



# Northeast Recycling and Transfer Station

## Frequently Asked Questions

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**PROJECT BACKGROUND AND NEED ..... 1**

**PROJECT SITING PROCESS..... 2**

**SITING PROCESS COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT ..... 4**

**IDENTIFYING CANDIDATE SITES ..... 10**

**HOUGHTON TRANSFER STATION AND CLOSED LANDFILL SITE-SPECIFIC QUESTIONS ..... 11**

**ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW (EIS PROCESS)..... 14**

**OTHER COMMUNITY CONCERNS ..... 15**

### Project Background and Need

**1. Q. What is the Northeast King County Recycling and Transfer Station (NERTS) Project?**

**A.** In 2020, King County's Solid Waste Division began a process to find a site for a new recycling and transfer station (a facility where garbage hauling companies, businesses and King County residents can bring their waste and recycling) in northeast King County. The new facility will replace the aging and outdated Houghton Transfer Station in Kirkland that has been in operation since the mid-1960s. A new station will provide convenient, accessible recycling and waste services to residents of Kirkland, Redmond, Woodinville, Sammamish, and areas of northeast unincorporated King County.

# Solid Waste Division

## 2. Q. What is the basis for the Northeast Recycling and Transfer Station Project?

A. Plans to expand and modernize solid waste disposal and recycling services in the northeast portion of King County's service area were outlined in the [2019 Comprehensive Solid Waste Management Plan](#) (Comp Plan), specifically Chapter 5, Pages 134, 141, 142, 143-145. The Comp Plan was approved by the King County Council and Department of Ecology after many years of deliberation that included opportunities for public input. In fall 2020, King County's Solid Waste Division moved forward with a siting process to identify potential locations for a new facility.

## 3. Q. Why do we need a new transfer station?

A. King County identified the need for a new station in the 2019 Comprehensive Solid Waste Management Plan. The aging Houghton Station, in operation since the mid-1960s, cannot accommodate our growing community because it:

- Lacks space for comprehensive recycling services
- Lacks ability to compact waste
- Lacks adequate queuing space
- Lacks space for waste storage in the event of a major regional emergency

Currently, many people in northeast King County need to drive 30 minutes or more to dispose of household waste and recycling.

## Project Siting Process

## 4. Q. What are the steps to find a site for the transfer station?

A. Since early 2020, King County has been following a step-by-step process to find a site for the new station. The County began by looking at many different sites and, through robust evaluation processes that included community input and a siting advisory group, has narrowed the list down to four sites. Here are the steps the County followed:

- **Pass/Fail Criteria:** These criteria establish minimum standards that must be met for potential sites to qualify for further consideration.
- **Geographic Information System (GIS) Criteria:** Used to identify sites for further analysis.
- **Broad Area Site Screening (BASS)** – After applying the above criteria, 109 possible sites remained. King County evaluated these sites in consultation with a technical team of professionals and the cities of Kirkland, Redmond, Sammamish, and Woodinville. Together the project team used Broad Area Site

# Solid Waste Division

Screening criteria to identify the best 15 sites that would move on to the next stage. Broad Area Site Screening Criteria includes:

- Appropriate site characteristics (size and shape accommodate the required features of a modern transfer station facility).
  - Few negative environmental considerations that cannot be mitigated (e.g., sites with sensitive environmental areas such as steep slopes, large wetlands, heavily wooded, or other environmental issues).
  - Few on-site property improvements that would require relocation (the presence of active on-site businesses or uses requiring relocation that would make development more expensive and disruptive).
  - Relatively few nearby sensitive receptors (such as schools, parks, residences, and hospitals).
  - Site can be developed with no unresolved equity or social justice concerns. Any equity or social justice concerns are mitigated by the NERTS Equity Impact Review or other supplemental Equity and Social Justice project.
  - Site can be developed with minimal known geotechnical concerns.
  - Any site located within an aquifer recharge zone will be noted for further assessment.
- **Community involvement:** To gain the community input and knowledge, and to recruit for a Siting Advisory Group, King County:
    - Mailed a postcard announcing the project in English, Spanish, Russian, and Simplified and Traditional Chinese to over 115,000 homes, businesses, residents, and tenants in the siting area.
    - Posted about the project on county and city social media channels.
    - Published a press release.
    - Announced the project in county and city newsletters and on websites.
  - **Focused Site Screening (FSS):** The top sites from the Broad Area Site Screening (BASS) were then evaluated in more detail in the Focused Site Screening. That evaluation assessed the sites from several perspectives including functional criteria, and input from the four core cities and the public. The results of the FSS helped shape the County's decision about which sites would proceed into the environmental review process.

