



CITY OF KIRKLAND
CITY MANAGER'S OFFICE
123 Fifth Avenue, Kirkland, WA 98033
425-587-3000

MEMORANDUM

To: Kurt Triplett, City Manager

From: Jim Lopez, Deputy City Manager of External Affairs
Daniel Lazo, Senior Community Engagement Coordinator

Date: May 7, 2025

Subject: **Kirkland Flag Learners Advisory Group Update**

RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends that the City Council receives an update on the Kirkland Flag Learners Advisory Group (K-FLAG) process, including the selection of six semi-finalists that will be presented to the North American Vexillological Association (NAVA) Flag Design Forum. If Council concurs with the proposed process, three finalists will be brought back to the Council for a final selection.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

- The City of Kirkland initiated a community-driven process to design an official city flag, forming the Kirkland Flag Learners Advisory Group (K-FLAG) to oversee submissions and selection.
- K-FLAG received 75 flag designs from 55 participants across two submission rounds and conducted a community survey to gather input on values, symbols, and colors important to Kirkland.
- Survey findings showed strong community pride, with a preference for natural imagery like water and trees, clean designs, and colors like blue and green, as well as themes of inclusivity and local identity.
- K-FLAG received guidance from flag design experts at the North American Vexillological Association (NAVA) and applied a structured, anonymous voting process to evaluate and rank submissions.
- K-FLAG selected six semi-finalist flag designs. If Council concurs with the proposed process, the six will be reviewed further at the NAVA Flag Design Forum on June 1, 2025, to narrow down to three finalists, which will be presented to Council to vote on one official flag at a future meeting.

BACKGROUND:

On July 16, 2024, the City Council approved Resolution R-5636¹ to create an official City of Kirkland flag through a fun, collaborative process with the community, including the creation of K-FLAG to review all flag design submissions to submit to Council for approval of the official flag. This community advisory group has 11 members who represent the multi-generational and diverse community of Kirkland.

In Fall 2024, staff received 42 flag design submissions and later reopened the design submissions upon request of K-FLAG for the month of April 2025. As of May 1, 2025, 55 participants submitted a total of 75 flag designs. Of the 55 participants, ten submitted two designs.

Before selecting the semi-finalist flag designs, K-FLAG discussed ways to further engage the community and have a robust selection process. K-FLAG advised a community survey that was posted online, which included the following two questions:

- What about Kirkland makes you proud?
- What colors, symbols, and concepts do you want to represent Kirkland in the future?

As part of its process, K-FLAG also learned about best practices in a flag design review process from NAVA Secretary and author of *Good Flag, Bad Flag*,² Ted Kaye, and NAVA Flag Design Forum Committee Member, Joe Pugliese. Their presentation is provided in Attachment 1.

An overview of the Kirkland Flag process timeline is as follows:

- **City Council Approves R-5636:** July 16, 2024
- **Flag Design Submissions Round #1:** October 1 – November 15, 2024
- **K-FLAG Meeting #1 – Mission & Vision Setting:** March 27, 2025
- **K-FLAG Meeting #2 – Introduction to Flags with NAVA:** April 3, 2025
- **Flag Design Submissions Round #2 and Community Engagement Survey:** April 3 – May 1, 2025
- **NAVA Flag Design Forum Monthly Meeting:** May 8, 2025
- **K-FLAG Meeting #3 – Flag Design Review:** May 1, 2025

Proposed final process

- **NAVA Flag Design Forum:** June 1, 2025
- **City Council Approves Official Flag:** June 17, 2025
- **Flag-Raising Celebration:** Two Options
 - **4th of July Parade:** July 4, 2025
 - **City Hall 4 All:** September 13, 2025

DISCUSSION/ANALYSIS:

Community Engagement Survey Results

K-FLAG advised staff to develop a two-question survey to engage specific groups that would likely utilize the flag as well as the community at-large, including:

- Senior Council

¹ https://www.kirklandwa.gov/files/sharedassets/public/v/1/city-council/agenda-documents/2024/july-16-2024/9b1_business.pdf

² https://nava.org/content.aspx?page_id=22&club_id=622278&module_id=475721

- Youth Council
- Tourism & Development Committee
- Cultural Arts Commission
- Kirkland Teen Union Building (KTUB)
- Kirkland Initiative
- Kirkland Alliance of Neighborhoods (KAN)
- City of Kirkland social media

Below are the results of the survey:

