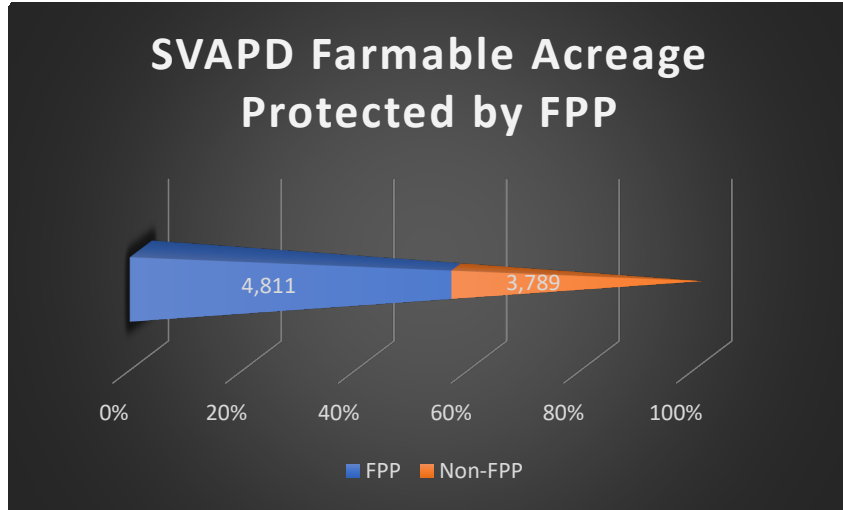


## 2.3.16: Farmland Preservation

### Current Condition

### Desired Condition by 2048

**Figure 43. Farmland Preservation Program: SVAPD Farmable Acreage Permanently Protected**



Since 1982, there have been 6,139 acres (204 parcels) protected by purchase of King County Farmland Preservation Program (FPP) easements by Deed on property in the SVAPD. Washington Farmland Trust also holds easements by Deed on 239 acres of SVAPD farmland. Of the 6,139 acres under FPP Deed, 4,811 acres are farmable, with 4,273 being currently farmed and 538 currently fallow. Approximately, 1,176 acres of FPP Deed protect unfarmable land in the SVAPD as open space. 56% of the 7,514 acres of currently farmed, private land in the SVAPD is protected by Deed. See Figure 43. There are approximately 3,789 acres of farmable land still unprotected in the APD.

FPP is designed to protect farmable soils in perpetuity as well as influence market value to keep the price of encumbered property more affordable for farmers. By analyzing the aggregated last three years of sales in the SVAPD for a total of 37 farm property<sup>1</sup> sales, the mean of farm properties protected by FPP Deed sold for \$41,821/acre, 37% less than the mean of properties without an FPP easement that sold for \$66,690/acre.<sup>2</sup> By using the same data and calculating the median sale price/acre, the median sale price of an FPP property sold for \$8,404/acre, a 77% decrease from a non-FPP median sale price of \$36,977/acre.<sup>3</sup> See Figure 44.

FPP continues to pursue purchase of Deeds on remaining farms in the SVAPD and surrounding areas to further protect the SVAPD.

Of the 6,139 acres of FPP land in the SVAPD, 98.7% is participating in current use taxation (CUT), such as Public Benefit Rating System (PBRs)<sup>4</sup> farm and agricultural land program that requires commercial production, or the forestland program. Acreage participating in CUT in the SVAPD is approximately 10,728 acres.

FPP has traditionally been a development right removal or purchase. New FPP Deeds protect against loss of water rights. The next level will be easements that protect farmland from rising real estate costs and obligate farming/agricultural activities.

All SVAPD farmable acreage is protected, as well as that near the APD, with FPP Deeds, and/or other long-term protections. FPP monitoring is increased, new programs are in place to keep ag lands affordable and in production. FPP properties are first in line for agricultural improvement programs. Farmers utilize best management practices.

