

Mapping Commissary Kitchen Spaces in King County

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Project Summary

- In partnership with **Public Health - Seattle & King County**, this project sought to support the local food system through improving access to commissary kitchens for food businesses through:
- **Creating an online map** of commissary kitchen spaces in King County and **gathering data** on the current landscape of food business permitting.

Background

- **Current kitchen infrastructure in King County does not meet the needs of the community** [2, 4, 5].
- **Kitchen rental fees are expensive and permit costs are high.** The average cost of kitchen space in King County ranged from \$350 to \$7,000. A new food business will have to spend between \$374 to over \$1,300 on permits.
- For food businesses owned or operated by immigrants or underserved populations, there may be **additional language barriers** and **unfamiliarity** with government processes [2].

Why a new online map?

- Other online databases are not comprehensive and many listed kitchens are now closed.
- A map located on public health's website takes advantage of existing web traffic and directs food entrepreneurs to other KC resources (i.e. permitting information).
- A public-facing map may increase awareness about the benefits of kitchens for local food businesses.

What are Commissary Kitchens?

- Commissary kitchens are shared-use, licensed commercial kitchen spaces available for rent.
- Commissary kitchens are **critical infrastructure** in King County, meeting the needs of food businesses through providing
 - Safe operating spaces
 - Technical assistance
 - Specialized equipment
 - Storage access
 - A sense of community



Photos of a commissary kitchen in Seattle. Images source: <https://www.kbmseattle.com/>

Methods

Data Collection

- **Internet searches**
 - e.g. thekitchendoor.com; commercialkitchenforrent.com; google.com
- **Existing data at PHSKC**
- **Snowball sampling**
 - Kitchen managers were asked to share known kitchens over email or phone.
- **Interviews with community partners**
 - Partners included the City of Seattle, Good Food Economy, Alliance for Pioneer Square, Port of Seattle, Downtown Seattle Association, and Launch Industries.

Results

- 46 commissary kitchen locations in King County identified
 - 14 were closed and excluded
 - 6 were suspected kitchen locations but were unable to be contacted.
- **26 final kitchen locations** included on final map
- Map Needs:
 - **Easy to understand and use**
 - **Affordable to create and maintain**
 - **A unique tool not on the current market**

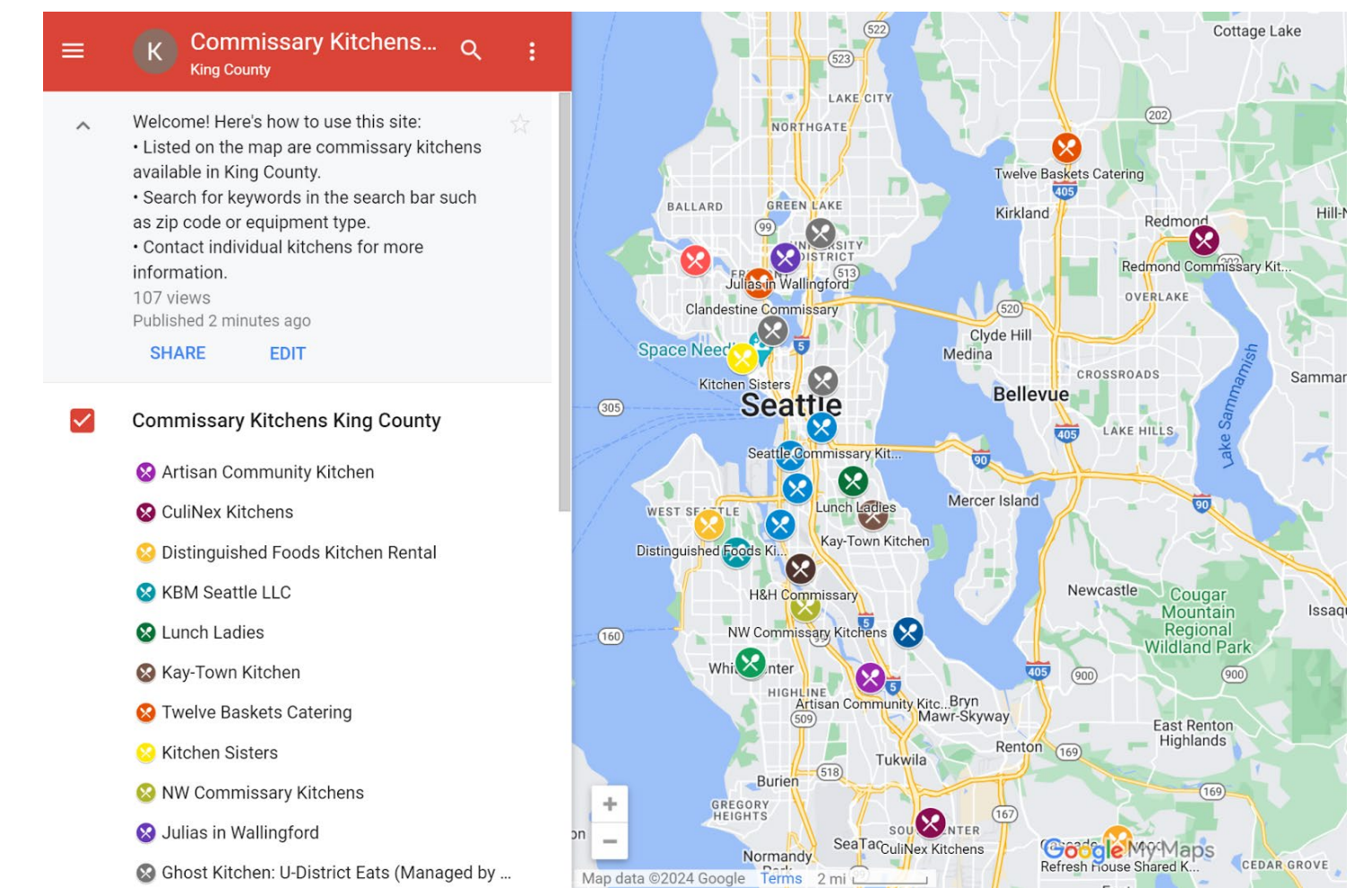
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The Kitchen Map

