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Council President Kaur
Members of the City Council
Kent Residents

I am proud to present to you my proposed 2025-2026 biennial budget. This proposed budget was prepared in collaboration with City Council, City departments, and community members. As a result of that collaboration, I firmly believe this budget is a road map that reflects the values of our organization and its commitment to our community. It is why I am grateful that as City leaders, we have shared values centered around benefiting our residents, businesses, and visitors. I thank the City Council for its teamwork and commitment to improvement so we can continue to make Kent a place we are all proud to call home.

Over the last several years, inflation has played a major role in our decision-making process. With the Consumer Price Index for Urban Wage Earners and Clerical Workers (CPI-W) for the Seattle-Tacoma-Bellevue area coming in at 40-year record high numbers, we recognized a growth in expenditures would be imminent. Over the last several years, we have certainly seen expenditures grow rapidly. Inflation has exacerbated the City's structural imbalance as labor contracts are tied, at least in part, to CPI-W. Outside of salaries and benefits, operation and projects costs are on the rise as well.

Earlier this year, knowing inflation was going to impact the 2025-2026 biennial budget, Council and staff agreed to maintain a status quo budget for this biennium. You will see this budget does exactly that as well as provides several options for restoration and stabilization. It was agreed that any budget request would be accompanied by a revenue stream or expenditure reduction to support it. We also collectively agreed to no new initiatives.

Within the \$884 million total 2025-2026 biennial budget, \$259 million is allocated to the General Fund. The proposed General Fund budget has been established with the intent to use some of the City's reserves in the General Fund to balance the budget in both 2025 and 2026. Our reserves are above the required minimums, and this is the kind of use they were intended for.

We have continued our commitment to equity in City projects, programs, and service delivery. The Race and Equity Division worked closely with community stakeholders and staff to develop the Council's Race and Equity Strategic Plan and have been working through actionable steps of that plan. This budget includes the use of ARPA funding to extend the Race & Equity Coordinator temporary limited-term position through 2026. This position will continue to support the mandatory Title VI reporting on behalf of the City and serve as a consultant to departments to assist with equity related matters while assisting in the implementation of the Race and Equity Strategic Plan.

The City will continue to be on the forefront of transparency and accountability in law enforcement. Recent laws on police reform changed how the Department recruits police officers, interacts with the community, and provides service. The Police Department expanded its recruiting efforts and as a result has been able to attract qualified and diverse recruits. Over the last year, the Police Department has become nearly fully staffed to available budget for the first time in many years. However, it is well established that Washington has the lowest rate of officers on a per capita basis as compared to any other state in the nation, and that the number of officers in Kent is among the lowest in the State. Therefore, even at fully budgeted staffing, Kent has a significant need for additional officers. To remedy this, earlier this year, the City's only legislative priority was to empower the City Council to increase the sales tax councilmanically to fund public safety. If this had passed, it would have given us the opportunity to fund our police force bringing our officer per thousand in alignment with just the average of other departments across the State. Although this did not make it to the floor of the legislature for a vote, the need is still there. This budget includes a modest increase in our business and occupation tax (B&O Tax) to help mitigate some of the immediate needs within our Police Department.

Over 50 of our 167 commissioned officers have a tenure of three years or less. This has increased the responsibility of our Police Sergeants who have the duty to provide direct supervision, mentoring, and development of these officers. That, coupled with the changes in policing, has impacted the workload for our Sergeants. The current nine officers per sergeant ratio is unrealistic and unsustainable. This budget includes the addition of two Patrol Sergeants along with one Police Officer, which will reduce the sergeant-to-officer ratio to one sergeant per five officers. The three new positions will support the Patrol Division giving the Police Department the ability to have a slightly increased presence on the street to handle 911 calls and to patrol the City. Funding has also been added to the budget to add a Correctional Sergeant allowing them the ability to supervise, mentor and develop their Correctional Officers instead of being pulled to work a post. With this additional position, two Correction Sergeants will be available to work each shift. These additions will not get our staffing levels to where they need to be but will help to mitigate some immediate needs. We will continue our efforts with the legislature for additional funding options to fund our Police Department to necessary levels.

State-level police reform bills have made apprehending criminal suspects significantly more challenging. In our continued response to regionally increasing crime, this budget includes funding for advanced technology to fight and investigate crime. We use drones daily for in-progress calls and crime scene photography. The drones we currently have are past their operational life and have operational security issues. This budget includes funding to replace three drones per year. In addition, this budget includes the purchase of the FUSUS platform. FUSUS is a real-time crime center platform that provides for the ability of businesses and residents to allow the Police Department access to their cameras to help with investigations. FUSUS is designed in a way in which a private entity can join by paying a small fee and in turn receive a box that plugs into their private cameras. The Police Department will not have unrestricted access to the cameras; they will only be able to see the cameras that are a part of the FUSUS crime center. If an incident occurs within view of those cameras, the Police Department can request access. If the private entity allows access, we can then pull video from their cameras right into FUSUS without having to go to their location, attempt to pull the video, save it to a jump drive and then head back to the station to upload the video into Evidence.com. This technology will save our detectives hundreds of hours of time each year.