- 93% of respondents expressed pride in Kirkland through its natural beauty, parks, and people.
- 86% of respondents mentioned natural elements like trees, water, parks, or sky.
- 76% of respondents said that blue and green were the most popular colors.
- 71% of respondents leaned toward a clean layout with just a few key symbols or colors.
- 64% of respondents used words like community, peaceful, family-friendly, or inclusive to describe what they want reflected in the flag.
- 43% of respondents emphasized keeping the flag uniquely “Kirkland” - not generic - and true to the city's local character and scale.
- 29% of respondents cautioned that the flag should preserve Kirkland’s charm, scale, and green character.
- 29% of respondents mentioned specific icons like the Marina Park pavilion, lakefront, or one-story downtown as inspiration.
- 21% suggested accents like yellow, pink, or orange to give the flag a more friendly, vibrant feel.
- 21% mentioned ideas like diversity, sustainability, and inclusivity as part of what Kirkland stands for.
- 14% of respondents specifically emphasized the need for the flag to represent all community members, including seniors or new residents.

Design Guidelines

As stated in Resolution R-5636, submission and evaluation of the flag designs must be guided by criteria combining the five basic principles for good flag design articulated by NAVA and two Kirkland-specific criteria, as follows:

1. Keep it simple.
2. Use meaningful symbolism.
3. No lettering or seals.
4. Be distinctive.
5. Be related to Kirkland.
6. Be consistent with City values.

The recommended size for the flag design is at a ratio of 3 feet by 5 feet. Note that when looking at a 3-by-5 flag from 50 feet away, the flag will have a similar view at 1 inch by 1.5 inch at 16 inches away.

Semi-Finalists Selection Process

After the presentation by NAVA on April 3, 2025, K-FLAG decided to go with the following process:

1. Staff first scrubbed all the designs for anything offensive.
2. Staff printed all the flags and posted them on the walls. Staff also provided descriptions of each flag and each submission was kept anonymous to prevent bias.

- Each K-FLAG member received 10 dots to mark their top choices.
 - Designs that were not picked were put aside.
 - K-FLAG members had a discussion on their top choices with the group.
3. Those top choices were rated at a 0-10 scale voting.
- K-FLAG discussed the top eight scoring designs to further narrow down what would move forward as semi-finalists to Council as an update and bring for design refinement at the NAVA Flag Design Forum.

Grounded in the six design criteria articulated in Resolution R-5636 and informed by the community survey results, K-FLAG selected six semi-finalist designs from the 75 submissions. K-FLAG identified two flag designs that were very similar and wanted NAVA to consider them as one semi-finalist. Staff proposed that these six semi-finalist designs will be reviewed at the NAVA Flag Design Forum on June 1, 2025. Following this forum, the semi-finalists will be narrowed down to three finalists that will go to Council to select one official flag for the City of Kirkland. The semi-finalists have been notified that their flag designs are moving forward in the process.

See Attachment 2 for the Kirkland Flag Design Semi-Finalists, with K-FLAG's pros and deltas to each design.

NEXT STEPS:

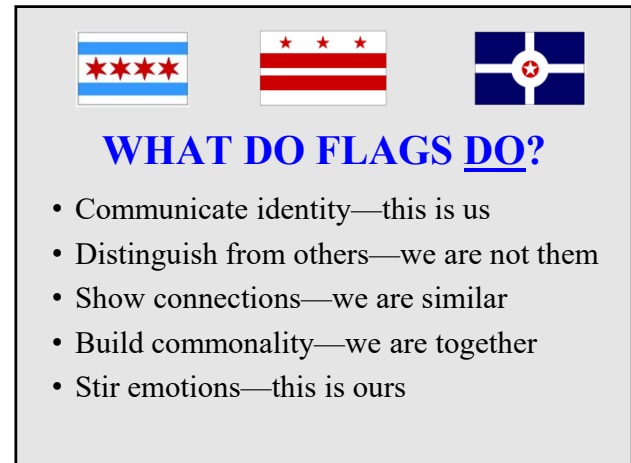
Staff recommends that the Council discuss any changes to the current process or semi-finalist flag designs before the designs go before the NAVA Design Forum. Staff will return to Council with three final flag design recommendations.

