

**REPORT ON  
FUTURE DEMOGRAPHIC TRENDS IN KING COUNTY**  
for  
**THE KING COUNTY CHARTER REVIEW COMMISSION**

by

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## FUTURE DEMOGRAPHIC TRENDS IN KING COUNTY

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

#### Introduction

This report presents a discussion of future trends in King County for both the intermediate future (10-15 years) and longterm future (50 years, decade by decade). The forecasts are based on various projections already created for King County through year 2010 (from the COG, Seattle City Light, and Office of Finance and Management).

The focus of this paper is more on human service needs and less on infrastructure development. The reason is that federal and state governments will probably reduce their social service expenditures, leaving to local governments the jobs of meeting social service needs of the population.

The approach is demographic/sociological in the sense that it focuses on the forecasts of age groups rather than forecasts of total population of King County. Age groups (0-4, 5-14, 15-24, 25-44, 45-64, 65-80, and 80+) are examined because age is so highly correlated with human needs and behavior: preschoolers need daycare, while young adults need jobs, young families need affordable housing, new retirees need senior citizen centers, and the very old need cost and labor intensive health and social services. Moreover, the changes in sizes of age groups are far more dramatic than changes in total population size. While the forecasts for growth in King County range from 6 to 18 percent per decade between 1980-2010, the change in age groups range from -20 percent to +50 percent per decade.

#### Longterm Trends

The report begins with an examination of growth trends in age groups and discusses the consequences (such as changing problems, opportunities, demand for services) for each decade between 1980-2030. Key findings for each decade are:

##### 1980-1990

This decade will be marked by labor shortages in entry-level jobs which have traditionally been low paying, but whose wages will likely increase in the future. This presents an opportunity for those who in the past have found it difficult to get into and stay in the labor force. This decade is also dominated by a growing retirement population needing both less and more intensive care, such as senior citizen centers and nursing homes. Other changes predicted include:

- o 20 percent decline in young adults (15-24) leading to labor shortages in entry-level jobs and opportunities for other groups to enter/re-enter the labor force,
- o 26 percent increase in young families who need affordable housing,

- o 30 percent increase in retirees with growth predominating among the very old who need intensive care services and facilities,
- o 13 percent increase in preschool children who need daycare centers.

#### 1990-2000

This decade will be one in which the number of retirees will not grow by much, but those large numbers who reached retirement in the 1980s will become increasingly older and more dependent on costly services. Elsewhere, the aging of the baby boom into mature families who tend to need little attention or social service assistance will be in their years of highest productivity, a beneficial period for society as a whole.

- o 40 percent increase in mature families who have fewer social services needs but who likely will want more expensive housing,
- o 40 percent increase in the very old population (on top of the 40 percent increase already between 1980-1990) who need intensive care facilities.

#### 2000-2010

During this decade there will be a respite from having to provide for the neediest population segments (children and very old). At this time with some foresight, society can begin to make preparations for the impending retirement of the baby boom generation. In addition, there will be:

- o 7 percent decline in number of students probably leading to some school closures again,
- o 30 percent increase in mature families-- more expensive housing,
- o A much reduced growth rate of retirees (65+) of only 13 percent-- therefore, fewer demands on increasing care for elderly.

#### 2010-2020

This decade will be characterized by an aging population reaching retirement years. Although the number of senior citizens will grow by 50 percent most will be in the early stages of retirement and therefore not need services required by the very old. There will be:

- o 50 percent increase in retirees-- most of whom will still be healthy and living independently,
- o The rest of the age groups will show little change.

#### 2020-2030

This decade will be marked as the one when the baby boom is in its most needy and dependent years. Society will have to focus its efforts in developing ways to meet the high cost of medical care, social services, housing, and so forth. While the labor force then will

be pressed into meeting these needs, they will also be called upon to provide for themselves and their families. This decade promises to be very stressful for society unless plans are begun to be put into place as soon as possible.

- o The baby boom generation becomes very old and needs very costly and labor intensive services,
- o The rest of the age groups remain fairly constant in size.

#### Intermediate Trends

Given the longterm impact of changing age composition, and the impending pressure that will be caused by the retirement of the baby boom generation, there are steps that can be taken in the intermediate future that will help reduce the societal stresses. The next section discusses two socio-demographic trends that are important for planning purposes today:

- o the deteriorating circumstances of children in King County, and
- o the growing shortage of labor in entry-level jobs.

In the area of children, two key trends describe their situation:

- o children are becoming an increasingly smaller segment of the population and suffering from the consequences as members of a declining constituency-- reduced visibility and political power and therefore poorer education facilities, increased poverty, financially constrained parents, and so forth; and
- o children are being raised in increasingly diverse household types which tend to be disadvantaged-- more are born to minorities and unmarried women, more live with a single parent, and more live with a mother who works.

