement Center could ensure individuals have a safe place to be during the day, but it was noted that this could impact surrounding businesses.

## COUNCIL DISCUSSES VISION AND FUNDING FOR PARKS AND RECREATION

Parks and Recreation Director Julie Parascondola opened the discussion by commenting that while parks and recreation programs have high returns on investment, these programs are usually the first areas to be cut when budget reductions are in order. This is a national trend, not just local. In Kent, concerns about future General Fund reductions and parks and recreation program cuts are creating stress for the Parks and Recreation Department staff.

Julie also noted a recent success: The golf course plan was an excellent illustration of the importance of strategic planning and the leveraging of scarce resources. And Julie told the Council that her long-term vision includes getting the department designated as a nationally accredited parks system by 2023.

In the interests of preparing the department for the future, and to increase both its value and efficiency, Julie is ensuring that:

1. The nine divisions within the department are coordinated and thinking and acting collectively. Because they are at different stages of maturity when it comes to strategic planning, they are working to align their strategies in eleven areas. Each set of strategies has performance measures for the purposes of evaluation and process improvement.
2. Employees are increasing the level of data tracking and evaluation of implemented projects and programs. For example, the department surveys residents to more accurately understand their needs, concerns, and interests, and what projects they would prioritize. The surveys indicate that Kent residents are very supportive of parks and recreation. One area that the department is planning to further examine is the public's interest in and need for additional public transportation to access the parks and recreation facilities.
3. The department strategically identifies and applies for grants and other kinds of funding. Julie assured the Council that these grants are aligned with the City's vision and existing City, School District, and King County policies and plans.
4. The department examines creating new sources of revenue to diversify and stabilize its funding sources while reducing reliance on the General Fund. Survey results will direct it in exploring permit and fee pricing structures, including the possibility of charging non-Kent residents more than Kent residents for programs and services or basing those costs on a sliding scale determined by need. In addition, the Washington Parks and Recreation Association is working at the state level on possible legislation to allow Parks Districts to receive one-tenth-of-a-percent of sales tax revenues or to gain the bonding authority currently given to Local Improvement Districts (LIDs).

In addition, the department is focusing on identifying funding from King County for the Interurban Trail and recreation areas such as Panther Lake. Julie will soon meet with King County Councilmember Reagan Dunn to advocate for returning to Kent more levy funding (Kent currently contributes \$3 million annually and receives in return \$250,000).

5. Parks and Recreation implements “greening processes”—the use of environmentally friendly products in the parks and processes throughout the department.
6. A succession plan captures the knowledge of existing professionals who will be retiring in the coming years to ensure that institutional history is not lost and a smooth transition from long-time to new employees. The Human Resources Department has been enlisted to help with the succession plan.

## COUNCIL REVIEWS CITY’S WORK TO ADDRESS SOME QUALITY OF LIFE ISSUES

In preparing the retreat agenda, Councilmembers expressed interest in a variety of issues affecting the quality of life in Kent. Kurt Hanson reviewed what the Administration has done or is doing to address a number of quality of life issues.

### ***Code Enforcement:***

Code Enforcement has two code enforcement officers, including one who was recently hired. A number of departments coordinate in this endeavor, particularly ECD and the Police, but occasionally Public Works and the City Attorney’s Office, too. Hundreds of staff hours can be devoted to a single case. For example, no action can be taken until the owner of a property is contacted, which can take a lot of time. Sometimes abatement funds are used and sometimes, though rarely, criminal charges are filed. Some cases also required coordination with the Regional Fire Authority (RFA).

An ordinance adopted by Council in July 2018 streamlined and improved Code Enforcement. When there is a clear violation, the new ordinance provides officers the ability to immediately write citations for either commercial or residential property. Citation recipients can either pay the fine or contest the citation, at which point the case goes to Court. Qualitative reports have shown this new system saves an enormous amount of time because the City can move from initially identifying the problem to obtaining compliance at a much quicker rate.

The Code Enforcement Division will soon be transferred from ECD to the Police Department’s Investigations Division so that all filed operations are under one central leadership. The division already deals with problem properties and related issues in the neighborhoods, so it makes sense for officers to have the ability to enforce codes. The budget line item for Code Enforcement is accompanying the program and staff’s move to the Police Department. Accountability measures will ensure that there is still coordination between the Police and CED.

### ***Rental Housing Inspection Program:***

Before this program existed, the City did not have a mechanism to get into privately owned hazardous or dilapidated housing facilities. Because they could not be adequately inspected, owners could take advantage of the situation to violate size-of-bedroom requirements and other housing rental and/or health codes. Today the City can inspect apartment dwellings where there are three or more units every three years. Buildings with less than three units are not being registered, and, therefore, are not

inspected through this program. When there is a violation and tenants are disrupted, the landlord is responsible for providing housing for those tenants.

The program will commence with rental inspections in the northeast corner of Kent because of the relatively newer median age of the structures. Notices are being sent to owners in that quadrant, letting them know of this requirement and the City's authority to inspect. In addition, because the City wants to ensure that this program is self-funded, the annual apartment business license fee has been increased by \$15 to pay for it.

### ***The Condition and Cost of Parking Signs:***

Kurt mentioned that it is important that the public understands that the City does not have a choice in replacing and paying for reflective parking signs for parking zones; they are required for regulatory compliance. This messaging to the public must be clear.