In 2022, the City budgeted a portion of HB 1590 sales tax funding to support a co-responder program. With those funds, the City partnered with the Puget Sound Regional Fire Authority to participate in their FD CARES program. This program is ongoing and is included in the 2025-2026 biennial budget. With the

use of grant funding, we were also able to partner with Project Be Free, an organization that has been serving all of King County since 2022. Their focus is on serving the entire family affected by Domestic Violence and has had a dramatic positive effect on all those contacted, including our own officers. With the grant dollars coming to an end, this budget includes \$185,000 per year to continue the use of this service. This funding will provide dedicated staffing from Project Be Free to respond to Kent incidents. This is just another step in our commitment to our co-responder programs. In the short time it has been instituted, we have seen a dramatic effect within the department our officers with new tools to handle domestic violence calls, as well as increased cooperation by victims and victim families in investigations. While it is still too early in the program to grade effectiveness on recidivism, we fully believe we will be able to show hard data that corresponds to recidivism going down for domestic violence defendants.

The Police Department has recently created a Professional Standards Unit. This unit is responsible for handling complaints that come into the department. Currently, it is largely a manual process to review complaints, comply with public records request requirements and track trends or common issues. To make efficiencies and to ensure transparency in how complaints are resolved, this budget includes funding to implement the Professional Standards Suite available in the Power DMS software. The Police Department currently uses Power DMS for their policies and standard operating procedures. The Professional Standards Suite securely manages internal affairs cases, has an early intervention program, and has forms that allows for the easy tracking of use of force and pursuits as well as the ability to provide resolution to complainants.

Serving in the police force often comes with high stress and intense demands, so it is important for our law enforcement personnel to continue to protect and serve to the best of their ability by being mentally and physically fit. We support our officers mental and physical wellbeing through access to holistic wellness services. This budget includes \$30,000 to expand the opportunities available to officers for wellness visits with a licensed mental health provider. The police officer's role is stressful, emotionally draining, and physically taxing. Research has shown police wellness programs reduce on-the-job injuries, improve retention, and help in recruiting new officers. Additionally, maximizing wellness in police staff protects our significant investments in training, equipment, and other personnel costs.

The workload for our probation officers has increased significantly as we have seen a rise in mental health and drug cases which require more intensive supervision. This budget includes the addition of a probation officer to help with the increase demands of the job including providing support for general probation services, mental health caseloads, and our growing DUI and Community Court programs. The Municipal Court was awarded a \$75,000 grant from Washington Traffic Safety Commission to cover half of the costs of a probation officer position in 2025. The Municipal Court will apply for the grant again; however, there is no guarantee that it will be awarded. The remainder of the position in 2025 would be paid for by shifting a portion of the Resource Coordinator's salary to be paid for out of the opioid settlement dollars.

This budget includes the addition of an Assistant City Attorney for the Civil Division beginning in 2026. Our civil attorneys have been managing an increased workload, in both volume and complexity, while having a deficit in attorney work capacity overall. This is due to priority being given to several large and simultaneous projects, along with code enforcement issues relating to problem properties that are difficult and time consuming to address. Other issues such as the increase in encampment-related issues, major projects going on in the City, and state legislative action contrary to City policies and governance have also added to the workload. The volume and complexity of this work has necessitated this new position.

The City's Permit Center continues to realize demands for service beyond their capacity with current staffing levels. Beginning in 2025, Washington cities will be required to comply with unfunded State mandates that include shortened permit issuance timelines. Reporting requirements will increase and penalties will apply if timeliness requirements are not met. Offset by the revenues generated by the Permit Center, this budget converts an expiring temporary limited-term Permit Technician position to a permanent position. This budget also converts two additional temporary limited-term positions to permanent positions. One will be a Long-Range Planner and the other a Current Planner. Finally, the budget includes a new position within the Economic and Community Development Department to administer the City's flood plain certification program. A portion of this position will be paid for out of the Drainage Fund.

Kent Parks' newly developed Asset Management System opens unprecedented opportunities to analyze and optimize Parks' operational workflows, assess the condition of assets, and evaluate parks performance. This innovative system is a direct result of the dedicated efforts of our GIS Analyst position. The GIS Analyst is essential in managing our assets and providing technical support for all geospatial data created within the system. This role ensures the accurate collection, maintenance, and analysis of spatial data, which is crucial for informed decision-making. This budget converts the expiring temporary limited-term position to a permanent position allowing the Parks Department to optimize operational efficiency by streamlining maintenance schedules, prioritizing repairs, and allocating resources more effectively. It will enhance asset condition monitoring through regular assessments and document the condition of park assets helping us to identify potential issues before they become costly problems. We will be able to track park performance by tracking and analyzing park usage and visitor satisfaction. Finally, it will foster community engagement through the use of interactive maps and data visualizations to engage with the community, soliciting feedback and promoting park programs and events.