# Solid Waste Division

- **Second Community Involvement:** After the Focused Site Screening identified four top sites, King County conducted the following outreach to announce those sites and encourage participation in the fall and winter community survey.
  - Mailed a postcard announcing the project in English, Spanish, Russian, and Simplified and Traditional Chinese to over 115,000 homes, businesses, residents and tenants in the siting area.
  - Posted on county and city social media.
  - Published two press releases.
  - Announced the project updates in county and city newsletters and on websites.
- **Environmental Impact Assessment:** The State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) requires state and local agencies consider potential negative environmental impacts of a project before taking action. As lead agency on the project, the King County Solid Waste Division was responsible for conducting the environmental review, which includes:
  - **Scoping: In fall 2022,** the scoping process began, allowing the public to provide input to King County and the project team about what should be studied and prioritized in an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS).
  - **Draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS): In early 2024,** King County published a draft EIS that analyzed the potential adverse impacts of the project and proposed mitigation. The draft EIS process provides the public opportunities to review the analysis of the sites proposed for the project, and to ask questions and make formal comments that will be considered in the final EIS.
  - **Final EIS:** King County will complete a final EIS that considers the comments and feedback on the draft EIS. The analysis presented in the final EIS, combined with cost, community considerations, and other factors, will help inform the announcement of a selected site in late 2024.

## Siting Process Community Engagement

### 5. Q. How has the community been included in the siting process so far?

A. Since late 2019, King County's Solid Waste Division has held regular monthly meetings with representatives from the four "core cities" of Kirkland, Sammamish, Woodinville, Redmond, as

# Solid Waste Division

well as with the Department of Local Services, which represents county residents living in unincorporated areas. These representatives helped establish criteria to advance or eliminate certain sites from further consideration.

The cities also completed Community Profile Questionnaires to provide King County with details about the characteristics of their communities that included: demographics; community values and interests; lists of current capital projects; and the number of major essential facilities, including those in economically distressed neighborhoods. Finally, jurisdictional representatives were able to comment on the list of proposed sites to be shared with the public, and helped review and shape King County's public involvement planning.

## Activities to date include:

### 1. Stakeholder Interviews

- From August to September 2020, the project team reached out to community members, stakeholders, and businesses to conduct a series of stakeholder interviews. The project team conducted 11 formal stakeholder interviews with residents, community organizations and business representatives from Kirkland, Redmond, Woodinville, unincorporated King County, and waste hauler representatives to learn more about their communities and guide future outreach efforts.

### 2. Siting Advisory Group (SAG)

- From August to October 2020, the project team worked with the core cities and unincorporated area representatives to recruit members for a siting advisory group to serve as community and neighborhood voices on the project. Direct mail to 115,000+ northeast residents and social media posts were sent out inviting community members to participate on the siting advisory group. Residents, representatives of local organizations and businesses, and City representatives were included in the group. The group was convened in October 2020.
- Members of the public are invited to attend SAG meetings and watch the process, and to provide public comment during a dedicated period in the meeting.

### 3. Press Releases

Press releases were sent by King County to notify residents about the new facility siting; to inform them of opportunities to serve on or attend public meetings; and to notify the public of the locations identified for possible study in an EIS.