ATTACHMENTS:

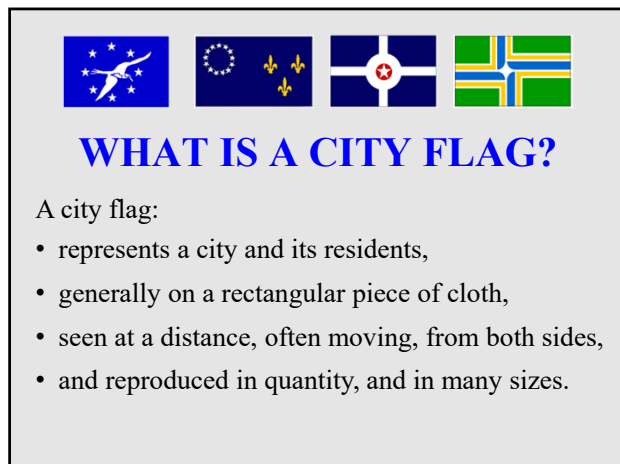
Attachment 1 - NAVA Presentation to K-FLAG
Attachment 2 - Kirkland Flag Design Semi-Finalists Results



1



2



3



4



5



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Highly-Rated New City Flags



7

Lowest-Rated City Flags



8

Wichita, Kansas



"The thing about this flag is that it doesn't matter which side of the river I'm on, it doesn't matter who I voted for, it doesn't matter who I cheer for...there's no barrier, there's nothing that I have to worry about because we're on the same team." Angie Prather

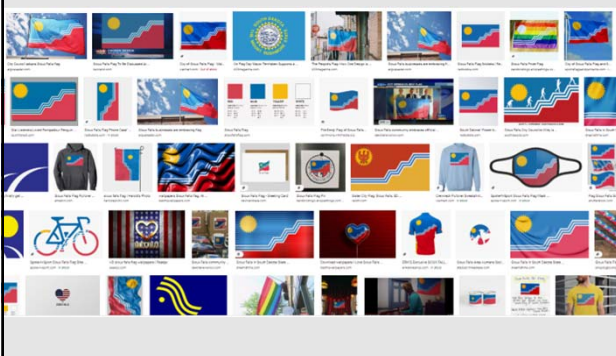
9

Wichita, Kansas



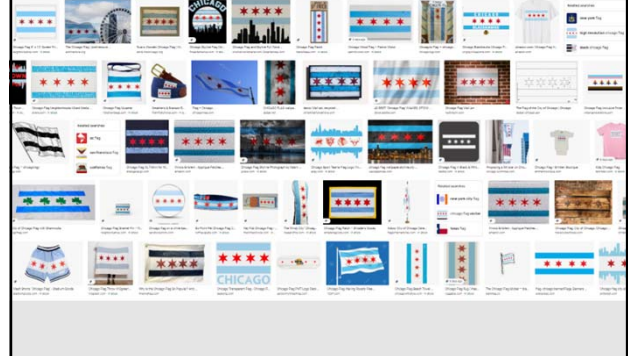
10

Sioux Falls, South Dakota



11

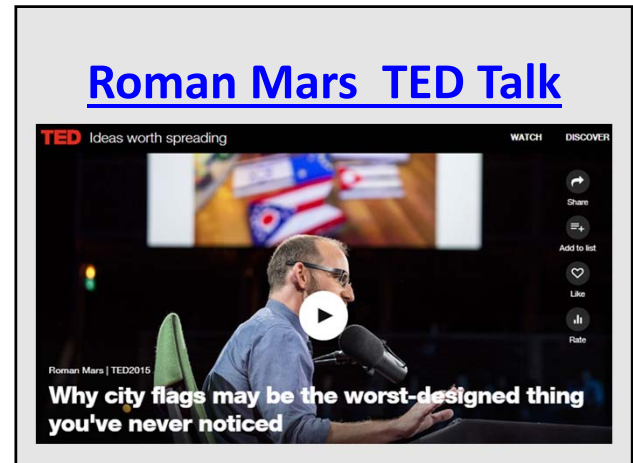
Chicago, Illinois



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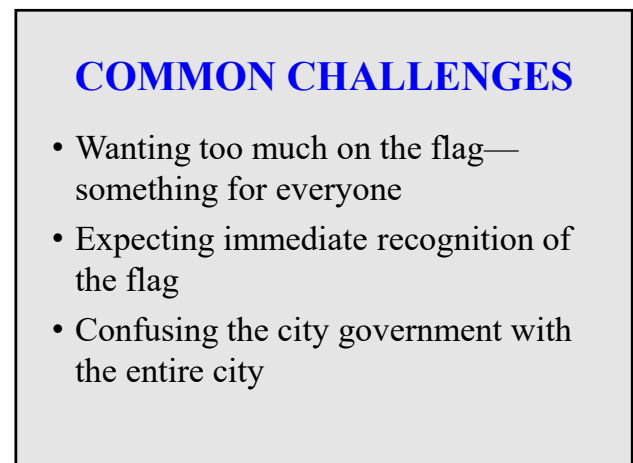
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Best U.S. State Flags



