



King County

Ron Sims
King County Executive

News Release

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King County, Burien and Seattle join together to find an annexation solution for North Highline, applaud Governor's leadership on annexation legislation

King County, Burien, and Seattle today launched a cooperative effort to achieve annexation of the entire unincorporated North Highline community by one or both of the cities. In a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), signed by King County Executive Ron Sims, Mayor Greg Nickels of Seattle, and Burien Interim City Manager David Cline, the jurisdictions agreed that it is in their joint interest, and the interest of the public, to work with residents to resolve the annexation issue, which has already been studied by residents and the adjacent cities for nearly a decade.

"I am pleased Burien and Seattle have committed to finding an annexation solution for North Highline," Sims said. "This issue has been studied to death. The residents of the North Highline community deserve to know what their options truly are for joining a city and then we need to let the people vote."

The MOU establishes a process and schedule leading to a joint recommendation by the Executive and mayors for potential annexation boundaries by July 2006, designation of potential annexation areas by the respective city councils in the fall of 2006, a vote or other form of citizen approval by November 2007, and annexation of the entire area no later than March 2009.

"Like Seattle itself, North Highline is a collection of dynamic and diverse neighborhoods," Nickels said. "The people who call this area home should have access to the kind of parks, libraries, public safety and other services that will help their communities prosper. I'm pleased the County and Burien are working with Seattle to provide North Highline residents with the information they need to chart the best course for their neighborhoods' future."

In recent years, the cities surrounding North Highline have independently examined the possibility of annexing all or part of the community. The MOU commits Seattle and Burien to share information, coordinate outreach and create a plan with input from the community that best suits North Highline. The cities of Tukwila and SeaTac declined an invitation to participate in this effort.

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“This agreement will allow us to jointly examine how services can be most effectively and efficiently provided to residents in North Highline while continuing to provide quality services to current city residents,” said Burien Deputy Mayor Jack Block. “Whether this means one city annexes the entire area or that we find a dividing line that works for the residents, we don’t yet know.”

Community involvement will be a critical component in the process leading to a resolution of annexation issues. In May, the jurisdictions will host four open houses in North Highline to solicit resident input for the July recommendation on potential annexation boundaries. A public forum will then be scheduled in late summer to review this recommendation. The cities of Burien and Seattle will be reaching out to their own residents for feedback on the annexation decision as well.

"Over the past year, the North Highline community has learned from a Council-funded study that incorporating North Highline as a stand-alone city would be financially prohibitive, while Burien and Seattle have stepped up and shown their interest in annexing all or part of the area," said County Councilmember Dow Constantine, whose District Eight includes the entire North Highline area. "We must continue to engage the community as we move toward an ultimate solution."

In Olympia, the Governor signed legislation Thursday that may also contribute to the annexation of North Highline and of urban unincorporated communities throughout King, Pierce and Snohomish counties. As passed by the legislature, Substitute Senate Bill 6686 allows cities that annex communities with at least 10,000 residents to receive a larger share of state sales-tax revenue generated within those cities for up to 10 years.

“King County, Seattle and Burien applaud the Governor and State Legislature for providing resources at the state level that will help us get our work done at the local level,” said Sims. “I also personally would like to thank the King County cities for their efforts to push this legislation ensuring that as a county we meet our growth management goals. I congratulate them on their victory and look forward to working with the different jurisdictions on further annexation efforts.”

Washington State Senator Margarita Prentice and State Representative Larry Springer provided significant leadership for the bill in the State Legislature. The cities of Renton, Kirkland, Federal Way, Burien, Kent, Tukwila, and Auburn among others offered a strong and active voice of support for the legislation in Olympia.

North Highline, with 32,000 residents, is an unincorporated urban area bordered by the cities of Seattle, Burien, SeaTac, and Tukwila. King County is currently the regional and local service provider for this area. Unincorporated North Highline includes the neighborhoods of White Center, Salmon Creek, Boulevard Park, Beverly Park, Glendale, Riverton Heights, Shorewood, South Park, and Top Hat.

The Countywide Planning Policies, a regional offshoot of the Washington State Growth Management Act, call for unincorporated urban areas to be included in cities by 2012. In 2003, King County also targeted the North Highline community for annexation and is offering financial assistance to cities that annex unincorporated urban areas.

When a community becomes part of a city, local services including roads and parks will be provided by the city. However, the county will continue to provide regional services, such as Metro Transit bus services; criminal justice services, superior courts, juvenile and detention and adult jails; wastewater treatment and solid waste management; public health and human services; licensing, records and elections. .

For more information about the North Highline open houses scheduled in May, please contact:

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<http://www.metrokc.gov/exec>**

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