# Solid Waste Division

- Sept. 17, 2020: [Public input wanted to help site a new recycling and garbage transfer station in northeast King County](#)
- Oct. 12, 2020: [Siting advisory committee meeting on Oct. 14 kicks off new recycling and transfer station project in north King County](#) -- Oct. 12
- Jan. 25, 2021: [King County considers four potential sites for its Northeast Recycling and Transfer Station set to open in late 2027](#)
- May 5, 2022: [Public invited to open house for King County's new Northeast Recycling and Transfer Station](#)
- July 12, 2022: [King County to study three sites for its Northeast Recycling and Transfer Station Project](#)
- Nov. 3, 2022: [King County seeks public comment on a proposed recycling and transfer station project planned for Kirkland or Woodinville](#)
- Feb. 7, 2024: [Northeast Recycling & Transfer Station Draft EIS Open House](#)

On Feb. 16, 2021, King-5 News covered the project in its evening newscast and promoted the NERTS community criteria survey that closed on February 18, 2021.

4. **Multilingual Mailers** Several mailings to over 115,000 people in the siting area to introduce the project and the siting process. Mailers invited community members to join the Siting Advisory Group, announced upcoming meetings, and offered surveys for people to share input, ideas, and information. Mailers were also sent to over 130,000 people to announce major milestones including opportunities to make scoping comments and review the draft EIS under SEPA.

5. **Newsletters and Social Media**

King County developed a communications toolkit with social media and newsletter text to share with the cities of Kirkland, Redmond, Woodinville, Sammamish, and with unincorporated King County to include in their local publications and newsletters. Project information has been shared in several ways:

- Project-related notices regularly appeared in Kirkland's weekly newsletter, and on the Kirkland Conserves Facebook page

# Solid Waste Division

- Woodinville Patch, Woodinville Weekly, and Woodinville Wire posted project-related news and information.
- The City of Redmond posted information about the project to their Facebook page.
- SEPA notices in the Seattle Times and Daily Journal of Commerce announcing the formal comment periods and public hearings for three scoping meetings in 2023 and three EIS hearings in 2024.
- Advertisements in the Woodinville Weekly, Kirkland Reporter, and Redmond Reporter newspapers to promote public engagement during environmental review in 2023 and 2024.
- Multilingual ads in the NW Asian Weekly, El Siete Dias, Se Habla, Seattle Medium, Seattle Chinese Times, Russia Town Weekly to promote public engagement in the environmental review in 2023-24.

## 6. Multilingual Social Media Ad Campaigns on Facebook

- Ads ran on Facebook inform people about the project and encourage them to visit the [kingcounty.gov/northeast](https://kingcounty.gov/northeast) website for information, and to take surveys where they could share information and input. Languages included Spanish, Chinese (traditional and simplified), Hindi, Russian, Arabic, and Farsi.
- Multilingual paid social media ad campaigns on Facebook and Instagram to promote engagement in the environmental review. Amplification of information on other King County social media channels in 2022, 2023 and 2024.

## 7. Two Surveys – November 2020, and January/February 2021

**Oct. 30-Nov. 20, 2020** – 786 responses (results on [kingcounty.gov/northeast](https://kingcounty.gov/northeast) website)

- The first survey sought input on what is most important to community members about a new transfer station location. The seven-question survey asked where people had first heard about the project; how important it is to have access to a transfer station; whether they use the current Houghton Transfer Station; and what benefits they think a project might bring. It also included an open-ended question about whether they had any concerns about a future transfer station. The Siting Advisory Group used that input to develop community criteria to evaluate the top four potential sites for the new station.

**Jan. 20-Feb. 18, 2021** – 2,431 responses (results on [kingcounty.gov/northeast](https://kingcounty.gov/northeast) website)

# Solid Waste Division

- The second survey sought community insight on the four locations being considered for an environmental review. People were invited to share information about sites King County might not see from a parcel search or a Google map, and they were also able to rank what criteria they think are most important for selecting a site. The information was shared with Siting Advisory Group members on March 17 so they could consider the community's criteria ranking in their recommendations to the project team.

## 8. Dedicated email address to the Project Team

- The team created the [northeast@kingcounty.gov](mailto:northeast@kingcounty.gov) email address to allow people to contact the project team directly with questions or concerns at any time, from siting through construction. The project team has responded to thousands of inquiries submitted via the project email address.