Both trends have placed children in increased jeopardy: fewer children are coming into the population and more of those that are, are being raised in higher-risk situations. Because children comprise the future of the society, it is extremely important that society begin to turn its attention once again to the needs of children. Better daycare facilities, improvements in education, child health care, and reductions in childhood poverty are all needed. The scope of the problem will require that government, business and families work together to this end since the implications are both serious and central to quality of life in the future.

Secondly, the number of young adults between 1980-1990 will decline by 20 percent in King County. Labor shortages will be accompanied by rising wages and greater opportunity to pull more of the traditionally disenfranchised population groups (young males, minorities, etc.) into the labor market as productive citizens. The next 15 years of labor shortages presents a temporary window of opportunity to turn around the economic conditions of these groups. It is argued further that in King County, many of the jobs will be created outside Seattle City, while the potential labor pool for some of the jobs resides in the City. The mismatch between jobs and residential location presents a problem. Two improvements could help greatly in solving the problem;

- o better public transportation outside Seattle especially between suburban cities, and
- o increase availability of affordable housing outside Seattle near jobs sites.

## FUTURE TRENDS IN KING COUNTY

### INTRODUCTION

This report presents a discussion of population trends within King County that will likely occur in the next 10, 20, and 50 years. These trends will shape the nature of both government and the private sector as they adjust to meet the changing needs of the population.

The main approach of this futurist discussion is sociological/demographic. That is, the population is examined in terms of life cycle stage and age. It is assumed that at each life cycle stage, an individual will have certain behaviors and needs which are different from those at other ages. For example, preschool children need daycare facilities, young adults need entry-level jobs, young families need inexpensive housing, and the very old need certain intensive social and health services.

The reason for this approach is that while predictions of overall population growth in King County are important, it is even more important to know the future growth patterns of different age groups. It is by determining whether those over 65 years old are a growing or declining segment, whether young adults seeking work are growing or declining, or whether the mature adult population is growing or declining, that one can better prepare to meet the needs of the future. Governments, social services, and other agencies which provide resources directed toward certain age groups can then conduct appropriate planning.

Moreover, while overall population growth may vary overtime, the variation is nowhere nearly as extreme as change in age groups over the next 50 years. As will be shown below, estimates of overall population growth over a 10 year period in King County may be as low as 6 percent or as high as 18 percent. But specific age groups will show growth as high as 40 to 50 percent or decreases as low as negative 20 percent.

Thus, this paper will first examine forecasted changes by overall population growth and by age groups in King County to the year 2030. A set of predictions of the consequences of these changes will then be provided. Some of these interface directly

with concerns of King County or other local government. Others may be more tangentially related.

Following the discussion of change by age, two additional demographic trends will be discussed which are related to changing age composition. The first is the recent development of labor shortages in the entry-level job market, and the interaction of this trend with the location of new jobs and the residential location of potential employees in King County. The second concerns the increasing diversity in types of families with children and the change in household composition. These changes are affecting the development of the next generation being raised. Government needs to be aware of developing trends in order to effectively ameliorate the crisis situation that has developed or will develop in some population groups.

In sum, this paper will examine:

- o the changing age composition of the population and its implications,
- o the redistribution of population and jobs within King County, and
- o the changing nature of the family in King County.

## CHANGES IN AGE COMPOSITION AND IMPLICATIONS FOR KING COUNTY

### Total growth rates

Table I below shows three existing forecasts of King County's population. The projections have been developed by Puget Sound Council of Governments (the COG), the Washington State Office of Finance and Management (OFM), and Conway and Associates for Seattle City Light (SCL). Both OFM and the COG forecasts show results through the year 2000, while SCL's forecast is through the year 2010. (The COG is currently developing a new updated forecast.)



Table 1  
Various Population Growth Forecasts  
King County

	1970- 1980	1980- 1990	1990- 2000	2000- 2010
OFM	9.8%	12.1%	12.5%	NA
SCL	9.8%	10.8%	10.6%	6.7%
COG	9.8%	9.3%	18.1%	NA

Sources: US Censuses for Washington State, 1970 and 1980; Puget Sound Council of Governments, *Population and Employment Forecasts 1984*; Seattle City Light, *Economic and Demographic Model: Forecast Summary and Detailed Projections and Forecasting Model Technical Report*, Dick Conway and Associates, July 1986; Office of Finance and Management, Olympia, 1986 *Population Trends for Washington State*, August 1986.

