

September 20, 2023

RE: The King County 4-to-1 Program

Dear Honorable Members of the Growth Management Planning Council:

I am writing in support of allowing cities that finalized their comprehensive growth plans after 1994 to participate in King County's 4-to-1 program.

During my administration as King County Executive and as Chair of the Growth Management Planning Council in the mid-1990s, we established this nationally acclaimed program to create an "emerald bracelet" of open space along the entire urban growth boundary. The program was very successful in its early years, creating over one thousand acres of open space for residents to enjoy and wildlife to flourish.

In a time of urgent need for affordable housing and the equally critical need to preserve our rural and forested areas from future urban sprawl, allowing more cities to utilize the 4-to-1 program is wise public policy.

The idea around the 4-to-1 program is very simple. In areas of already urban development on one side of the urban-rural line—often a major highway or roadway—it sometimes makes little sense to keep the other side of the line or roadway as "rural." The 4-to-1 program allows, under certain conditions, urban development on the rural side of the urban/rural line, provided four times the amount of land is dedicated to permanent open space, thereby creating a sizeable barrier of open space, farmland, or forests that would prevent future urban creep—in essence a "Maginot Line."

Only a fraction of the 4000 acres allowed to be re-designated as urban under the 4-to-1 program have been converted. Cities that finalized their comprehensive plans after 1994 are not eligible to submit proposals to the 4-to-1 program. These cities should be allowed to submit innovative and creative proposals to provide more affordable housing while dedicating four times the amount of land to permanent open space. The 4-to-1 program is a growth management tool that all cities in the county should have available.

I urge the Growth Management Planning Council to allow all cities to submit proposals for consideration under the King County 4-to-1 program, as originally intended by the County and the GMPC when the program was first launched.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Gary Locke".

Gary Locke

King County Executive, 1994-1997; Governor of Washington State, 1997-2005; U.S. Secretary of Commerce, 2009-2011; U.S. Ambassador to China, 2011-2014.