### Timeline

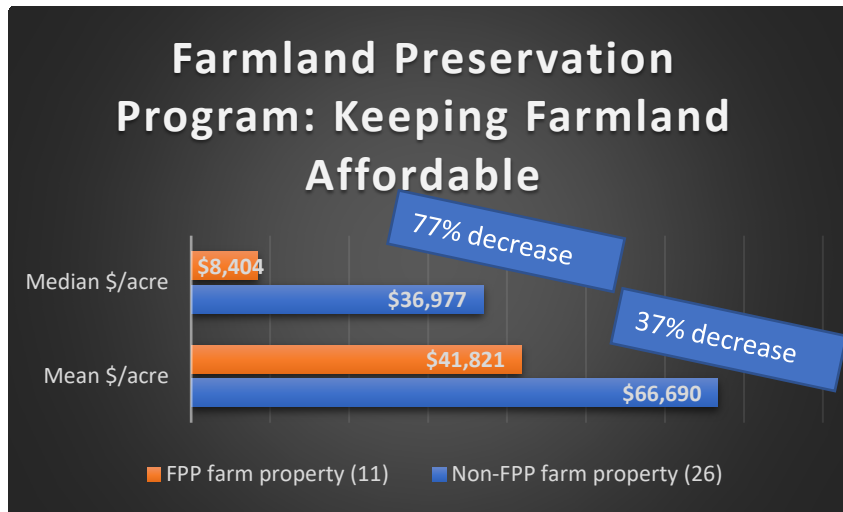
2024

- Convene farmland preservation partner organizations to understand and implement preservation strategies
- Incorporate these goals into Comp Plan
- Use the impetus of the Local Food Initiative and the Land Conservation Initiative to maximize the needs and preserve more farmland in SVAPD.
- FPP pursue purchase of Deeds on all remaining, high priority unprotected farms, with development rights to sell, including APD expansion areas
- Monitor and maintain existing FPP Deed protections to ensure compliance
- Ensure FPP Present Conditions Report, which are part of new Deed purchases, detail high value salmonid habitat areas for potential and voluntary restoration on protected land

2025

- Invest in infrastructure to keep open space properties and FPP properties in farming, being farmed
- Increase program capacity of FPP for monitoring, new easement creation, funding, and outreach
- Annual monitoring of FPP Deeds
- Research and create additional FPP easements/encumbrances

**Figure 44. Farmland Preservation Program: Keeping Farmland More Affordable – Sales/Acre and % Value Reduction in SVAPD<sup>5</sup>**



With expanding the SVAPD a high-level priority of this plan, ensuring FPP deeds are pursued and realized on the expanded APD parcels is also critical to ensure protections in perpetuity for productive agriculture.

In addition to FPP, preserving farmland has been integral to King County government and residents for decades. King County has delivered groundbreaking policy and programs that have become models throughout the country. For example, King County created:

- Agriculture Production Districts through zoning protections in 1985,
- King County Agriculture Commission in 1994 to advise the County Executive and Council on agriculture policy,
- County agriculture program staffed to support farmers,
- Farmland lease program
- Agricultural drainage program (ADAP),
- Farm pad program,
- Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) program,
- Fish Farm Flood watershed planning process,
- the Executive’s Local Food Initiative in 2014 followed by the Land Conservation Initiative to protect an additional 65,000 acres of natural resource lands, and
- further protections and preservation of agriculture embedded in the County’s Comprehensive Plan, and agricultural code delineating allowed agricultural activities and protecting the right to farm and the land on which to farm.

This work is ongoing and continued commitment to these programs and the implementation of this plan is needed because outside organizations have moved out of the County because the County has done so much, so any reversal of this course, would be absolutely detrimental to agriculture.

2026

- Overlay original FPP easement deed with additional easement/encumbrances where appropriate
- Utilize existing and pursue new revenue for enhancement of FPP Deeds
- Increase outreach and education about FPP opportunities, to farmers and landowners
- Add signage to properties that are FPP protected

2030

- Continue to overlay original FPP easement deed with additional easement/encumbrances
- Ensure FPP deeds continue to be primarily for farming purposes, encourage landowners to farm and retain farmable lands as open space in general.
- Ensure FPP offers protections that preserve affordable homes.