Of the three forecasts, OFM's is the highest for the current decade between 1980-1990 with more than 12 percent growth predicted over the 10 year period, while the COG's is the highest during the next decade between 1990-2000 where more than 18 percent growth is predicted. SCL's forecast remains fairly constant over the two decades at between 10 and 11 percent growth. The difference in forecasts is a result of differing expectations of economic growth in the Puget Sound region. While the COG expects a strong economic rebound in the next decade resulting in considerable in-migration, both OFM and SCL expect more moderate economic growth, and therefore less in-migration.

Of course, it remains to be seen what actually will happen. According to OFM 1986 estimates, King County population has grown already by about 7 percent since 1980.

The difference in total population sizes in 2000 predicted from the different growth assumptions represents a difference of about 82,000 persons. While SCL forecasts a population 1,556,000 in 2000, the COG forecasts a population of 1,639,000. This amounts to only about 6 percent of King County's population in 1980.

#### The Role of Age Composition

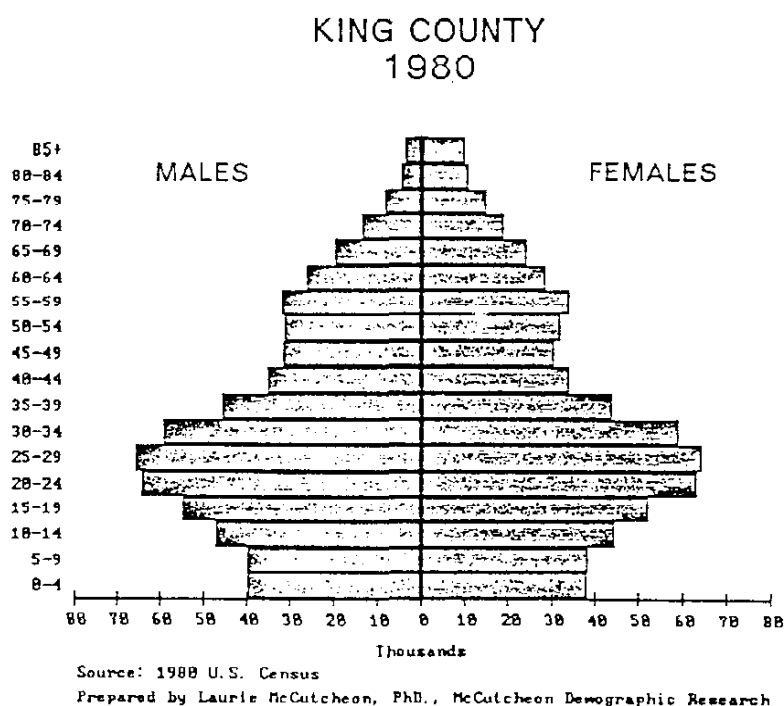
Of greater significance for this discussion is the way in which the age composition of the population is expected to change. Age is greatly related to behavior and needs of individuals. As time passes the numbers of people in the different age groups change, since individuals are continually growing older and moving into different age categories and stages of the life cycle.

If one examines the current age distribution of the United States or of King County (which are very similar to each other), one should be struck by the difference in sizes of the various age cohorts (see the population pyramid presented in Figure 1).

Those who are 50-54 years old are only half as numerous as those 20-24, who, in turn, are more numerous than the 5-9 year olds. Because age is related to needs and behaviors, changes in age composition of a population can be used to predict the kinds of services needed in the future, as well as the degree of need.

Table 2 lists different types of issues that are related to age. The list of needs and behaviors are not exhaustive, but presents examples of age-related characteristics. The way to use this list is to compare the issues presented for each life cycle stage against predicted growth or contraction of the age group by decade over the next fifty years. This list will help one predict whether issues such as crime, unemployment, nursing homes, or transportation, will need to be addressed on a larger or lesser scale. This list has been used to help develop the predictions for change in King County presented at the end of this section.

Figure 1



The key to understanding the importance of age composition is to know that changes in sizes of age groups over time can be far larger than overall population growth. In fact, the overall population growth rate is merely the averaging out of increases and decreases of age groups. Because the American population has an unusual age distribution (which is mirrored in the King County population), with a large baby boom generation, surrounded by considerably smaller generations, percentage increases or decreases among elderly, children, young adults and other age groups can be extreme.

