

A MESSAGE FROM THE KING COUNTY ASSESSOR -- SCOTT NOBLE



I am proud to report that 1996 was a landmark year. It marked the first year of annual revaluation using modernized computer systems and applications. Annual revaluation, widely recognized as the most equitable assessment practice, is a big step toward our commitment to fair and understandable property valuations.

We have had marked success in improving service to the public in 1996; streamlining operations with new technology, expanding customer services and enhancing our responsiveness. My focus will continue to stress three areas to produce these results: standards, resources, and customer service. Highlights include:

- **Computer Systems** -- This year, new technology produced programs for property revaluation, building permit tracking, personal property assessment processing, property sales verification and senior citizen exemption processing. Our technology transition has not been without challenges. We continue to be considered at the forefront on productivity improvement progress, and appraisal documentation for public use. Our personal computer and laptop use will expand and greatly improve the areas of field data collection, mass appraisal methodologies, public access to information, and information sharing. We look forward to, and actively seek, collaborative technology efforts to provide cost-effective and timely service delivery, and information access.
- **Enhancement of Customer Services** -- The department increased office hours for handling senior citizen and other exemptions. Also, property maps now may be obtained from our Public Information area. Coordinating with federal authorities, department staff assisted citizens in obtaining tax relief for homes damaged by floods and windstorms. In a big step for information access, we actively supported establishment of community information centers in the Lake Wilderness and Northshore areas, where assessments information is now available via computer terminals. Organizational changes enabled commercial appraisers to maximize use of specialty and tailored mass appraisal techniques, thus greatly improving the quality, accessibility and uniformity of valuations. Efforts toward information gathering and sharing were initiated in 1996 with the cities and jurisdictions of King County to gather land use change information for value adjustment purposes, and to clarify tax base and levy capacity determination processes.
- **Training Program** -- To maintain technical skills in the rapidly changing appraisal and technology environments, the department training program is designed to meet two objectives: 1. provide high quality, effective, responsive and courteous services to customers, and 2. provide opportunities to develop job knowledge, skills and abilities to achieve personal and professional goals. A variety of in-house sponsored courses as well as apprentice and mentoring programs are provided.
- **The Future** -- Professionalism and accountability are self-imposed requirements here at the Department of Assessments, and the staff can take pride in their professional performance. I will continue to emphasize our department's mission and goal to deliver quality service **and** responsive service. Technology, our work environment, and training are vital to our future, where an ever-increasing workload meets the challenges of performance under constraints. My vision revolves around the idea that operational systems such as ours, with a wealth of information for all to share, will be more useful to everyone concerned. Access to information for the citizenry should be provided from as many points as possible. This effort can improve public access to services and participation in government. At the Department of Assessments we recognize we must not lose sight of our guiding principles and it is people who are the service providers and problem solvers.

We are blessed with talented people in the King County Department of Assessments. Our reforms over the last four years have focused on **changes in organizational culture and thinking, a customer service orientation, information systems modernization**, and, central to our mission, **professional standards and accountability**. Our success is due to the hard work of a great group of people at the department -- true professionals. Professionals who in a time of technology transition, organizational change, and resource constraints put forth resourceful and creative efforts demonstrating that the T.E.A.M. concept -- Together Everyone Accomplishes More -- works. They have my sincere thanks, respect and accolades for their dedication and commitment to "providing fair, equitable, and understandable property valuations...".