

# SERVICE LEVEL STANDARDS

## REPORT SUMMARY

Shortly following incorporation in August, 1995, the City Council had to make many decisions relating to City service levels and service mix. Service level deals with "how much" service. Service mix deals with "what services" and "who provides" the service. A basic determination of the in-house and contract-out mix and general levels of service was set. Gradually, the City began expanding services within this mix as time and resources allowed.

By 1999 the City had grown its services – now including Parks and Recreation, following the absorption of the U.P. Parks and Recreation District in 1997 – into its "Basic" level of services. While some surrounding "Full Service" cities with larger per capita revenue structures provided more services, COMMUNITY SURVEYS INDICATED A VERY HIGH LEVEL OF CITIZEN SATISFACTION WITH THE CITY'S "BASIC SERVICE" LEVELS.

The City had kept the "Promise of Incorporation" by:

- 1.) REDUCING TOTAL LEVELS OF TAXES/FEEES per household below equivalent unincorporated county taxes/fees;
- 2.) INCREASING CITY SERVICE LEVELS beyond unincorporated county levels;
- 3.) BEGINNING CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PROJECTS; and
- 4.) ESTABLISHING SOUND FISCAL POLICIES.

In the Summer of 1999, however, Initiative I-695 qualified for the Fall ballot. I-695 was to eliminate most of the Motor Vehicle Excise Tax (MVET) and, indirectly, funding for the Sales Tax Equalization Program. UNIVERSITY PLACE FACED THE LOSS OF 25-30% OF ITS GENERAL FUND!

The City Manager directed staff to prepare budget cut-back options looking at specific service level indicators and service items in each Division. For discussion purposes and to help Council with its policy, decisions on budgets, staffing and services, the following terms were established:

- IV. FULL SERVICE – That level of service provided in the Full Service (higher tax/revenue) communities like Tacoma, Puyallup, Fife and Gig Harbor.
- III. BASIC SERVICE – The then City of University Place level of service in 1999, similar to services in Fircrest, Lakewood and