Table 2

Needs and Behaviors Related to  
Certain Life Cycle Stages

<u>Life Cycles Stages</u>	<u>Needs, Behaviors</u>
Preschoolers age 0-4	Daycare
Students age 5-15	Schools, Social service programs for adolescents (eg., Youth Service Bureaus), Daycare/after school care, Teenage pregnancy programs, Entry-level jobs, Public transportation, Juvenile crime, drugs, Runaways, Recreational programs
Young Adults age 16-24	College and vocational schools, Entry-level jobs, Apartments, Non-juvenile crime, drugs, Facilities for single mothers, Public transportation Mental health, school nurses
Young Families age 25-44	Single family housing (inexpensive, "starter" homes), Condos for not marrieds, Advanced-level jobs for both husband and wife, New small business start-ups, Prisons, Services for single mothers, Adult sports
Mature Families age 45-64	Bigger, more expensive housing, Fewer social service needs, Jobs for wives returning to work force, Expensive hobbies (eg., boats)
Young Retired age 65-80	Public transportation, Senior centers, Apartment/townhouse housing, Some health care
Very Old 80+	Intensive health care needs, Nursing homes, Public transportation, Other social service assistance (eg., meals on wheels)

In fact, the whole shape of the pyramid is overwhelmed by the baby boom generation (those born between 1945 and 1964 and peaking in 1957), and who are now approximately 20-40 years old. It may be useful for the reader to review post-war history in the light of past changes in age composition. It can be said that a key driving force in the evolution of American society since World War II has been a continuing adjustment to the needs and behaviors of the giant baby boom generation. Just what kinds of adjustments were made society-wide depended on how old this generation was at the time.

For example, the decade of the 1950s was one of high fertility rates and a young population. Schools were built, there was overcrowding in schools, suburbanization, the predominance of the classic nuclear family with the father the sole bread-winner while the mother remained at home to raise two or three (or more) children. It was a very family-oriented decade and the age composition of the population reflected this fact.

In contrast, the 1960s was historically one of the most turbulent decades in American history. It can be argued that the crucial factor in creating such turbulence was the presence of a generation twice as numerous as its parents, physically mature, but still young, idealistic and not yet fully integrated into society with families and children, and all the related responsibilities. In other words, this generation in the 1960s consisted essentially of free agents, people who could take risks without much cost to others. By virtue of their sheer size, this generation was able to overwhelm the rest of society, and radically change social customs. The "sexual revolution" is one example. It is interesting to note that the two main issues which incited the most radical behavior in the 1960s-- American intervention in a foreign war (Vietnam) and race relations-- were both present in the 1950s. The Korean war was being fought and the first significant Civil Rights legislation began in mid decade with *Brown vs. the Board of Education*. Nevertheless, there was only spotty reaction in the population. The missing ingredient, provided in the 1960s, was a group which was both large enough to constitute a significant portion of the population and also willing to take considerable risk.

The decade of the 1970s saw several remarkable trends including a significant increase in crime and unemployment and an extraordinary increase in the cost of housing, which rose more rapidly than the average wages of the working population and the Consumer Price Index. Research has shown nationally that approximately 50 percent of the increase in crime in this decade (remember all the talk about the rising crime wave?) was due to a change in age composition and the increase in number of 15-19 year olds who have the greatest probability of committing crimes. The largest portion of the baby boom was entering this age bracket during the 1970s. The sheer size of this cohort of young adults meant that crime rates population-wide would increase significantly.

Similarly, the increase in unemployment rates was linked to the large numbers of new entrants into the labor force. Unemployment tends to be highest among first-time job seekers. When the labor force swells disproportionately with these types of workers, unemployment rates will automatically go up. Moreover, the combined sheer size of the young adult baby boom and the increasing numbers of women in the job market overwhelmed the rate of job formation. Although 20 million net new jobs were created in the 1970s, it was not rapid enough to absorb new entrants, thereby exacerbating unemployment among young adults. Today, unemployment rates have declined to levels seen in the 1960s.

In the case of housing, it turned out that the growth rate of households was much higher than the overall rate of population growth. In Washington State population

grew by 21 percent while households grew nearly twice as much at 39 percent. This was because the 1970s saw the large generation of baby boom young adults leaving their parents' homes, delaying marriage, and setting up independent households. It was a seller's market and prices went up accordingly. It was not unusual to find a house bought for approximately \$20,000 in 1970 worth \$90,000 in 1980.

The descriptions above provides examples of the way in which demographic and age composition trends in the past have profoundly changed the American scene. It is not unlikely that the changing age distribution will continue to exert its impact in the future, at least until the giant baby boom generation is gone. Those institutions such as governments which must respond to the changing environment, should have a clear understanding of the kinds of changes that can be expected in the future.

### Forecasts by Age

Two of the existing forecasts allow examination of the trends in population by age composition to the year 2000 or 2010 (see Table 3 below). Ages have been broadly grouped into basic phases of the life cycle. These groups are useful since needs and behaviors are so strongly related to life cycle stage. Also, the changes during the 1970-1980 decade have been provided for comparison purposes.