## 9. Meetings and Briefings

- King County offered briefings to over 30 community organizations to share information about the project and ways to stay informed and to be involved through the survey through future outreach periods. The most recent public meetings took place in early 2024 for the draft EIS.

## 6. Q. What kind of recent and future activities are planned for public engagement?

A: Following is a brief summary of opportunities for the public to share their input on the project:

### 1. Environmental Review Process

- In fall 2022, the project team began preparing for an environmental review process under the State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA).
- The process begins with scoping to enable the public to comment on what should be studied about the selected sites in the EIS. There will be meetings and a formal comment period scheduled for late 2022 and early 2023.
- A draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) was issued in February 2024. The project team will hold meetings that will include opportunities to comment, and the division will consider the comments when preparing the Final EIS.
- The Final EIS will announce the site selection and is expected in early 2025.



# Solid Waste Division

## 2. Design – 2024-2027

- The division will recruit a Design Advisory Group to represent community interests in informing the architectural and service features of the new facility.
- Community members will have opportunities to weigh in on design concepts and proposed mitigation measures to make sure the new facility is a good neighbor.
- The Design Advisory Group and the community will also have opportunities to weigh in on public art that will be included as part of 4Culture’s 1% for Art program.

## 7. Q. What is the Siting Advisory Group and how are they involved in the County’s decision?

A. King County brought together a Siting Advisory Group (SAG) comprised of community representatives to advise the county on where the new station should be located and what to consider in making that decision. The SAG has 25 members that represent community, business, and city interests and perspectives. Part of the SAG’s work includes participating in the site scoring and weighting processes. SAG members developed and weighted community criteria based on community concerns, interests, and values shared through community surveys in Fall 2020 and Winter 2021.

For additional information, the Northeast Recycling and Transfer Station [project library](#) includes:

- SAG Convening plan (includes recruitment process)
- SAG roster
- Meeting summaries
- Final SAG rankings of sites

## 8. The draft EIS meetings in 2024 were advertised as “public hearings”. Why wasn’t there a presentation and why weren’t people allowed to get up and speak publicly?

King County selected the open house format because of positive feedback from other community members during prior SEPA processes. The open house format gave people the flexibility to drop in at their convenience, and to speak directly to project staff at various topic stations to get the information of greatest interest to them. People had the option to make verbal comments to a court reporter, to fill out comment cards at tables, or to submit written comments via mail, email, or to comment on a virtual open house on the project website.

# Solid Waste Division

## Identifying Candidate Sites

### **9. Q. Why would the County consider sites that have existing businesses?**

Vacant land is increasingly hard to find in a densely developed and growing area like King County, and commercial/industrial properties are in very short supply. King County needs to keep a range of options open to site essential facilities needed to support growth, and to provide services needed to protect public health and the environment.

### **10. Q. One of the site alternatives is in a residential neighborhood, the other is near a popular tourist area. Why couldn't King County find another alternative in an industrial area, or vacant land someplace else?**

Finding buildable land in a densely populated and highly-developed area is challenging in King County, and the transfer station needs to be located in the area it will serve. King County's project team went through a detailed site selection process to identify the alternatives that will meet project and customer needs. With modern design and mitigation, a transfer station can be built to fit into a community, and the public will have opportunities to help shape design decisions.

### **11. Q. How did the County determine which candidate sites warranted further study?**

**A.** Finding sites for essential public facilities that need to be located in the communities they will serve is challenging in a region where so much development has already occurred. Finding suitable sites for a transfer station is even more challenging, because the sites need to meet certain size, shape, and topographical characteristics, and they need to be located in areas with access to transportation corridors.

A number of factors were considered in determining which sites advanced for further analysis in an EIS, including cost, technical feasibility, transportation access, community needs, and environmental considerations.

### **12. Q. Some community members feel like their input isn't being considered. How do you address that?**

That people would have concerns about a new transfer station in their community is understandable. However, "no" or "not here" are not feasible options when there is an established need for a new transfer station to replace an outdated facility that has been in service for 60 years. Essential public facilities need to go in the communities they serve. For over four years, King County worked to help community members understand the need for the project, to explain the benefits of a new station that will include design features to reduce impacts, and to guide community members in providing insights and information that the

## Solid Waste Division

project team wouldn't know by simply looking at a map. Public feedback that helped shape decision making included recommending sites for consideration, recommendations on what should be studied in an Environmental Impact Statement, and additional studies on traffic, wetlands, and greenhouse gas emissions. After a site selection decision is made, there will continue to be many opportunities for people to learn about the project and how their input can help shape decisions that reflect community priorities.