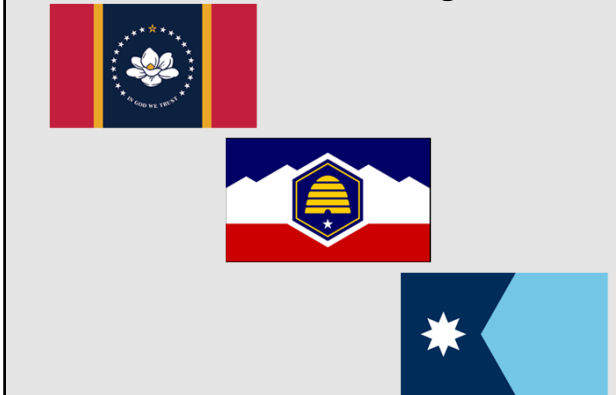
19

Indistinguishable U.S. State Flags



20

New U.S. State Flags



21



THE 5 BASIC PRINCIPLES OF FLAG DESIGN

1. Keep It Simple
2. Use Meaningful Symbolism
3. Use 2–3 Basic Colors
4. No Lettering or Seals
5. Be Distinctive (or Be Related)

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1. Keep It Simple

- The flag should be so simple that a child can draw it from memory...



23

2. Use Meaningful Symbolism

- The flag's images, colors, or patterns should relate to what it symbolizes...



24

3. Use 2–3 Basic Colors

- Limit the number of colors on the flag to three, which contrast well and come from the standard color set...



25

4. No Lettering or Seals

- Never use writing of any kind or an organization's seal...



26

5. Be Distinctive (or Be Related)

- Avoid duplicating other flags, but use similarities to show connections...



27

**DISCERNIBLE & MEMORABLE**

Must be able to make out what's on the flag

Must be able to remember what it symbolizes

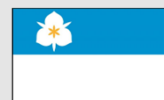
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Final advice:
The 1½-Inch Rule

**3' x 5' flag at 50 feet away =
1" x 1½" at 16"**

Draw in that small rectangle !

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**YOUR CITY CAN HAVE
A GREAT FLAG**