This budget extends the temporary limited-term Parks Program Coordinator position at the Senior Center through 2026 allowing the Parks Department to review its business model for the Senior Center and create a long-term viable solution for the Center that would be addressed with the mid-biennial budget adjustment or next biennial budget. This budget also extends the temporary limited-term Facilities Capital Projects Manager which is currently slated to expire in May 2025 for an additional three years. With large projects such as the Kent East Hill Operations Center, there is no doubt that additional support will be needed to keep all projects moving forward.

The Kent Commons Community Center currently has a part-time Program Assistant position who supports community education programming, handling essential tasks such as contracts, billing, payments, onboarding, and general program support. This role also assists with registration, office coverage, special events, and recitals when available. The demands on this position have grown significantly and the workload has exceeded what this part-time position can manage effectively. To address this issue this budget increases this position to full-time. This adjustment will create a sustainable workload, allow for consistent office coverage, as well as the ability to manage duties effectively during times of lunch breaks, illness, and vacation. To cover the increased cost of this position, the Parks Department has reduced its part-time line items within the Recreation Division. The result will be to ensure that our Commons staff can meet the growing demands efficiently and continue to provide high-quality service to our community.

In 2023, dedicated staff hours were allocated for encampment management as part of the Natural Resources team, with the expectation that additional staff time would provide the necessary resources.

However, the demand for encampment response remains high, currently consuming 65% of available staff time. These same staff resources are also responsible for trail maintenance and community stewardship events via the Green Kent program. Annually, 10 to 15 locations require contracted services, with typical costs ranging from \$3,000 to \$5,000 per day for one to two days of work, not including the variable disposal costs. To effectively manage this ongoing issue, this budget includes an additional \$75,000 each year to support contracted encampment cleanup services.

Kent Parks, through its Recreation and Cultural Services Division, proudly delivers the Spotlight Series to Kent and surrounding communities. This series showcases a diverse range of performers across multiple genres and styles, enriching our community's cultural landscape. These performances serve an estimated 2,500 to 3,000 people annually. The associated costs for these events have risen sharply. To sustain the quality and reach of the Spotlight Series, this budget includes an increase of \$55,000 for the Spotlight Series to ensure we can continue to deliver a robust cultural program that benefits the entire community. The increased cost is offset by a reduction of under-utilized budgeted line items.

The use of our Parks has been increasing and changing rapidly over the last several years. This requires our delivery of services to evolve. In 2024, our Parks Department explored a one-time pilot program in which it used a contracted security firm to provide support to manage high-use park locations such as Lake Meridian, Van Doren's, Hogan, and West Fenwick parks. The pilot program was successful. The current use of contract security services to supplement park staff securing of both park buildings and parking lots has already shown a reduction in illicit use specifically in parking lots within our park system. While this has not eliminated all issues, it has been a positive step in responding to these trends that have created a demand on police responses. This program currently includes the lock up of park restroom buildings and parking lots at 28 locations to discourage use outside of normal park operating hours. This budget includes \$50,000 per year to continue this program.

Security and safety of our city employees and facilities have been in the forefront of our minds as we have seen continued growth in theft, vandalism and acts of violence. We are seeing vandalism occur regularly at several parks' locations. The repair and replacement of doors, restroom dividers, lighting and other elements of park facilities are straining existing budgets. Because of this, we are dedicating \$50,000 per year to cover the increased costs in this area.

Over the last couple of years, we have worked to increase employee safety through upgraded security measures at our facilities, having field staff double-up when working in high-risk areas, distributing staff safety training videos, and implementing a pepper spray policy. The meter reading staff have been experiencing safety issues in the field while reading meters and shutting off delinquent accounts. At its current staffing levels, the Meter Reader group is unable to double-up in some areas due to the growing number of new meters and the increased number of delinquent accounts requiring shutoffs. This budget includes the addition of one Meter Reader to allow for better workflow, a more manageable workload for city meter staff, and the ability to double-up on routes where needed, increasing the safety of our employees.

The Drainage Fund has close to 400 sites to mow and trim during the growing season. In the past, we have tried to use a temporary position to help with this work. Unfortunately, it is difficult to retain temporary help as they tend to seek out permanent positions which leaves our crew short-staffed and unable to maintain all of the sites that the Drainage Vegetation team is responsible for. Using funding from the temporary positions budget, this budget includes the addition of a permanent, full-time Drainage Vegetation Maintenance position.

