

# IMPROVING

## GOVERNMENT PERFORMANCE

*While other governments talk about priorities of government, King County has acted. Executive Sims reorganized government and applied proven management principles. Prioritizing and streamlining has allowed \$135 million in cuts from 2002 to 2005.*

### Streamlining services, saving money

Since 1998 King County has:

- Consolidated departments from 14 to 7, drastically cutting overhead.
- Realigned juvenile justice operations and renegotiated jail contracts with cities to help avoid building new detention facilities.
- Restructured employee medical benefits in collaboration with unions, saving millions.
- Created the Metropolitan Parks Task Force, oversaw development of a business plan, transferred in-city parks and pools, cut spending 35 percent, cut reliance on general fund by \$17 million annually while ensuring all parks and facilities remain available to the public, paving the way for a four-year voter approved levy for parks.
- Charged rent to the solid waste utility for the real costs of using the county-owned landfill, while maintaining service to solid waste customers.
- Working in collaboration with unions, saved more than \$16 million in four years in the Wastewater Treatment Division through an innovative employee-based productivity program modeled on the business practices of private industry.
- Cut the Solid Waste Division budget by more than \$9 million/year by making operations more streamlined and efficient, while maintaining services. The savings help keep rates among the lowest in the state.
- Leveraged the county's \$4+ billion in assets to generate more revenue for a better return on taxpayer investments.

### **Parks Business Transition Plan**

**P**opular tax-cutting initiatives and the worst economic session in 30 years produced a 2002 countywide budget crisis that forced King County to cut \$135 million from its general fund over the following years. Parks was faced with complete elimination of its \$20 million budget and the closure of 180 parks (25,000 acres) and 16 pools.

Today, Parks receives only \$3 million from the county's general fund, but all of these facilities are still open to the public.

Parks is acting like a business, in collaboration with unions, to generate over 25 percent of its operating revenue. Additionally, citizens are volunteering more, user groups are helping maintain facilities, and thousands are attending new events. As a measure of confidence in parks' innovative approach, voters approved a four-year operations and maintenance levy at a time other parks levies in the region failed.

**R**ead about the successes and challenges of our election process in the "2004 King County Elections Report", available at libraries, community centers and online at [www.metrokc.gov/elections](http://www.metrokc.gov/elections)

- Rebated and rolled back over \$1.8 million in building permit fees (2004) as a result of efficiencies.
- Streamlined development permit processes between state, federal and local agencies.
- Installed a 24/7 interactive voice response system, allowing customers to schedule building inspections at any time.
- Secured top-tier bond ratings from Moody's and Standard & Poor's. No other governmental unit in the state has higher bond ratings than King County.
- Negotiated a new cell phone contract resulting in \$300,000 to \$400,000 in annual savings.

#### **Learning from the Financial Systems**

**Replacement Project** – Since the suspension of the Financial Systems Replacement Project in 2000, the county has proceeded carefully and methodically toward improving services and preparing a new Accountable Business Transformation (ABT) effort.

Several studies have been completed and careful steps have been undertaken to address the underlying challenges and implement best practices to blend complex financial systems.

The county has an established technology governance structure to provide oversight essential for projects of this magnitude.

The county has employed new business management and analytical experts, as well as technology resources with proven expertise in the successful business management, innovation and systems implementation that improve current business operations.

Executive Sims' recommendation for implementing the Accountable Business Transformation plan will be transmitted to the County Council on April 7.

### **Improving Elections**

- King County Elections processed a record-breaking 138,729 new registrations in 2004, a 40 percent increase for the same 10-month period leading up to the 2000 election.

- In 2004, King County issued a record 646,537 absentee ballots and counted more than 233,000 absentee ballots on Election Day, a record for King County.

- Last year, King County Elections launched an online polling place search engine, giving voters instant information on their precinct and the located of 540 polling places throughout the county.

- In compliance with the Help America Vote Act, King County Elections last year rolled out a bilingual provisional ballot search engine to give voters who cast a provisional ballot on Election Day the ability to check the status of their ballot.

- In response to the Citizens' Election Oversight Committee, King County Elections replaced outdated computer system, and is working to implement other Oversight Committee recommendations.



**King County Elections Director Dean Logan and League of Women Voters president Nancy Eitheim with the Voter Mobile. King County processed a record-breaking 138,729 new registrations in 2004.**