### **13. Why doesn't King County let people vote on the alternative they think is best?**

A site selection decision for a transfer station needs to be based on a detailed analysis of the site alternatives, including parcel size and shape, proximity to transportation routes, cost, environmental impacts, community impacts, mitigation opportunities, and more. While it's not feasible to put the decision to a public vote, the voices of community members still play an important role. The feedback, insights, and formal comments received since the siting process began have been shared with the project team and decision makers to ensure community needs and values are reflected in the project.

## Houghton Transfer Station and Closed Landfill Site-Specific Questions

### **14. Q. What will happen to the Taylor Fields ballfields if the Houghton Transfer Station/closed landfill is selected for the new recycling and transfer station?**

**A.** The King County Solid Waste Division (SWD) recognizes the importance of Taylor Fields ballfields to the South Rose Hill / Bridle Trails community. The ballfields will not be removed if the Houghton site is selected and in fact could be improved as part of the mitigation for the new transfer station development.

### **15. Q. How much of the landfilled area at the current Houghton site would be developed if it is selected for the new transfer station?**

**A.** If the Houghton site is selected, a new recycling and transfer station would be constructed on the portion of the property currently occupied by the transfer station with limited encroachment into the landfill area. During the design stage (late-2024 to late 2027) SWD will consider technical and service needs, community input, cost, and other factors to determine a final design for the selected site, including the total footprint.

SWD has been successful excavating waste from previously landfilled areas at the Cedar Hills Regional Landfill (CHRLF) and at transfer stations located at closed landfill sites. Should

## Solid Waste Division

excavation be done at Houghton, SWD would follow an extensive permitting process, including preparation of an operational plan for review and approval by Public Health – Seattle & King County (Public Health) that would include specific terms and conditions for soil and waste excavation and mitigation measures.

The operational plan would include appropriate methods/techniques to excavate solid waste under wet conditions, handling of leachate, landfill gas, and other environmental considerations. In previous landfill excavation work, SWD performed under a plan approved by Public Health that included intensive air quality monitoring at the excavation site, and air quality impacts were minor. During excavation, CHRLF staff closely monitored odor emissions and, where needed, implemented corrective measures, including the use of odor-neutralizing agents.

**16. Q. What will happen to the current Houghton Transfer Station after the new site is selected?**

**A.** One of the sites being considered for the new recycling and transfer station is located at the current Houghton Transfer Station. King County will determine next steps for the current transfer station after the site for the new recycling and transfer station has been selected.

**17. Q. I heard that the proposed site at 11724 NE 60th Street in Kirkland is a Superfund site. Is that true?**

**A.** No, it is not accurate. Superfund is the commonly known name for the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act (CERCLA) that is enforced by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). CERCLA regulates the liability and requirements regarding closed and/or abandoned landfills and provides a trust fund for cleanup of sites with no responsible owners. For a site to be considered a Superfund means it has potentially dangerous releases of hazardous chemicals or materials and has been placed on the CERCLA National Priority List. The County's closed Houghton Landfill is not on the National Priority List and is safely managed by the County in accordance with the pertinent federal and state regulations.

The County wrote a [white paper](#) responding to the environmental concerns pertaining to the Houghton Recycling & Transfer Station.

## Solid Waste Division

**18. Q. What is the environmental status of the closed Houghton landfill adjacent to the transfer station?**

**A.** The Houghton Closed Landfill (HCLF) is in a post closure maintenance status and is continuously maintained and monitored by SWD in accordance with regulatory requirements overseen by Public Health. The post closure environmental controls include a cover system, surface water management features, and a landfill gas control and collection system.