Table 3  
Forecasts of King County Population by Age

	1970-1980	--1980-1990--		--1990-2000--		2000-2010
		OFM	SCL	OFM	SCL	SCL
Preschool Children:						
Age 0-4	-17.2%	13.1%	11.2%	-3.9%	-8.4%	1.2%
Students:						
Age 5-14	-23.6%	6.3%	5.8%	9.5%	10.3%	-6.8%
Young Adults:						
Age 15-24	14.9%	-17.6%	-21.8%	9.7%	4.2%	11.4%
Young Families:						
Age 25-44	39.0%	25.8%	29.1%	-0.8%	1.8%	-7.8%
Mature Families:						
Age 45-64	3.8%	11.9%	7.8%	46.5%	37.3%	30.9%
Retired:						
Age 65+	27.2%	30.4%	24.6%	12.4%	13.0%	13.0%
Young Retired:						
Age 65-80	26.9%	27.7%	NA	4.0%	NA	NA
Very Old:						
Age 80+	28.3%	39.7%	NA	39.4%	NA	NA

Sources: US Census for Washington State, 1970; Seattle City Light, *Economic and Demographic Model: Forecast Summary and Detailed Projections and Forecasting Model Technical Report*, Dick Conway and Associates, July 1986; Office of Finance and Management, Olympia, *1986 Population Trends for Washington State*, August 1986.

Both OFM and SCL forecasts predict similar changes. They agree on situations where absolute declines or close to no change in population are predicted; where positive increases are expected, the degree of change is similar. Part of the reason for such agreement is that many members of the population are already born and therefore are a known quantity, since mortality is reasonably predictable, and migration among persons older than 35 is not widespread.

In order to take the forecasts further into the future, we have used the forecast of City Light and extended it to the year 2030. This was carried out in such a way as to preserve the same rates of migration and mortality as were assumed in the preceding decades, and to assume the same levels of fertility as the medium projection of the United States from the Bureau of Census. While the results are rough, the relative degree of percentage changes at each age group will be fairly accurate to the extent that the previous projections through 2010 are on target and the assumptions of continued migration and low fertility are correct.

Table 4  
Projected Percentage Change by Age Groups  
King County  
1980-2030

Age Groups	1980- 1990	1990- 2000	2000- 2010	2010- 2020*	2020- 2030*
Preschool Children:					
Age 0-4	11.2%	-8.4%	1.2%	3.0%	3.2%
Students:					
Age 5-15	5.8%	10.3%	-6.8%	6.1%	3.2%
Young Adults:					
Age 16-24	-21.8%	4.2%	11.4%	-6.8%	6.1%
Young Families:					
Age 25-44	29.1%	1.8%	-7.8%	7.2%	2.1%
Mature Families:					
Age 45-64	7.8%	37.3%	30.9%	1.8%	-7.8%
Retirees:					
Age 65+	24.6%	13.0%	13.0%	50.3%	17.1%
Total	10.8%	10.6%	6.7%	8.9%	2.6%

\*Based on the City Light forecast using cohort ratio methods.

A key change happening right now is the declining numbers of young adults. It is this shift which is creating current conditions of labor shortages discussed in more detail in the next section. The current as well as next decade are also important for the increase in number of very old people (over 80 years old).

In the long-term future, one of the most remarkable changes will occur between 2010 to 2020 when the baby boom begins to retire. During this decade the number of retirees can be expected to increase by 50 percent. In the next decade after, the increase will be much slower at 17 percent, but this obscures the fact that much of the baby boom will have become part of the Very Old population requiring much more intensive health care and other service needs. In other words, the story of population change after 2010 will revolve around the retirement of the baby boom population. Assuming a continued low fertility level and no unexpected changes in mortality, other groups will experience little change.

### **Implications of Age Changes for King County**

Given the above predicted changes in age composition, what can be said about the changing needs of the population in the future? Below we provide some predictions about changes in store for King County drawing on the types of age-related needs and behaviors presented in Table 1. The predictions are grouped by decade. We will focus on the larger percentage changes, since they will have the more dramatic impact.

#### **1980-1990**

- o **Child care facilities.**  
With the increase in number of children and because more mothers are in the labor force, care of preschool children will be needed more than ever.
- o **Decline in crime rates.**  
The high crime rates of the 1970s will abate. Since crimes tend to be committed by young adults, to the extent this group will decline by approximately 22 percent, all else being equal, the crime rate will drop. If crime-inducing activities, such as drug use, increase in this young adult group, then the decline will be offset.
- o **Increase in prison population.**  
Incarcerated persons tend to be older (age 25-44). Since this group will grow by nearly 30 percent, the prison population will also grow significantly. Changes in punishment standards could independently shift the expected increase either up or down depending on changing rules for sentencing.
- o **Labor shortages in entry-level jobs.**  
Young adults age 16-24 who fill entry-level jobs will decline significantly. Labor shortages in industries which employ young adults (such as hospitality, restaurant, banking, and tourism) will and are already experiencing difficulty in filling positions.
- o **Increase in wages of entry-level jobs.**  
Given the developing labor shortage, young adults will be able to command higher wages. Some fast food chains in Seattle are currently paying well over one dollar above minimum wage for beginning jobs. Elsewhere in the nation, there are reports busboys being paid \$8.00 an hour. Given the scarcity of labor, minimum

wages will no longer be able to attract employees, and entry-level wages will have to increase.