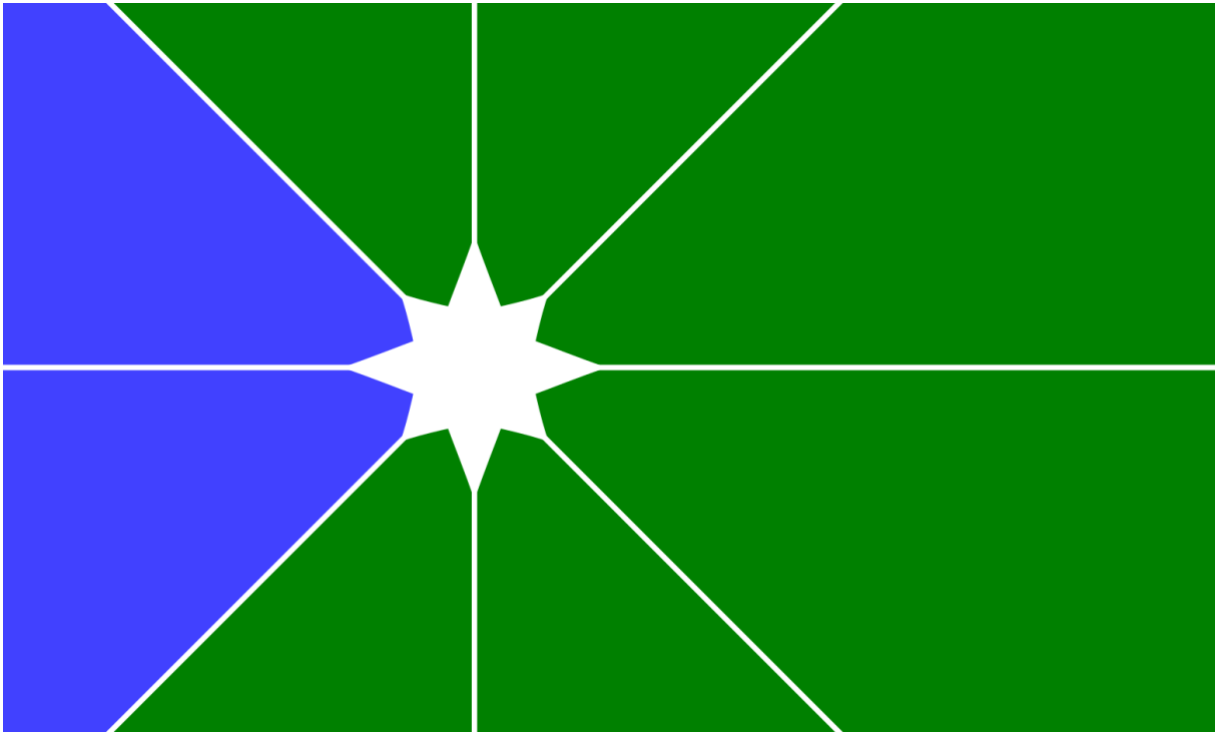



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*The Map - Simplified by Kurt Dresner**

K-FLAG Score: 68

Artist Description: An abstract depiction of Kirkland's downtown on Lake Washington. The flag is symmetric so cannot be flown upside down and uses a simplified color palette with more standardized colors. The blue triangle represents both Lake Washington as well as an arrow pointing forward for progress. Downtown is symbolized by a compass rose to pay homage to our history as a shipbuilding town and our connection to the water. Lines radiate out from downtown to symbolize both how Kirklanders come from all over the world and also how Kirkland's influence extends to the whole world.



Pros	Deltas
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The symbol is transferable to multiple mediums.• Line gives it a distinctness.• The flag is easily invertible and will look good hung vertically.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The lines are too thin and hard to see when zoomed out.<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ This would make the stitching would be expensive.• Suggested design edit:<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Flip the flag 180 to get a “K” symbol and remove thin line○ Points of the star can expand instead of making lines thicker or remove lines• The colors need more contrast.<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Suggested design edits: Use the Flight of Seattle blue• This flag is similar to the Minnesota Flag: 

***Note that K-FLAG identified this flag design to be very similar to another, and wanted NAVA to consider them as one semi-finalist.**

Kirkland Flag Design Semi-Finalists Results 2025

Guided by the “K” by Yasin Merchant

K-FLAG Score: 62

Artist Description: This flag design is a bold visual representation of Kirkland’s identity—its natural landscape, civic values, and forward-looking spirit. It features a horizontal division: sky blue above to represent Lake Washington and the city’s deep connection to water, and deep green below to reflect Kirkland’s parks, forests, and environmental stewardship.


At the hoist side, a stylized chevron made of layered blue, green, and metallic white lines forms the shape of the letter "K"—a subtle yet intentional nod to Kirkland. The chevron points inward to signify movement, direction, and unity. Its angular design evokes progress and collaboration—key traits of the city’s dynamic growth and civic engagement.

From the heart of the “K” shape emerges a metallic white starburst, symbolizing a compass rose or guiding light. This radiant design element represents Kirkland’s prosperity, rich culture, and shared direction. It highlights the city’s foundational pillars: vibrant neighborhoods, a sustainable environment, inclusive and welcoming communities, connected infrastructure, safe and healthy people, and a transparent, equitable government.

The use of metallic white throughout the design is intentional—it represents not only light and clarity, but also prosperity, peace, and the cultural richness that define Kirkland as a thriving, diverse city.

This flag honors both the spirit and the structure of Kirkland: grounded in nature, rooted in community, and moving confidently toward a shared and inclusive future.



Pros	Deltas
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The green and blue are in value to each other here.• The flag colors are to the Washington Flag colors.• The concepts are distinctive, including the partial compass rose and subtle K.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The star looks like cannabis leaf.• Suggested design edits:<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Half star becomes the white border○ Instead of three stripes, make one stripe○ Star to thicken to make it more bold, not weak○ Remove the white stripe• Teal does not scream Washington and feels cold.• This flag is similar to the Minnesota Flag: 

Kirkland Flag Design Semi-Finalists Results 2025


Green, Blue and You by Heather Cooney

K-FLAG Score: 61

Artist Description:

- K for Kirkland (Because the rules state “no lettering”, the left column of the white K has been removed. If “lettering” were acceptable, then we would put it back in)
- Green section represents Kirkland’s hills
- Lighter blue section represents the Lake Washington which runs along a border of Kirkland
- Dark blue represents open space where you can be whoever you want to be (the sky’s the limit)
- Blue and green colors also nod to Kirkland’s close connection with all of Seattle’s pro sports teams