The Houghton Closed Landfill was added to the Washington State Department of Ecology Confirmed and Suspected Contaminated Sites List (CSCSL) in the late 1980s ([site ID # 824](#)). The CSCSL is a list of all sites in Washington State that are “[undergoing cleanup, or awaiting further investigation or cleanup.](#)” No action had been taken by Ecology until April 2021 when Ecology advised SWD that a Site Hazard Assessment (SHA) would be undertaken for the site.

A SHA “[evaluates potential risk to human health and the environment based on exposure potential and severity of hazard.](#)” The CSCSL and SHAs are elements of Washington’s Cleanup Law, the [Model Toxics Control Act \(MTCA\)](#), which is separate and distinct from Superfund, a federal program pertaining to contaminated sites that is managed by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

Ecology’s decision to perform a site assessment on the closed landfill was prompted by an elevated methane event that occurred, as described below, and the resulting high levels of public concern.

In May 2020, during routine monitoring of the landfill gas collection system, King County crews detected elevated levels of methane in one of the underground gas probes on the closed landfill property. About 140 neighbors within 1,000 feet of the probe were notified, and King County offered in-home air testing for methane to verify none of the gas migrated off the landfill property. No methane was detected in any of the neighboring homes where monitoring was conducted.

King County’s engineers worked closely with Public Health – Seattle & King County and took measures to stabilize the landfill gas system. In June 2020, the County’s engineers began a permanent gas system improvement project that entailed drilling three new extraction wells to increase the gas system efficiency and performance. A new monitoring probe was also installed between the gas probe and nearby homes to make methane detection easier for our crews

## Solid Waste Division

and to reduce the need for future in-home testing. Combustible gas in this new probe has not been detected.

Information about the Houghton Landfill and MTCA, including the letter from Ecology advising SWD of the Site Hazard Assessment, can be found here: <https://apps.ecology.wa.gov/gsp/Sitepage.aspx?csid=824>.

SWD complies with all applicable environmental regulations and requirements. SWD is responding to Ecology and monitoring the situation as needed and will comply with any requirements that may be issued by Ecology pursuant to this site hazard assessment.

The closed Houghton landfill is not, and has not ever been, on the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's National Priority List (NPL), i.e., it has not been designated a Superfund site. EPA's Superfund Site Information webpage for the Houghton Transfer Station (EPA ID WAD980639298) shows the site's status as "[No Further Remedial Action Planned](#) (NFRAP) – site does not qualify for the NPL based on existing information." <https://cumulis.epa.gov/supercpad/CurSites/csitinfo.cfm?id=1000881>

For more information on the environmental status of the closed Houghton Landfill and the Houghton Transfer Station, please see the [Houghton Environmental White Paper](#).

### Environmental Review (EIS Process)

**19. Q. What is "SEPA," and what is an environmental review or an "environmental impact statement?"**

**A.** Enacted in 1971, the State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) is a law that requires state and local agencies to identify the likely environmental consequences of proposed actions and plans. The environmental consequences are identified through a SEPA review process. When potentially significant impacts are anticipated, an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) is required. The State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) review process is designed to help agency decision-makers, applicants, and the public understand how a proposed action or plan will affect the environment.

The EIS process starts with scoping, which gives community members, cities, business organizations, and other interested parties an opportunity to shape what will be studied in the Draft EIS. Comments on the Draft EIS are considered in the development of a Final EIS, which informs the agency's decision on which plan or action will be selected to move forward.

# Solid Waste Division

## **Q. Will there be an environmental review for the Northeast Recycling and Transfer Station Project?**

**A.** Yes. King County studied the environmental impacts and proposed mitigation of proposed sites in a draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) released in 2024. During the environmental review, King County looked at the potential impacts of each site to the natural and built environment through an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) and State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA). There were several opportunities for public input during this process.

King County will then prepare and publish a Final Environmental Impact Statement (Final EIS). The Final EIS will include responses to all substantive comments submitted during the Draft EIS. Finally, King County will issue the record of decision explaining the final site selection, the alternatives considered, and plans for mitigation and monitoring potential impacts. To stay updated, please sign up for our mailing list at [www.KingCounty.gov/northeast](http://www.KingCounty.gov/northeast).