Kitchen data parameters

Map Data Component	Example	Rationale
Kitchen Name	Commissary Kitchen Name	Provides universal identifier for kitchen location
Kitchen Location	1234 Basic Street, Seattle, 98101	Allows for users to see the locations of kitchens and compare locations with other sites
How to Contact	Email kitchenmanager@kitchen.com or call 555-555-5000	Allows users direct contact information.
Website	kitchenwebsite.com	Allows users to easily find more information or contact the kitchen.
Last Updated	3/14/24	Lets consumers know if map information is current.
Fee Range	\$350/month - \$1500/month	Allows users to compare the price ranges of multiple kitchens.
Hours Available	24/7	Some food businesses may need late-night or 24/7 access to their kitchen spaces for production.
Available Equipment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cooktops • Ovens • Freezers • Coolers • Dishwasher • Cold storage • Dry storage • Renters need to bring supplies like pots and pans for their needs. 	A simple list of available equipment or specialized equipment allows map users to find a kitchen that meets their equipment needs. Access to specialized equipment in kitchen spaces has been identified as a critical need for food businesses in King County (South King County Public Market Feasibility Phase 1 Report, 2023).
Add-Ons for Extra Fee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cold storage • Freezer storage • Dry storage 	Users may need additional storage not included in the kitchen rental fees. Access to storage in kitchen spaces has been identified as a critical need for food businesses in King County (Ecotrust, 2019).
Services Provided	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Garbage • Grey water • Fresh water fill • Dishwasher 	Certain services provided by a kitchen may be desirable for some users.
Special Kitchen Characteristics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Co-working commercial kitchen space designed for food start-ups and small businesses. A fun and nurturing environment • Limited onsite parking available for vehicles. • No food truck parking on-site. 	A few short sentences about each kitchen allows them to be distinguishable from each other and highlight important aspects of the space.



Screenshot of map page on Google My Maps. Multiple kitchen locations under the same management are coded with the same color. Map has 4,098 views as of 3/28/24.

Conclusions and Recommendations

- **King County needs more commissary kitchen spaces to serve the needs of local food entrepreneurs.**
- **To reduce turnover rates, technical assistance should be made more accessible to food businesses renting from commissary kitchens.**
- **The Food Protection Program should consider collecting data from food entrepreneurs about their permitting experience at the time of business closure.**
- **Permitting fees should be reduced, further prorated, and the process made faster and more efficient.**

Key Personnel

- Mary Fudge, *MPH student and dietetic intern, University of Washington*
- Elizabeth Kimball, *Unit Manager, Healthy Eating Active Living*
- Eyob Mazengia, *Assistant Division Director of Environmental Public Health Services*
- Michael Lufkin, *Local Food Economy Manager; City of Seattle*
- Bridget Igoe, *Strategic Advisor, Food Policy & Programs; City of Seattle*
- Leonard Winchester, *Environmental Public Health Planner III, Meat Safety and Licensing Lead*
- Seth Schromen-Wawrin, *MUP, Healthy Eating & Active Living, Chronic Disease and Injury Prevention Section*



Screenshots of map webpage. Webpage URL: kingcounty.gov/commissary