

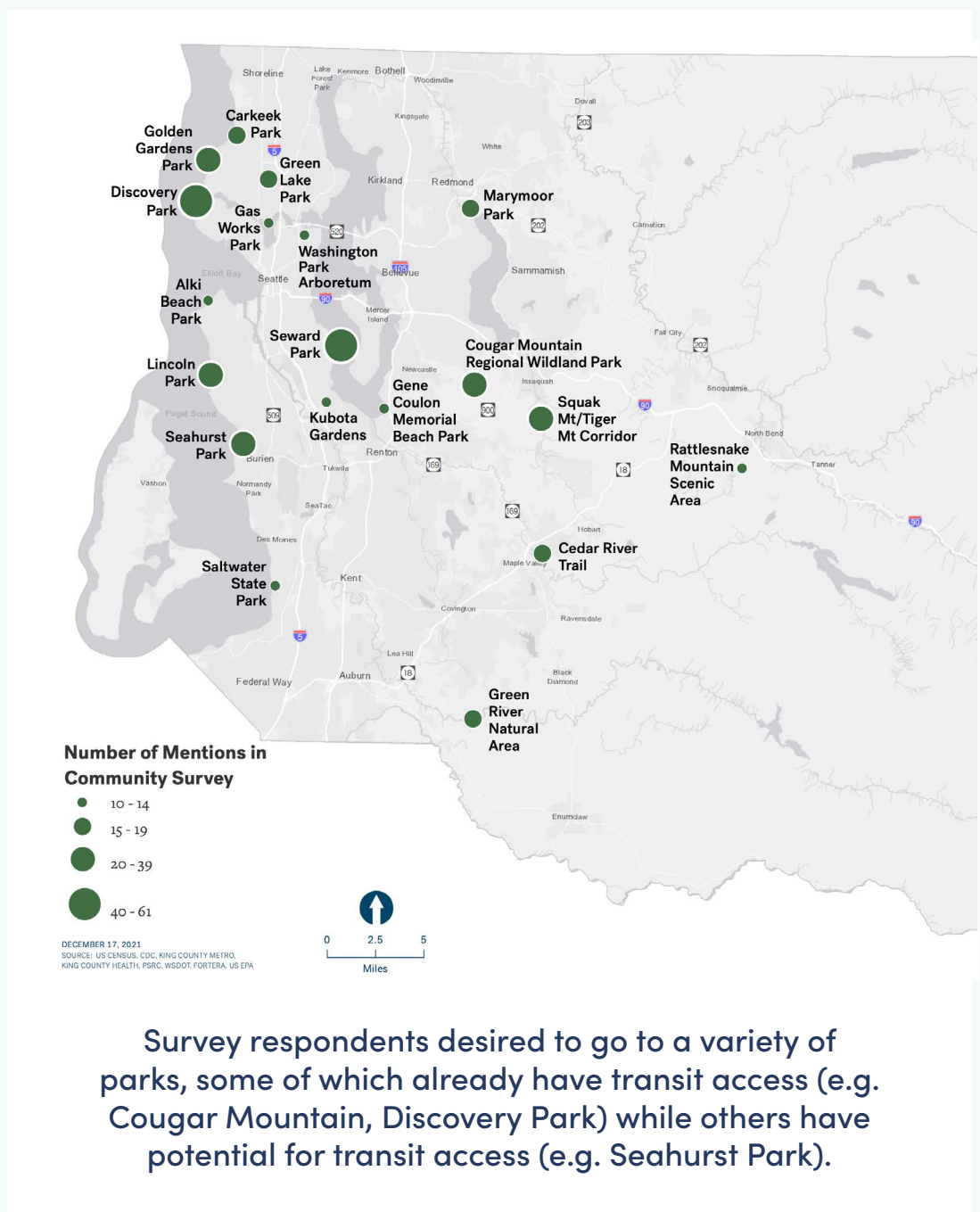
# KING COUNTY EQUITABLE ACCESS TO PARKS COMMUNITY NEEDS ASSESSMENT

**Access to nature and the opportunity to safely experience parks, open spaces and nearby public lands is a fundamental right everyone should enjoy.**

Yet, too often, this experience is determined by race, place, ability, and income, with communities of color and low-income communities experiencing greater inequities in access to parks and green space. While King County has made bold commitments to open space equity through initiatives such as the landmark [Land Conservation Initiative](#) and innovative [Trailhead Direct shuttle service](#), access to parks, trails, and natural areas remains out of reach for many across the region, with south King County having some of the [greatest disparities](#).

“ The County needs to invest in long-term relationships with community-based organizations so these conversations can be ongoing, rather than just one-and-done projects periodically. The County also needs to demonstrate a commitment to actually listening to the community, and have structures of accountability in place.

To better address these disparities, King County Parks, ECOSS, and The Wilderness Society led a community engagement project consisting of 6 community-led roundtables hosted by 5 local organizations involving 60 community members and an online survey that received nearly 400 responses. These efforts provided valuable insights into community needs and priorities to increase equitable access to parks and transit across King County and, importantly, provided King County and partners the opportunity to work together and engage the community in new ways.



“ Provide direct routes from major transit hubs to popular park destinations — like Trailhead Direct but to city parks.

## Key Takeaways



People value parks and want them to be safe and welcoming for their communities.



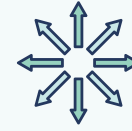
Riding transit can be difficult in general, and especially to parks.



Safety in parks and on transit can be a deciding factor for using them.



Community members want more opportunities to engage with decision-makers and hold them accountable to community needs.



Intersections of identities affect how we interact with and use parks and transit.



Incentivized participation encourages more in-depth conversation and involvement.

## Survey and Roundtable Findings

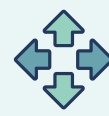


### Safety

When asked what would encourage them to use parks and transit more often, improving safety was mentioned most frequently, particularly for women and Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC) community members.



*For folks of color feeling safe, we need to have a reporting system to report racial conflicts (harassment, discrimination, etc.) and incidences - both at parks and on buses.*



### Education and Outreach

Connecting neighborhoods to green spaces goes hand in hand with communicating events, activities and other opportunities with potential visitors, which should be done in culturally relevant ways.



### Infrastructure

This assessment highlighted many infrastructure-related barriers to promoting safety, inclusion and usability.



### Access, Representation, and Inclusion

Equity in the outdoors and on transit means so much more than providing physical access. When these spaces are truly for the people, community members will want to visit and will feel a sense of belonging. Creating inclusive and welcoming spaces for people of all identities is a key prerequisite for equitable access.



### Engagement and Accountability

Community members want more direct ways to engage with King County leadership and have their ideas heard. Communities often have the best solutions for their neighborhoods and would like a system of accountability in place to meet their needs. To build trust between agencies and communities, there needs to be ongoing compensated collaboration and communication.



*Host events geared toward BIPOC folks with reduced fare/free fares to help raise awareness & reduce barriers to access.*

## Next Steps



*More land acquisition for local parks and trails within environmental justice communities, so we don't have to travel so far.*

Through this work, King County, in partnership with community leaders, organizers, and entities across the county, can continue to deliver on its commitment to improve equitable access to open space, regional trails, and transit. Early opportunities include:

- King County Open Space Plan
- 2022 Trailhead Direct Season
- King County Metro Safety Initiative
- Future King County Metro pilot programs
- Innovative collaborative campaigns to raise awareness and engage the community in culturally relevant ways around existing routes to parks (e.g. Discovery Park, Lincoln Park, and Seward Park)