2036-2046

On-going FPP Deed purchases on remaining unprotected land; stacking protections on protected lands when appropriate; annual Deed maintenance/monitoring

Background	Service Providers	Priority
<p>Beginning with the farmer revolt to sell directly to customers that started Pike Place Market in 1907, farmers have battled against growth and profiteers to preserve farmland and farming in our region. There are many things that farmers, residents, policymakers, and NGOs still need to do to ensure farmland in the Snoqualmie Valley is preserved.</p> <p>King County’s Farmland Preservation Program (FPP) is a voluntary program that since 1984 has purchased development rights from property/farmland in order to permanently preserve it for agriculture or open space uses. Covenants contained in an agricultural conservation easement known as the Deed of Agreement Relating to Development Rights (“Deed”) restricts the land’s use.</p> <p>King County is the grantee of the Deed and holds the development rights in trust on behalf of the citizens in perpetuity. The covenants placed on a property “run with the land” and remain in effect even if the property is sold, rented, bequeathed, or annexed by another jurisdiction. The covenants restrict the land to agricultural or open space uses, permanently limit the number of dwelling units, and require that 95 percent of the property remain open and available for cultivation (i.e., 5% maximum non-tillable). Although these covenants do not require a property be actively farmed, they do prohibit any activities that would permanently impair the use of the property and its soils for agriculture.</p> <p>Ordinance 4341 (codified as Chapter 26.04 of the King County Code) outlined the objectives and parameters of FPP and instructed the Executive to put a bond initiative before the voters in the early 1980’s. The ordinance recognized the economic, aesthetic, and unique benefits agriculture provides to the citizens of King County and stated land suitable for farming is an irreplaceable resource. The ordinance acknowledged current policies and regulations did not provide adequate protection and therefore, permanent acquisition of voluntarily offered interests in farm and open space lands would provide long-term protection of the public interests these lands served. King County voters ultimately passed a \$50 million Farmlands and Open Space Bond (79’ Bond) Initiative that authorized the sale of bonds to finance the purchase of development rights on high quality farmlands<sup>6</sup>.</p> <p>During the mid-1980s, the County began the purchase of Deeds and development rights on priority farms, ultimately protecting 12,600 acres, primarily in the five Agricultural Production Districts (APDs). The County continued to acquire farmland development rights using remaining 1979 Farmlands and Open Space Bonds, but mainly using funds generated through the Conservation Futures levy (CFT), the Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) program, as well as federal and state funding. Recently, the Local Food Initiative and Land Conservation Initiative have guided FPP Deed purchases. To date, the County has purchased development rights on over 16,127 acres located throughout the County, in the rural areas as well as APDs.</p>	<p>Lead:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• King County DNRP Farmland Preservation Program</li> </ul> <p>Partners:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Landowners</li> <li>• DNRP WLRD (RRSS, RFMS, TDR, CFT)</li> <li>• DNRP Parks</li> <li>• SnoValley Tilth</li> <li>• SVPA</li> <li>• SVWID</li> <li>• Washington Farmland Trust</li> <li>• Forterra</li> <li>• Mountains to Sound Greenway Trust</li> <li>• WA State Conservation Commission</li> <li>• USDA NRCS</li> <li>• King Conservation District</li> </ul>	HIGH
Strategies		
<p>King County Farmland Preservation Program</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Engage with remaining property owners in SVAPD and SVAPD expansion areas to purchase FPP/TDR Deeds.</li> <li>• Monitor and maintain existing Deed protections in regard to farming and agriculture activities (i.e., adaptive management, ADAP, permit assistance, etc.) to ensure compliance.</li> <li>• Increase program capacity of FPP for monitoring, new easement creation, funding, and outreach.</li> <li>• Annual monitoring of Deeds.</li> <li>• Research and create additional easements/encumbrances (purchase of additional Deed restrictions). <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Affirmative easements that encourage or require farming, such as require maintaining taxation enrollment or higher standard in FPP Deed.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>		

