

A MESSAGE FROM THE KING COUNTY ASSESSOR

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The vision of a professional, customer-service-oriented Department of Assessments is becoming reality as technology and training plans reach fruition. The county-wide revaluation of property for 1995 taxes showcased many innovations in technology and assessment practices – innovations that will continue in 1996 and beyond. Among them:

- ***Re-defining the focus toward customer service.*** In addition to adopting a mission statement centered on fairness and service, the Department expanded its public service counter hours, redesigned its business personal property reporting forms to a more customer-friendly format, and enhanced its efforts to reach out to the taxpayer, settling valuation questions “up-front” without appeal to a formal board where possible.
- ***Advancement in GIS (Geographic Information Systems) Implementation.*** This year, the Assessor took over maintenance of the parcel layer of Seattle’s GIS database, providing digital coverage of over one-third of King County. Assessor staff are also extensively involved in the county-wide GIS project that will convert the remaining areas of the county maps to computerized form by the end of next year. The GIS project promises to provide faster, more accurate service to the citizens of King County in many arenas, including property tax assessments.
- ***Modernization of Assessments Computer Systems.*** A department-wide local area network was installed, and more than 200 desktop and laptop computers were purchased and distributed to department employees. Training in basic computer skills was provided to all employees in 1995. New PC-based applications are being implemented to support improving fairness of valuations and responsiveness to taxpayer concerns.
- ***Adoption of and Adherence to Appraisal Industry Standards.*** The 1995 valuations reflected for the first time the Department’s adoption of the Uniform Standards of Professional Appraisal Practice (USPAP) as applied to mass appraisals.
- ***Re-structuring of Work Flow.*** The “assembly-line” approach to appraising property was abandoned in favor of geographic assignment for appraisers, giving each appraiser full authority and responsibility for valuations in his or her area, and allowing the appraiser to take advantage of growing experience with a geographic location. Managers with significant professional credentials were added to the staff in 1995, and reporting relationships were re-defined to facilitate communication.

The team of talented and dedicated employees at the King County Department of Assessments has ensured our success in making change work. They have my sincere thanks for their commitment to the goal of providing outstanding service to the taxpayers of King County. The Metropolitan King County Council and staff, the King County Executive, and the officials of the 160 taxing districts in King County have my thanks also for their support and assistance, as do the citizens of King County for allowing me the challenging and rewarding opportunity of leading the Department of Assessments in its mission of public service.