



## **Introduction to the Snohomish County Community Assessment Data Committee Report**

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**To:** Community Partners

**From:** Data Committee

**Date:** **March 2002**

This report contains selected community assessment information, corresponding to the questions to be asked in the community survey, descriptive of needs in Snohomish County.

The Committee intention was to collect and collate data through research and access of existing databases and community reports. The data represents information of social, economic and environmental well-being.

One or a small group of committee members prepared each of the sections. As the sections were not reviewed or considered discretely by the group as a whole, inquires or concerns related to any of the information should be directed to the member(s) who worked on that section. The Committee set out to provide an in time snapshot for the Community Partners to utilize with the survey results in the identification of priority needs and responses. The Committee purposely chose to utilize the bullet and reference format to minimize the volume of raw data that the Community Partners would have to consider. Further information or copies of source documents can be obtained by contracting individual committee members as identified on the roster.

It is the hope of the Data Committee that this report will enable the Survey Committee to structure their findings in a manner that will maximize the degree to which the information corresponds.

Data Committee members have been asked to attend the Community Partners meetings and to be prepared to respond to questions regarding the information contained in this report. They are also prepared to gather additional information in any of the issue areas as necessary due to the results of the community survey.

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# **Executive Summary**

## **KEY FINDINGS:**

### **• DEMOGRAPHICS:**

Snohomish County is the third most populous county in the State of Washington, and one the fastest growing. Between 1990 and 2000, the Snohomish County population grew nearly 30%. In relation to the other Washington State Counties, Snohomish County ranks number 3 in total population and number 7 in total population change from 1990 to 2000. Although it should be noted that from 1995 to 2000, Washington State's population grew by 8.5%, while Snohomish Counties population grew by 15.3%. The male to female ratio is nearly even with 303,209 males in comparison to 302,815 females. The 35-44 year old age group represents the largest group of people at 18.3% of the total population. The 25-34 year old group follows this at 14.6% and the 45-54 year old group at 14.3%. According to the 2000 Census, racial and ethnic diversity in Snohomish County continued to increase during the 1990's. Given continued immigration and the comparatively younger age distributions and higher birth rates in non-White and Hispanic groups, the trend toward greater diversity can be expected to continue. Snohomish County is clearly a society comprised of family, while 70.2% of the households are considered "Family Households". Of those households, 37.3% of them have children under the age of 18.

As the county population continues to grow, specific cities have begun to show significant signs of growth. As a result of flat population growth and annexation, the following cities have experienced greater than 100% growth in the last five years: Arlington (190%), Marysville (145%), Mukilteo (158%) and Stanwood (100%). The State is predicting between 800,000 and 1.1 million people will be living in Snohomish County by 2025. Their low projection forecasts a 31.3% growth increase in the next 25 years, while the intermediate projects a 53.3% change and the high forecast projects a 75.4% increase in the population.

### **• ECONOMY:**

Snohomish County has the third highest personal income in the state of Washington. In 1998 the residents had the third highest per capita income and the second highest median income. Snohomish County is somewhat unique in that a third of its civilian labor force commutes to King County for their employment. With this in mind it should be noted that the King County average wage was \$46,053 in 1999 compared to Snohomish county's \$33,899. It is estimated that 31 % of Snohomish County earned income was earned outside of the county in 1999. Between 1989 and 1997, real average wages improved statewide, with the greatest gains in the King and Snohomish County region.

The Snohomish County unemployment rate has always been slightly lower than the statewide rate. Snohomish County has traveled from its highpoint of 11.8% in 1982 to 3.8% in 2000. Also, the TANF (temporary assistance for needy families) WorkFirst program has seen a decline in participants since 1997. The average caseload reduction in Snohomish County is nearing 48%. However, those who are still on TANF are facing a greater challenge as their time limit nears and the economy is slowing.

- **EDUCATION:**

Research confirms that quality public education is essential to the health of a community, and is directly related to increased income, better health, lower levels of criminal activity and less reliance on public assistance. Although the State of Washington stipulates that public education is its primary duty, the State's contribution to education funding has eroded to the extent that only 72 to 75 percent of education costs are state-funded. School districts must, therefore, rely heavily on the passage of local levies to assure quality educational programs for students.

Certain facts provide a picture of public education in Snohomish County:

High School Drop-Out Rate—Among all students, Everett Public Schools has seen a slight decrease in its drop-out rate. The percentage of white, black, Asian and American Indian students dropping out of school in Everett has decreased, while the percentage of Hispanic drop-outs increased.

Educational Attainment—In Snohomish County, a higher percentage (vs. the national average) of the population received at least a high school diploma. In addition, a greater percentage than the national average report having obtained at least a bachelor's degree.