o **Declining unemployment rates.**

To the extent that unemployment is dominated by first-time job seekers, and because jobs will be easier to obtain for this group due to the developing labor shortages, unemployment rates are expected to decline in this decade. This may also mean that groups traditionally not found in the labor force will be pulled in, including young minority males who have extremely high unemployment rates or have dropped out of the labor force entirely, retirees, disabled and handicapped, and the mentally retarded.

o **Inexpensive housing for young marrieds.**

With nearly 30 percent predicted increase in the young family group, low cost housing will be in demand. In fact, nationwide, to the extent this need has not been met, ownership rates have already declined among this age group during the 1980s. This indicates still pent-up demand for affordable housing.

o **Housing for retirees.**

As retirees move to smaller housing which may or may not be less expensive, more such housing will be needed. This will include non-single family detached dwellings such as apartments and townhouses.

o **Nursing homes, long-term care facilities.**

As Table 4 shows the number of Very Old is expected to increase in King County by 40 percent. Because persons 85 and over have a nationwide nursing home use rate of 22 percent, this decade will certainly see an increase in demand for facilities.

o **Transportation for elderly.**

Since many senior citizens do not drive, there will be a greater need for assistance to and from medical appointments, shopping, and so forth.

o **Senior citizen centers.**

For the younger retirees who are still active, a growth of 28 percent in this decade will create more demand for activity centers.

## 1990-2000

o **Childcare facilities.**

If fertility rates continue to remain as low as they are today, the number of children in King County can be expected to decline. However, given the still unmet need for daycare facilities, it is expected that growth of facilities will continue into the 1990s.

o **Schools.**

The student population will increase by approximately 10 percent as the current baby boomlet begins to enter school. Schools will have to be built, remodeled or reclaimed..



- o **After-school facilities.**  
Along with the increase in the student population, and to the extent mothers remain in the labor market as they are today, more places for students to go after school will be needed.
- o **Labor shortages in higher than entry-level jobs.**  
Labor shortages in entry-level jobs will begin to abate in the 1990s. But the baby bust generation will begin to enter more advanced jobs. According to OFM and SCL forecasts, there will be virtually no increase among members of this age bracket (25-44 year olds). (However, if the COG forecast for 1990-2000 with its prediction of an 18 percent overall growth rate is correct, most of the new immigrants will be in this age group which will then see an increase.) If the economy continues to grow, shortages will be felt in the mid-level positions that the baby bust generation will fill. This could raise their wages, and might even mean that wives could drop out of the labor force and return to a more traditional family role.
- o **Expensive homes.**  
Mature families will increase by 37 percent (SCL) or 46 percent (OFM). Because higher household incomes are associated with older families, it is likely that some will want to move into better housing.
- o **Nursing homes, care facilities for the elderly.**  
The very old are expected to continue growing by 40 percent in this decade in King County. Demand for social and health services for the elderly will continue to grow rapidly.

#### 2000-2010

- o **Constant childcare facilities.**  
Assuming continued low fertility, the number of preschool children will grow only slightly. Thus, if the need for daycare has been met by this time, further new facilities will not be needed.
- o **Fewer schools.**  
The student population will begin to shrink in this decade, which may result in school closures.
- o **More competition for entry-level jobs.**  
An 11 percent increase in young adults will mean a small increased need for starting jobs. Therefore, wages for these jobs will likely remain fairly steady.
- o **Decreasing need for inexpensive housing by young families.**  
Because the number of young families is expected to decline by approximately 8 percent, there will be less need to build affordable housing for this group.
- o **Continued need for more expensive housing.**  
The number of mature families will continue to grow in this decade by approximately one-third. Although social services for this group

are lower than other population segments, they often do expect to be able to move into better housing.

**o Services for the Very Old-- housing, health care, social services.**

The cohorts reaching retirement age during 2000-2010 will be those born between 1935 and 1945, or very small cohorts. Thus, the 13 percent growth of retirees during this period will be among the older of the retirees due to improvements in mortality conditions. Some additional care facilities will be needed for the Very Old.