- Assist with lowering price of farmland and homes, such as Option to Purchase at Agricultural Value (OPAV).
- Protect land and farm infrastructure with a deed or easement, such as homes or farm pads.
- Overlay original FPP easement deed with additional easement/encumbrances to preserve farmland (the complete package).
- Continue to utilize existing and pursue new financing for enhancement of Deeds.
- Increase outreach and education about FPP opportunities, to farmers and landowners.
- Add signage to properties that are FPP protected.
- Ensure FPP deeds continue to be primarily for protection of agriculture and farming purposes.
- Ensure FPP offers protections that preserve affordable homes.
- Ensure FPP Present Conditions Report plans for and details high value salmonid habitat areas for potential voluntary restoration, which is referenced in the Deed.
- FPP properties are prioritized and first in line for agricultural improvement and infrastructure programs.
- Advocate for a person with agricultural expertise on CFT committee award group.
- Add Farmland preservation 100% easement to CFT funding allowances.
- Prioritize FPP properties for all agricultural maintenance and infrastructure improvements so that the land can be in food production. LFI Strategy 1.2: Improve farmland productivity and 1.4: Preserve farmland for food production.

#### Food Production and Farmland Access

- Invest in infrastructure (including permitting technical assistance and cost-share) to keep open space properties and FPP properties in farming, being farmed.
- Incentivize and educate about best management practices and agro-ecological production principles<sup>7</sup> that will help preserve farmland.
- Use the impetus of the Local Food Initiative and the Land Conservation Initiative to maximize the needs and preserve more farmland in SVAPD.
  - Support farm employees with education and training to become farm managers. (LFI Strategy 1.3: Enhance recruiting, training, and technical assistance programs for new farmers, with consideration of diverse cultural and language needs.)
  - Improve infrastructure for food storage, food processing and marketing [specifically for dairy, vegetables, fruit, and flowers]. (LFI Strategy 2.3: Improve the local food processing, distribution, and marketing infrastructure in King County to accommodate and increase aggregated food distribution.)
- Convene farmland preservation partner organizations to understand and implement these strategies:
  - Enhance King County’s Working Farmland Partnership to create and promote innovative land bank and business models for new and beginning farmers. (LFI Strategy 1.4: Preserve farmland for food production.)
  - Increase tax incentive programs for commercial food production and include the taxation savings in the bill/mailer.
  - Create long-term annual incentive/rebate to encourage succession and ag production.
  - Create an essential business priority and rebate program for food production from fuel, utility and energy companies, or other sources.
  - From real estate sales, create an extra contribution option to fund farmland succession/acquisition fund.
  - Modeled on the “School impact fee”, bill new building permits (excluding commercial farm operation building permits), for improvements needed by their development to King County owned agricultural open spaces and roads, i.e., road pull-outs in APD for slower vehicles/wildlife viewing areas, or drainage improvements for increased stormwater, or fencing to protect crops from wildlife pushed onto farms from population growth.
  - Create “community foundation” fund to apply to offset farming costs and respond with emergency funding grants to farm businesses in SVAPD.
  - Increase succession planning resources and funding to assist current landowners to transition their businesses to new farmers and keep homes occupied and livable.
  - Conduct outreach about creative financing and business ownership models for farm and home transition.
  - Research, test, and trial additional public/private partnerships, including tax incentives or rebates to homeowners to offer homes for rent to farm employers and farm employees.



<sup>1</sup> For this analysis, farm property is defined as an active farm, which could include home and/or ag improvements/structures.

<sup>2</sup> King County Farmland Preservation Program, Unpublished Report, October 2022. The analysis is based on aggregated mean sales price/acre and median sales price/acre from the last 3 years of sales, March 2019-2022, in the SVAPD. Accessed March 2022 from King County's iMAP, "last three years of sales" layer.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> King County Current Use Taxation Programs. Last updated November 28, 2016. [[LINK](#)]. Accessed 8/4/22.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Kit Oldham, HistoryLink.Org, "King County Farmland Preservation Program," Essay 7691. Last updated 3/15/2006. [[LINK](#)]. Accessed 8/4/22.

<sup>7</sup> Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, "The 10 Elements of Agroecology Guiding the Transition To Sustainable Food And Agricultural Systems" [[LINK](#)]. 8/4/22.