## **20. Q. How will the final decision on the site be made?**

**A.** After the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) is completed, King County will carefully evaluate the technical feasibility, environmental impacts and mitigations, equity and social justice considerations, costs, and community input before selecting the final site for the new recycling and transfer station.

## **21. Q. When will the decision be made for where to site the transfer station?**

**A.** King County will make its decision on the new recycling and transfer station site in late 2024. To be kept up to date on any schedule changes, please sign up for our mailing list at [www.KingCounty.gov/northeast](http://www.KingCounty.gov/northeast)

## **Other Community Concerns**

### **22. Q. Can a modern transfer station facility be an amenity to the community?**

**A.** Yes. King County is committed to working with the local community to ensure the transfer station offers community benefits. After a site is selected in 2024, King County will convene a Design Advisory Group. This group of community members will advise the County on its efforts to ensure the transfer station fits within the selected location's community character.

Some community benefits from a new transfer station are guaranteed, such as improved recycling services and larger, easier-to-use unloading areas. Other community benefits will depend on what is possible at the location, what the community asks for, and additional design

## Solid Waste Division

and environmental considerations. For example, other King County transfer stations include public art, rainwater harvesting, and creek restoration.

**23. Q: What safety measures will be used at the new transfer station to keep nearby communities and the traveling public safe?**

**A:** King County is dedicated to building a recycling and transfer station that is well integrated and an amenity to the community, which includes safety for pedestrians and vehicles in and around the site. The addition of a compactor at the new station will increase the efficiency of each load which will reduce large transfer truck traffic on local roadways. This contributes to environmental benefits along with traffic and pedestrian safety benefits for the surrounding community. During the siting and design process, King County will evaluate a variety of traffic control and safety measures for the facility, including:

- Providing acceleration, deceleration, and turning lanes at transfer station entrances for steady traffic flow.
- Funding road and traffic signalization improvements to reduce congestion and prevent road damage from additional truck traffic and adding sidewalks to improve walkability.
- Soliciting community input and feedback on traffic routes and ensuring Solid Waste Division truck drivers follow designated routes to reach the transfer station.
- Prohibiting queues on public streets and evaluating alternative locations for haulers to wait if there is not enough space at the transfer station.
- When possible, scheduling incoming traffic to avoid local rush hours.
- Working with local law enforcement to enforce local speed limits.

**24. Q: How will the new transfer station design protect the natural environment around it such as parks, natural habitat, and water quality?**

**A:** King County will identify impacts and propose mitigation of potential environmental impacts through careful planning, design, and operation of the new transfer station. During the environmental review process, we will conduct detailed studies of the impacts to the natural and built environments for each potential site, and community members will have opportunities to review and weigh in on proposed mitigation.

Many mitigation elements will be addressed in the design process. Thoughtful and careful planning, siting, and design, and continual attention to environmental issues will be an important part of the mitigation process for the new transfer station. Transfer station operations are also regulated by the state Department of Ecology as well as Public Health –



## Solid Waste Division

Seattle & King County, and King County's Industrial Waste Program, which require ongoing monitoring and reporting.

To protect and mitigate impacts to water quality, transfer station design features might include the following stormwater pollution prevention measures:

- Covering waste handling and storage areas
- Site grading that directs industrial wastewater to the sanitary sewer system and uncontaminated stormwater runoff to the municipal separate storm sewer system
- Secondary containment and leak detection systems for storage tanks and associated piping
- Limiting the volume of stormwater runoff by minimizing hard surfaces, capturing rainwater for reuse, and other green stormwater infrastructure elements appropriate for the site
- Providing stormwater flow control and treatment
- Spill kit placement throughout site

To protect and mitigate impacts to natural habitats, design features might include:

- Environmental assessment of critical or sensitive areas, including wildlife surveys
- Laying out the facility to avoid critical areas.
- Improving wetlands and replacing piped sections of streams with open forested stream channels.
- Removing impervious surface to reduce stormwater runoff into salmon-bearing creeks or streams.
- Green roofs, cisterns and engineered rain gardens to capture runoff
- Replacing trees and adding tree canopy and nesting boxes
- Providing natural buffers between existing habitat and active portions of the site.