**2010-2020**

**o Facilities for new retirees.**

The story of the 2010-2020 decade will center on the retirement of the baby boom generation. There will be an expected 50 percent increase in the number of persons over age 65. This will mostly swell the ranks of the younger retiree who are still in good health, still active and independent. Therefore, developments such as senior citizen centers, smaller housing, and other facilities for newly retired persons will be needed in a big way.

**o Constant needs for other age-related resources.**

In comparison with the rest of the population, the change rates for the elderly will dominate the scene. Small percentage changes in other groups will probably require little adjustment or planning.

**2020-2030**

**o Intensive care for the elderly.**

Although the growth rate of all persons 65 years and over substantially reduces during this decade compared to the previous one (although 17 percent is still high), the aging of those who retired in the preceding decade will dominate the scene. Costly and labor intensive care facilities will need to be provided. Means of transportation for those still living independently will be needed. Services such as meals-on-wheels, and other as yet to be thought of services to assist the very old in remaining in independent living situations will need to be developed.

It is likely that this generation of elderly will experience constrained financial resources. The Social Security system will not be able to provide payments on the same scale as current retirees are receiving, since the ratio of workers to retirees during this decade (assuming continued low fertility) will drop from over 3:1 (today) to 2:1. In addition, the number of high earning mature families will decline by nearly 8 percent, which will reduce high-wage payees into the System, further exacerbating the issue. Also, projections of the Social Security System as it currently exists predict that this generation will not receive the same amount in benefits as they paid in during their working life. These trends will make the problem of providing support for this generation all the more difficult.

## Summary

To summarize, each decade will have one or two key changes in the population which will dominate developments in King County during that decade. The current decade (1980-1990) is one of decreasing young adults (with a positive effect on wages and unemployment rates), a rising prison population, and an increase in the number of retirees.

The next decade (1990-2000) will see the growth of mature families who tend to need very little in terms of social services, and the student population which will generate stresses in the school systems.

The first decade of the 21st Century (2000-2010) will see a continuing rise in mature families and small contractions in the school-age population.

The second decade of the 21st Century (2010-2020) will begin to see the retirement of the baby boom generation. However, since these retirees will still be relatively young, they will need less in the way of intensive social and health services. Nevertheless, during this decade plans will have to be made in how to cope with a very old and very large generation in the next decade.

The third decade of the 21st Century (2020-2030) will be dominated by enormously growing numbers of the very old who need costly and labor intensive care and treatment. New cost-effective ways of coping with the problems of the aged will have to be invented.

This analysis has provided some vision of the future, with the hope that problems can be anticipated and overcome before they grow into major headaches. For example, in a humorous vein, had demographers been included in planning processes back in the 1950s, and had such demographers held similar foresight into the future, what might have happened is this: Policy-makers when faced with the burgeoning school population back in the 1950s could have built schools that could be converted into prisons in the 1980s, which then could be turned into homes for the elderly by the year 2010! Some of the changes we will see will be large and will require considerable advanced planning to meet the need. Such is the case of the retirement of the baby boom generation. Other changes hold serious consequences for the future, and some trends hold the potential for improving conditions if taken advantage of. In the next section we will examine two intermediate term trends, which examine a challenge and an opportunity. The first concerns the deteriorating circumstances of children today, and the second focuses on the developing labor shortages in entry level jobs.

## INTERMEDIATE TRENDS: A CHALLENGE AND AN OPPORTUNITY

### Introduction

The previous section examined how King County's population will grow and how its changing age characteristics will affect social and economic trends to the year 2030. In a sense, within the 50 year timeframe, King County (as is the rest of the nation) is moving toward the period when the baby boom will retire. This is important for it represents the next major period with a large dependent population (the last was during the 1950-60s when the baby boom was born and exerted a tremendous force for change). As such, it will be a period when maximum demands will be made upon the

independent adult segment of the population who will be responsible for both their own children and a huge retirement population.

In order to prepare for this period, it is useful to examine further some trends which are occurring in the intermediate future. We take up two trends here:

- o the deteriorating condition of children today, and
- o the growing labor shortages in entry-level jobs.

The first trend represents a challenge facing society today while the second represents an opportunity to redress the past and improve the economic conditions for those who have been traditionally disenfranchised. The next two sections address each of these issues and present some thoughts on what actions might be taken by government, business, and individuals.

### **The Changing Environment of Families and Households: King County's Children**

Any discussion of the future of King County is incomplete without addressing the specific concerns of children. The environment in which they are raised will shape their future health and welfare which will, in turn, affect the health and welfare of the people of King County. The situation in King County is indeed distressing but is not substantially different from the situation of children in Washington State or the nation as a whole.