Performance on Standardized Tests—In most categories, average results on standardized tests in the State of Washington and in Snohomish County are at or above the national average. In Everett, students score higher than the state average.

Public School Expenditures—The cost for educating students in public schools is steadily increasing in the state, in Snohomish County and in Everett Public Schools.

High School Graduates Enrolling in Higher Education—The percentage of students graduating from Everett's high schools and enrolling in institutions of higher learning is slightly above the national average.

Total Primary and Secondary Enrollment—These numbers continue to increase, with public school growth in Snohomish County being much higher than nationally and significantly higher than the state.

- **HEALTH:**

Primary health concerns vary from individual to individual. For the purpose of this report, a consultation was made with the Vital Statistics Section of the Snohomish Health Department to determine what health indicators would make a good broad-based overview of health issues for the most people. With that in mind, mortality rates were limited to coronary heart disease, stroke, suicide, homicide and cancer. In all cases other than mortality rates from stroke, the County is at or below the Healthy People 2000 objective. Stroke mortality was at a 26.4 rate per 100,000 and the Healthy People 2000 objective was at a rate of 20.0.

Fertility rates trends for females 15-17, low birth weight births, smoking and alcohol used during pregnancy, infant mortality rates, proportion of mothers giving birth under the age of 18 and proportion of women receiving first trimester prenatal care tries to address pregnancy and birth issues. A comparison of recent health status indicators with year 2000 and 2010 goals are included to see where Snohomish County is in comparison to state and in some instances the nation and also the national goals. Access to health care follows.

Teen pregnancy rates have had a steady decline since 1994 in both the state and county. Low weight births and self-reported maternal smoking exceed Healthy People 2000 goals, while self-reported alcohol use during pregnancy has dropped from 5.8% in 1989 to a low of 0.8% in 1998. Infant mortality rates for the county have gone from 9.9% in 1988 to 5.5% in 1998.

Finally, youth substance abuse trends complete the report. This section covers current use patterns (defined as having tried a substance at least once in the last 30 days) for 6<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> grade students. Data was taken from the Washington State Survey of Adolescent Health Behaviors (WSSAHB) administered in the fall of 2000. It is limited to tobacco, alcohol and marijuana since these drugs are the performance measures identified by Washington State Division of Alcohol and Substance Abuse and are considered gateway drugs for further substance abuse. 2000 survey results show that in each category of drugs used in the past 30 days, with the exception of 10<sup>th</sup> grade students for heroin has made a decline since 1998.

- **LEISURE ACTIVITIES:**

Over the last 20 years the role of parks in Snohomish County has changed. Today the focus begins to shift towards small local land preservation as resources continue to diminish. According to the 2001 Snohomish County Comprehensive Park and Recreation Plan, 24.7% of the participants responded that they favored trails as the most important followed by 21.6% favoring natural resources, 17.7% favoring water activities, 16.1% favoring sports facilities, 14.8% favoring leisure and 5.1% favoring special use facilities. The demand for regional park facilities has, if anything intensified with a significant interest in trails and a strong constituency for certain special use facilities. Input from a variety of sources demonstrate that the earlier demand for regional athletic facilities has given way to a greater focus on multi-purpose parks at the community level while accommodating a greater cross-section of the population. According to the National Park Land Standards, the National Recreation and Park Association suggests that a park system, at a minimum, be composed of a total of 6.25 to 10.50 acres of developed open space per 1,000 population.

- **SAFETY:**

For the purpose of this report, safety concerns are focused on crime index statistics, domestic violence and hate/bias crimes. Crime Index Offenses consist of murder, non-negligent manslaughter, forcible rape, arson, robbery, aggravated assault, burglary, larceny (theft), and motor vehicle theft. These crimes were selected as indicators of the total amount of criminal activity they are serious offenses with widespread concern; they occur with sufficient frequency to reflect overall fluctuations in the overall level of criminal activity and they are most likely to be reported and reported accurately. Crime Index data has been collected from 1995 through 2000. It should also be noted that, by law, crime statistics are not required to be reported to the Washington Association of Sheriffs and Police Chiefs. See the first footnote on the Crime Index Offenses Summary page to see how that situation was handled.

Domestic violence data collection began statewide July 1, 1995. Data on violations of protection/no contact orders began June 6, 1996. Domestic violence information in this report is collected from 1997 through 2000.

Hate/Bias Crime data is reported from 1995 through 2000. It must be recognized that hate crimes are not separate, distinct offenses, but rather traditional crimes motivated by the offender's bias. It is only reported as a hate/bias crime when the law enforcement investigation revealed sufficient objective facts to lead to a reasonable and prudent person to conclude that the offender's actions were motivated, in whole or in part, by bias.