### **25. Q. How will the new transfer station fit into a community?**

**A.** The new transfer station will be a modern, enclosed facility that meets the latest environmental standards and best practices. It will feature a fully enclosed waste and transfer building to control noise and odor, and will provide larger and easier-to-use customer loading areas to reduce wait times. Modern equipment will include waste compactors, which will reduce truck traffic that will lead to less road impacts. The station will also be designed to aesthetically compliment its surroundings, and include green design features and public art.

## Solid Waste Division

Three potential sites will go through an environmental review process required by the State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA), where impacts to the natural and built environment are assessed and evaluated for each site. There will be opportunity for community input during the environmental review process. After a site is selected, the division will begin working on permitting and design through 2027-28. During this time, we will work closely with the host community and people interested in the project will have opportunities to be engaged in project decision making. To stay updated, please sign up for our mailing list at [www.KingCounty.gov/northeast](http://www.KingCounty.gov/northeast).

### **26. How will the project impact my taxes?**

King County's Solid Waste Division is funded by rates and fees paid by customers who use the system, not by taxpayer funds. The county has contracts with local cities and haulers that collect waste from residents and businesses and pay for transfer and disposal at a county facility. King County also charges disposal fees to customers who use its transfer stations. These rates and fees fund the programs and services King County provides, and also cover the bonds (loans) King County borrows to cover the cost of its capital program for projects including the Northeast Recycling and Transfer Station Project. Because SWD manages a regional system, it's important to note project and program costs associated with NERTS are spread evenly out over the entire service area of 1.4 million customers, which helps keep rates affordable across communities while expanding services where they are needed. The fees charged at county facilities, called tipping fees, pay for the operation and maintenance of transfer and disposal facilities and equipment, education and promotion related to waste prevention and recycling, grants to cities to support waste prevention and recycling efforts, and administrative operating expenses and overhead. Tipping fees also pay for the construction of transfer facilities. Bonds or loans may be used for large projects, but repayment of this debt is funded by tipping fees.

### **27. Q. Will cost be factored into the decision about which site is selected?**

Yes, project cost will be a consideration, along with the analysis presented in the final EIS, combined with cost, community considerations, and other factors, will help inform the announcement of a selected site in late 2024.

### **28. Did King County consider the socioeconomic impacts of the project?**

Yes. King County conducted an Equity Impact Review and Socioeconomic Analysis of the Northeast Recycling and Transfer Station (NERTS) Project to gain a fuller understanding of potential project benefits and impacts to communities, and the region (King County) as a whole. There is a [link to the Socioeconomic Impact Assessment Report](#) on the NERTS website.

## Solid Waste Division

These studies were not required under the SEPA process, but done in addition to the environmental review to foster greater understanding of potential community impacts of the project. Overall, the study found the benefits of building a new, modern transfer station to replace the existing Houghton transfer station will outweigh any short- or long-term negative socioeconomic effects on the community.

The regional economic benefits of a new facility include:

- Increased employment
- Additional household income
- Increased economic value

The social environment is also not expected to be negatively affected in the long term. The study defines the social environment as the community amenities that residents and visitors use daily that make up the fabric of their everyday lives, as well as those features that are important to the functioning of the community that contribute to the safety and wellbeing of its residents. The new facility will be designed and built with modern design features and techniques and will operate more efficiently and in a more environmentally friendly way than the existing transfer station.

**29. Q. I have questions and concerns that go beyond the Northeast Recycling and Transfer Station Project. How do I get more information?**

**A.** People with questions or concerns about waste disposal, waste prevention, or recycling are welcome to call us at 206-477-4466 or email us through the “Contact Us” section at the lower right corner of our website at [www.kingcounty.gov/solid-waste.aspx](http://www.kingcounty.gov/solid-waste.aspx).

**For information about the Northeast Recycling and Transfer Station project:**

**Visit:** [www.kingcounty.gov/northeast](http://www.kingcounty.gov/northeast)

**Email:** [northeast@kingcounty.gov](mailto:northeast@kingcounty.gov)