This budget also extends a temporary limited-term Design Engineer which is set to expire in June 2025. This position will continue to support current and upcoming work. The City has been successful with grant applications and have been awarded grants from regional funding partners such the Transportation Improvement Board and Puget Sound Regional Council. This position will ensure we can deliver on current commitments without the costly expense of a consultant.

With the use of some of our Fleet fund balance, this budget includes the replacement of 13 pieces of major equipment for Parks and Public Works for assets that are past their useful life and are in need of replacement. The equipment includes a variety of mowers, tractors, woodchippers, flatbed trailers, vehicle/cart and portable light towers.

Finally, this budget includes investment in the City's capital program.

- **East Hill North Community Park – Roadway Improvements.** The Parks Department was awarded approximately \$2.5 million from the State Department of Commerce to develop the East Hill North Community Park. This budget includes an additional \$1.5 million to support near-term improvements along 132nd which will improve pedestrian connectivity from the neighborhood to the park, opening the way for a more modest set of improvements at the park including limited parking, a restroom building and trails. The roadway improvements along 132nd would likely include an extruded curb separated walkway along the eastern edge of the road with rectangular rapid flashing beacons at 218th and 214th with a short segment of elevated boardwalk between 214th and 216th. These improvements would tie-in with trail improvements in the park, creating safe bike and pedestrian access to the park and facilitate future expansion.
- **Roundabout Project Design Funding.** A single lane roundabout at the intersection of the of 116th Ave SE and SE 248th Street is a project identified in the City of Kent Transportation Master Plan. This intersection has high congestion during the morning and afternoon commutes and is within proximity to Kent East Hill Operations Center, Puget Sound Regional Fire Authority Station 74, the YMCA, Clark Lake Park, Morrill Meadows Park, Martin Sortun Elementary and George Daniel Elementary. Relief of this congestion would be beneficial to the commuters on the East Hill, emergency responders as well as employees working at KEHOC. Multi-modal enhancements would be improved at this location. In order to be ready to take advantage of granting opportunities, this budget includes \$300,000 for the design of the project. We will be at a greater advantage for grant funding with the design complete.

Technology. During this biennium, the City will continue to invest in technology by funding hardware and software lifecycles with approximately \$1.7 million each year in addition to \$3.4 million in additional capital projects over the biennium. Many of these improvements are intended to support our IT security zero trust architecture approach and align with the recent IT reorganization that helped us further focus on bolstering our security and contract accountability.

- Some of technology projects include:
 - Replacement of the City's Council & Committee meeting minute, agenda, and video management software (\$135,000).
 - Updates to iNovah, the City's point-of-sale system to ensure PCI compliance which is designed to protect cardholder data (\$36,000).

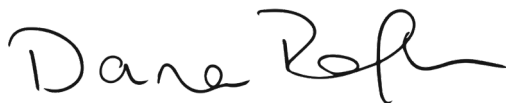
- Improvements to the City taxes and business licensing systems (\$499,000).
- Modernization and security of our Active Directory services by establishing a new hybrid on premise and cloud-based environment (\$200,000).
- Migration of the Telestaff solution from the Kronos Private Cloud to Google Cloud as required by the vendor (\$110,000).
- Integration with Valley Comm's new CAD (computer aided dispatch) vendor, Versaterm, with Axon Records and to ensure this new system works smoothly with Kent Police Department's mobile devices (\$70,000).
- Replace and create the integrations from the legacy Corrections jail management system, Tiburon, to the new BlackCreek system (\$133,000).
- Replace the current database used to manage Stormwater Program workflows, including NPDES (National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System) and FOG (Fats, Oils, and Grease) and Erosion Control workflow with updated software that can support enterprise systems integrations and collaboration to streamline the manual current state processes within Public Works Environmental Engineering (\$300,000).

Tonight, I respectfully transmit the 2025-2026 budget to the City Council for consideration. There is a tremendous amount of demand for City services. Our job as City leaders is to remain fiscally responsible, anticipate future challenges, and move this City forward. I believe this proposed budget accomplishes all of these obligations.

This document is a representation of the collaborative efforts of City leadership, City Council, City staff and the Kent community. I would like to extend my gratitude to Chief Administrative Officer Pat Fitzpatrick, department directors and their staff for the dedication and hard work that was put into this budget process. Thank you to the Finance Department, particularly Finance Director Paula Painter, Financial Planning Manager Michelle Ferguson, and her team, Kathleen McConnell and Shane Sorenson, who masterfully navigated this budget process.

Thank you all for your hard work, collaboration, and your willingness to continue to move Kent forward. Our residents, businesses and visitors are counting on it and deserve nothing less.

Respectfully Yours,



Dana Ralph, Mayor