In the following charts, you will notice that Unincorporated Snohomish County (reported by Snohomish County Sheriff's Office) has had a steady decline in total crime index offenses since 1997. The incorporated part of the county (reported by local police departments) had a steady decline in the index rates from 1997 through 1999. However there was a slight increase in offenses per 1,000 population for the year 2000 from 51.9 offenses per 1,000 population to 55.2 per 1,000.

Domestic violence crimes have shown a steady decline since 1988 and hate/bias crimes sent from a high of 19 reported in the County in 1998 and leveled off at 14 reported in 1999 and 2000.

- **TRANSPORTATION:**

Included are subsections on vehicles & drivers, work commuting, traffic & congestion, highway accidents & fatalities, public transportation, ferry ridership and selected results from the 1999 PSRC household transportation survey.

The 1990 Census indicates that access to automobile transportation was higher in Snohomish County than was true statewide (95.4% of all Snohomish County householders had one or more vehicles available vs. 92.5% statewide). That was especially true for nonWhite householders (94.4% of all nonWhite Snohomish County householders had one or more vehicles available vs. 85.6% statewide).

In 1990, 38.1% of all Snohomish County workers 16 years of age and older commuted to jobs that were located in another county; that proportion increased to an average of 55.1% in the southern part of Snohomish County. By far the majority of them (90.3%) rode a car, truck or van to work and 77.9% drove alone. Only 3.2% of Snohomish County workers rode some form of public transportation (e.g., bus, ferry, railroad, taxi) to work.

The tendency to drive rather than ride has led to ever more traffic and increasingly congested highways. In 2000, Snohomish County had twice (208%) as many licensed vehicles per lane mile of roadway as does the state as a whole and those cars were driven over twice (228%) as many miles per lane mile of roadway. In 1997, 21.5% of State highways in the county were at or above peak capacity; 6.5% were near capacity. Similarly, in 2001, 28% of County arterials were close to, at, or exceeded peak capacity.

While traffic related death rates were generally lower in Snohomish County, the proportion of traffic fatalities involving a drinking driver averaged about 5% higher than statewide over the 1989-1998 period. Data on the distribution of traffic fatalities by age, demonstrate that the young (15-30yrs) are more likely to be killed in an automobile accident than are other age groups. The data also highlight the dangers of motor vehicle travel for those over 70 years of age.

Three bus agencies provide public transit services in Snohomish County: Community Transit serving most of Snohomish County, Everett Transit serving primarily the City of Everett, and the

Regional Transit Authority providing express bus commuter service to the urbanized area from the King County line to north Everett. King County's Metro also provides vanpools for King County residents commuting to Snohomish County employers and limited subscription, custom bus service to Boeing facilities in the county.

The Washington State Ferry System is the largest in the nation and has more than doubled in ridership over the past 30 years. After 19 years of relatively steady increases, vehicle traffic on ferries declined slightly (0.3%) system-wide in the year 2000. Early reports indicate that ridership decline extended into 2001 and may be the strongest decline since 1982.

The Puget Sound Regional Council's 1999 Household Survey on Transportation asked what were the 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> & 3<sup>rd</sup> most important factors affecting the respondent's choice of where to live, a weighted combination of their answers indicates that "community/ neighborhood" is the most important (40.1%) with price a close second (36.7%); both of those responses were far ahead of transportation related factors such as "proximity to work" (17.0%), proximity to services (14.6%) or a convenient work commute (13.2%).

- **HOUSING:**

The cost of housing in Snohomish County has increased significantly in recent years precluding more and more households from securing housing at an affordable cost. The Puget Sound area is reported to have the eighth most expensive housing market in the United States. Prospective homebuyers have found the median price for single-family homes has increased much faster than family income and renters have faced a similar prospect. An increasing number of households, even with full time employment, are unable to rent or buy affordable housing in the County. As an example, in 2000, the percentage of home sales affordable to low and moderate-income households reached an all time low of 22%.

Snohomish County has approximately 8500 subsidized housing units reserved for low-income households, with 5100 of them serving those with incomes below 50% of the median. During the last 5 years, the number of units assisted with government provided subsidies has increased by 38%. Unfortunately, this increase has been outstripped by demand as rental prices have grown faster than incomes. The three largest assisted housing providers, the Everett and Snohomish County Housing Authorities and Senior Services of Snohomish County, report waiting lists alone of nearly 7000 households.

Not surprisingly, homelessness continues to be one of the most significant housing problems in the County. In 2000, homeless shelter providers reported 10,571 individuals and families were turned away for lack of space or other reasons. At least 25% of the homeless sheltered in Snohomish County are disabled, and 55% of them are families with children. Eviction/displacement followed by lack of affordable housing, lack of income/employment, domestic violence, and transient are listed as the chief causes of homelessness.