Pros	Deltas
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The K is very distinct.• The design is simple and a canvas for creativity.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Suggested design edits:<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Center the K○ Less sky symbolism• The arrow feels like we are going backwards.• The space on the right feels too empty.• The flag does not have a connection to place and needs more character and personality. <div></div> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• This flag is similar to logo of Vancouver, Washington:

Kirkland Flag Design Semi-Finalists Results 2025

Flag #45 (Not Titled) by Nicole Gallacher

K-FLAG Score: 60

Artist Description: This flag symbolizes the city’s natural beauty and strong community spirit. The tree's reflection in the lake mirrors the city's close connection to Lake Washington, emphasizing Kirkland’s waterfront identity. The blue upper half signifies the sky and water, while the green lower half reflects the city’s parks and forested landscapes and commitment to sustainability. Together, the design evokes harmony between urban life and nature, celebrating Kirkland as a vibrant community.



Pros	Deltas
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The flag is still recognizable with different shapes.• The flag is unique to other flags because of the reflection of the tree.• The bottom of the flag is up to interpretation for reflection or roots.• This flag is the least conceptional and more concrete among other submissions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The tree looks like it was screwed into the ground.• Suggested design edits:<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Flip the blue and green or go with other color schemes○ Include a mountain• The colors are too similar, especially for someone with color blindness.

Kirkland Flag Design Semi-Finalists Results 2025

Kirkland Harmony by Luisa Furtado

K-FLAG Score: 52.5

Artist Description: What makes Kirkland’s identity, and us all proud? The top of the list certainly includes: a unique sense of community, its ample culture scene, a strong technological character, the prominent waterfront, our cherished parks, and ultimately, a deep connection to nature. Can you find it all in the new flag?

A kite soars just above our green parks and blue waterfronts, representing both community and craftsmanship. Its tip forms a north-pointing triangle, which, together with the lightning bolt-shaped tree silhouette, symbolizes not only for progress and technology but also Kirkland's continued responsibility to harmonize these with nature. Looking at everything together, the composition of foreground and background resembles an iconic painting, nodding at our art scene, where the kite reveals itself once again: this time as a diamond, for Kirkland is a true jewel of Washington State.



Pros	Deltas
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The diamond feels like Mt. Rainer.• Best as a small size (e.g. lapel pin)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Suggested design edits:<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Get rid of the diamond to simplify the design.○ Change the lime green and make variants with different color schemes.

Kirkland Flag Design Semi-Finalists Results 2025

The Heron’s Path by Agustin Da Fieno Delucchi

K-FLAG Score: 52

Artist Description: This flag honors the natural spirit of Kirkland through the elegant silhouette of a great blue heron, a familiar resident along Lake Washington’s shores. The heron symbolizes grace, observation, and connection to the local ecosystem. It soars across a gently winding white band that represents both the lake and the flow of community life — peaceful yet ever-moving. The deep blue above evokes the sky and Kirkland’s forward-looking vision, while the green below reflects the city’s parks, forests, and environmental commitment. The design is minimal, rich with symbolism and distinctively tied to Kirkland’s identity.



Pros	Deltas
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The shades of the green and blue are a good contrast.• This would make a great seal.• It is distinctive to Kirkland with the heron.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The bird may be too complicated.• The waves are not symmetrical.<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Suggested design edit: Semicircle and long triangle for just the head.

Kirkland Flag Design Semi-Finalists Results 2025

The Map by Kurt Dresner*

K-FLAG Score: 52.5

Artist Description: The overarching theme is a very abstract map of Kirkland. The blue is the water and the various bays (Juanita Bay, Moss Bay) that border Kirkland. It forms an arrow signifying progress. The Compass Rose shows where our downtown is while alluding to our history as both a shipbuilding town and a ferry suburb. The alternating shades of green represent the many hills in Kirkland, and our commitment to sustainability. The squiggly white line represents the much-loved Cross-Kirkland Corridor, the paths that bring us together, and also helps the flag be recognizable when the wind is not blowing.



Pros	Deltas
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The wave is good design aspect.• It can be a bonus for the greens to blend to make it less similar to the Minnesota Flag.• The alternating greens make it look 3D like terrain.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The similar shade of greens is too close – make them more distinct.• The squiggly line makes it look like that part of the flag can be torn off.

***Note that K-FLAG identified this flag design to be very similar to another, and wanted NAVA to consider them as one semi-finalist.**