### ***Windshield Inspections in Neighborhoods:***

In ensuring compliance, fliers were sent to neighborhoods alerting them to the issues and requirements. The fliers saved resources that would otherwise have been devoted to tracking down and sending letters to each individual owner who was in violation of the Code.

## **RALLY THE VALLEY: TRANSFORMING KENT FROM WAREHOUSING TO MANUFACTURING**

For over four decades Kent has received significant revenue from an economic infrastructure in the Kent Valley that was based on warehousing. The State of Washington's implementation of the streamlined sales tax (destination-based sales tax) has led to a massive loss of revenue from sales tax, so Kent has become a "pass through" whereby the state greatly benefits from Kent's global e-commerce in the warehouse industry while the City receives a declining portion of the tax revenues. From this development emerged "Rally the Valley."

Kent has gotten seven cities in South King County to agree to name the industrial valley the "Kent Industrial Valley." "Rally the Valley" is the effort to transform this industrial area from warehousing towards the manufacturing, aerospace, and engineering industries. Twenty-seven percent of the Kent Industrial Valley workforce is engaged in such industries, but 73% are not. These sectors bring in the greatest revenues but are the minority of jobs. Kent and the cities of the Kent Industrial Valley are intent upon reversing this.

Today warehousing generates a low level of revenue but consumes a high proportion of land. In addition, it requires out of proportion land and street maintenance costs that are borne by the City. And today it minimally contributes to the City's employment market. Manufacturing holds the promise of generating more jobs and revenue while costing less in terms of maintenance

Kurt outlined the long-range strategies. They are:

- Recruit and promote manufacturing in the Kent Industrial Valley.
- Demonstrate to employers the benefits of living in the region and why their employees want to live and work here.
- Incorporate design criteria into the industrial code to ensure pedestrian network connections at key nodes.
- Move toward performance based zoning; current zoning regulations, which are from the previous era of warehousing, are outdated. The City is embarking on an eighteen-month process ,

including public meetings, to negotiate policy and Zoning Code changes that will promote manufacturing industries.

- Revisions to the lodging tax now allows the City to hire a public relations firm to conduct marketing and promotion (including website and media campaigns) targeted specifically for “blue” industry investments and manufacturing industries. This is a much more effective use of funds than investing in general tourism promotion.
- The seven partner cities have agreed to jointly market the Kent Industrial Valley for advanced manufacturing.
- The City is leveraging partnerships with industries by establishing “seed money” whereby industries match City funding for manufacturing development.

At the end of Kurt’s presentation the Councilmembers appeared interested in and enthusiastic about this vision for the valley and the Administration’s efforts to date, particularly gaining the support of the other cities for calling the valley the Kent Industrial Valley and joining together to market it for manufacturing.

## ISSUES ON THE HORIZON

Here are issues the Councilmembers expressed interest in and predicted would be topics of their future conversations. These issues are not ranked and reflect individual member’s interests.

- HR’s Cultural Community Conversation training has been great.
- Current conversations to revamp and come up with Racial Equity and Social Justice training.
- Location/landmark named for Officer Diego Moreno. Mayor Ralph and staff are looking into the most appropriate landmark and location.
- **Inventory of available housing. Hayley Bonsteel will look into current version and revise if needed and present it again to Council.**
- Codes for: 1) Design standards in new single-family developments; and 2) Enforcing existing commercial design standards. Kurt and his staff have this information; **Kurt offered to brief any interested Councilmembers.**

As this list was being generated, four ideas were generated that address current issues. The latter two will be implemented.

1. City Council Districts: Election not at-large but by district. Most Councilmembers stated that they do not favor district elections. It was also noted that the current Council is diverse and representative of all principal Kent neighborhoods. Some Councilmembers noted that an unintended consequence could be that there would be a reduced incentive to consider and address needs of the entire city.
2. Update Council Manual to revised the Council Meeting dress code. There was a general consensus that the Manual does not need to be updated, but that Councilmembers should be reminded to avoid wearing of jeans, shorts, and flip-flops.
3. Protocol for Responding to emails from resident to the Councils. Everyone was reminded that the practice is for the Council President to respond on behalf of the entire Council. Other Councilmembers may respond there is a need for coordination. The Council President also forwards messages to the appropriate Council Committee chair and department when the email addresses issues for which a particular committee is responsible. Afterwards the Council Committee chair should report back to the Council President on the status of the issue and reply. *Derek will update orientation materials to include e-mail protocol.*

4. Councilmembers' use of social media: Councilmembers must specifically state that they are speaking from their personal perspective and that they are not speaking on behalf of Council. Reminder: When on professional OR personal social media page, whatever a Councilmember writes is subject to public records requests.

## WHAT ARE WE TAKING AWAY FROM THIS YEAR'S STRATEGIC PLANNING RETREAT?

The Council, Mayor, and ELT answered that question by saying:

- Importance of succession planning
- Great presentations from departments
- Very helpful and informative presentation on homelessness in Kent
- Seeing everything we are doing to address associated issues
- Exciting to see economic development in the Kent Industrial Valley
- Great to address other issues that aren't the budget
- Importance of departments bannng together to "tell our story"
- Focus on the future of Kent—tackling today's issues with a lens on improving the future
- How state and regional efforts related to affordable housing will impact Kent
- Excited to continue actively participating with Rally the Valley
- Coordination and ability to work together as leaders
- Fantastic professionals and responsive leadership
- Exciting to see transformation of the City
- IT roadmap and leadership is impressive
- Resident survey: We must strategically think about how to work with residents to make decisions for the betterment of the community