

City Manager looks back and ahead

Retiring in 2010 after 15 years as University Place City Manager

As I prepare to retire after almost 15 years with the City, I am both very proud of our accomplishments, and yet, concerned about our ability to meet the challenges ahead.

For 40 years now, I have watched University Place grow and change for the better. I turned 21 in 1968 in an ROTC fox-hole at Fort Lewis, and on weekends I'd stay at my Aunt Mildred's home off 23rd and Bridgeport. Back then I had no idea I'd come to call U.P. home, let alone be the first City Manager.

As promised, when we incorporated as a new City in 1995, we have:

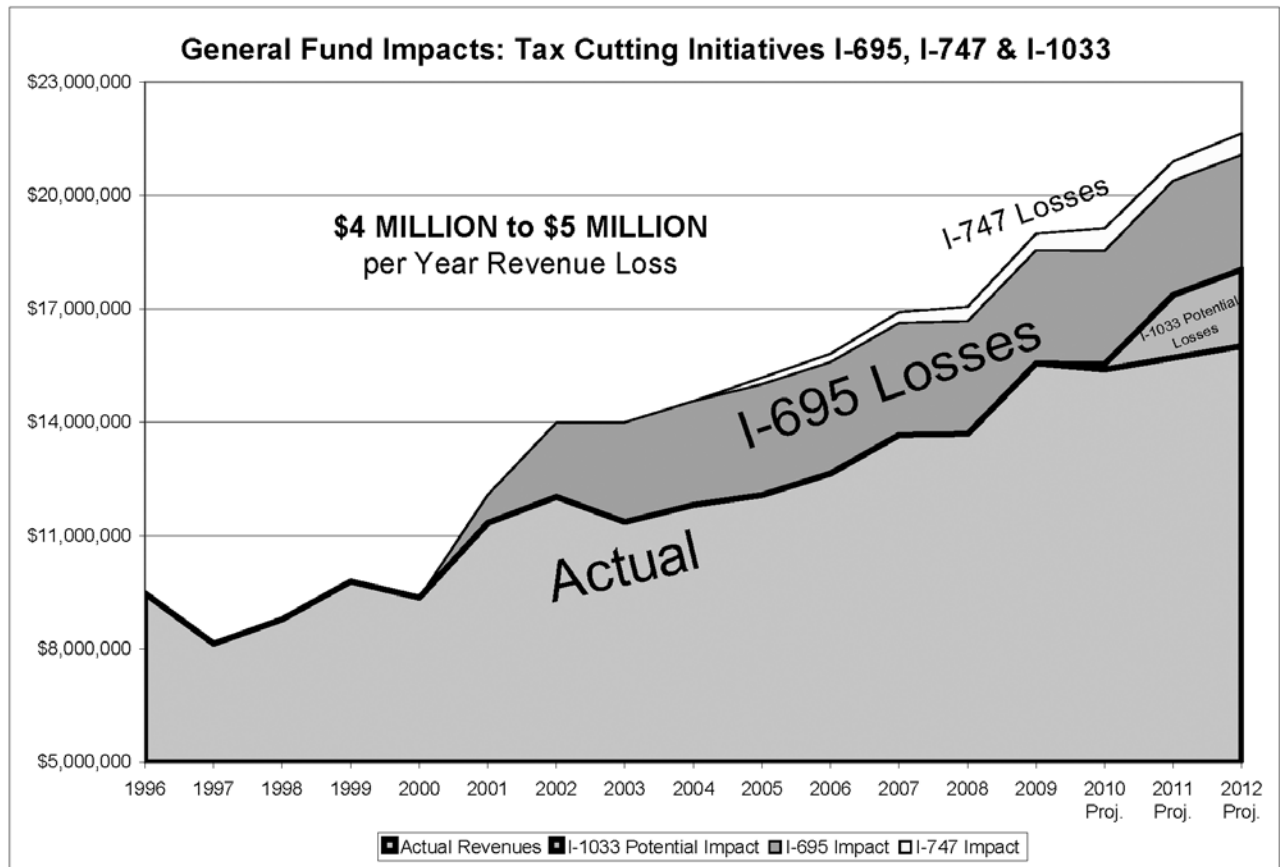
- Lowered City property taxes;
- Improved City services;
- Made capital improvements; and, so far,
- Maintained financial stability.

At your request and with your support, we have reduced crime rates, improved parks and recreation, controlled growth, while requiring that "growth pay its own way," and improved traffic safety. We built 23 miles of sidewalks, installed 530 streetlights, planted 2,445 street trees, opened new parks, eliminated most flooding problems and improved streets.

I remember when Grandview was two lanes and gravel shoulders, with speeds of 45-50 mile per hour. When we proposed building sidewalks and using roundabouts to calm traffic, we were told "nobody walks there and traffic is too fast, why bother?" Now Grandview is the most popular walking street in town, with traffic at safe 30-35 miles per hour speeds.

And that would have been reason enough, but it was the Grandview Street improvements that also led to the Chambers Bay Project. So to those who say "why bother," I say "good things sometimes happen in unanticipated ways."

After we lost \$3 million a year in General Fund revenue following I-695, we cut to "Limited Services." We next worked through



the recession of 2002 following 9/11. We then started our investment in Town Center in order to build a long-term tax base. We again adjusted and lowered service levels and capital improvements after I-747 limited property tax growth to one percent in a 3-5 percent cost environment.

We've been cutting services and capital budgets for 10 years. Now we're in the middle of the worst economic crisis in 61 years since the Great Depression, and this time we need to cut to "Core" levels and have limited capital improvements to just grant funded projects.

As I said in 2005, if "we are to achieve your vision of an even better University Place... then we need to realize that continued budget cutting isn't going to get us there."

Earlier this year, I stated "I am seriously concerned that in our zeal for tax-cutting, we begin to think there are no consequences."

For 2010 we are struggling with the real consequences of 10 years of State-wide tax-cutting initiatives and the worldwide economic crisis: City service levels cut by 33 percent and Police by 25 percent to Core levels, recreation programs and events dependent on volunteers. We will use the rest of our reserve or rainy day funds in 2010. And unless voters approve a

Police levy in 2010, should I-1033 pass, then City services will stay at Core levels for at least the next five years or until Town Center revenues start to offset the I-1033 property tax cuts.

As citizens of University Place, we must rethink our responsibilities and recognize that "there is no free lunch." Somehow we need to decide how we want to pay for the City services we have come to take for granted.

So, we can be proud of our accomplishments as a community these past 15 years, but we need to face the challenges ahead with a real understanding of how we've limited our abilities to provide and pay for the services we want. Ultimately, our investments in community pay direct dividends to us and our families.

City Manager Recruitment/Selection

The City Council will meet with Councilmember(s)-Elect on November 30, 2009 to discuss the City Manager Recruitment/Selection and public involvement in the process.