There are two key factors that capture the current trends regarding children today. The first is that children are an increasingly scarce segment of the population. The second is that children are growing up in much more diverse family settings. Rather than the traditional nuclear family of married couple, father in the workforce, and mother at home raising the children, children today are more likely to live with only one parent, to be poor, to be black or Hispanic, and to be born of a woman who is not married. Nationwide, a majority of preschool children today live with a working mother.

### **Increasing Scarcity of Children**

Table 4 above reported the forecasted number of preschool children in King County. In every decade but the current one, the growth rate of children is predicted to be substantially lower than overall population growth. Part of the reason, of course, is that while in-migration into King County is expected to be high, it tends to be more common among young adults age 20-29 rather than children. This means that children tend not to be added to the population because of migration (although they may be subsequently born to in-migrants).

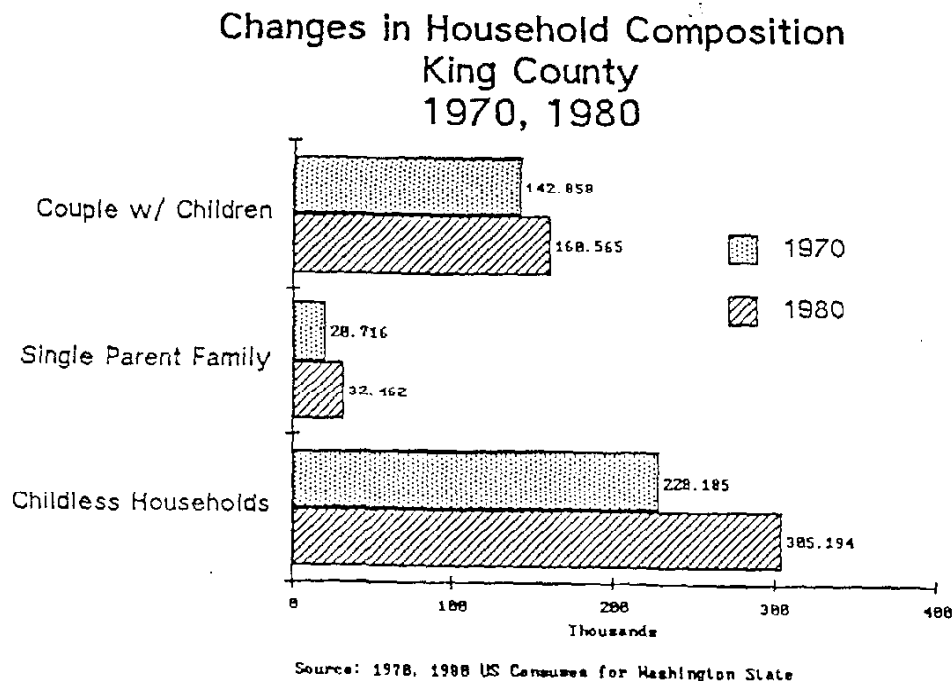
But the more important reason for the declining proportion of children is that fertility rates have been low for years. In fact, since 1972, fertility rates have been at below replacement levels throughout the country. Families are having an average of 1.7 children rather than the 2.1 needed for replacement. If rates continue to stay at these low levels, there will continue to be a decreasing presence of children in the society.

On a national level, if fertility rates continue at their current historic low levels, between 1990-2000 the number of children 0-4 years old will decline by -8 percent,

while the total population is expected to increase by 7 percent. In subsequent decades, there will be a positive growth rate of children, but at only half the level of total population growth.

Another way of demonstrating the decreasing presence of children is by looking at changes over time in the number of households with and without children. While there are no projected figures available for the future, past trends are illuminating. Between 1970 and 1980 in King County the number of households without children increased by 34 percent, while the number with children increased by only 18 percent (see Figure 2). This meant that the proportion of households with children in King County declined from 42 percent to 39 percent during the decade.

Figure 2



The declining proportion of children in the population is an important political factor. It has been argued that groups which are growing tend to be able to direct public resources in their direction. Members of shrinking groups lose visibility, voter constituency, and public interest in their concerns. This is probably one of the reasons for the declining quality of education and the dramatic reductions in AFDC payments in recent years, since both programs serve children. In contrast, senior citizens over 65 years old, who have experienced major population gains and who have been able to exercise a strong influence in Congress, have also experienced the highest income gains of any age group between 1970 and 1980, and have also been able to reduce their poverty rates substantially.

Moreover, children provide a cohesive binding force in neighborhoods and communities. Children provide reasons for neighbors to meet neighbors. Children

promote parental involvement in schools, neighborhoods, and extended family activities. Responsibility for the schools brings adults together, and may provide the avenue for citizens to become further involved in other community activities. However, when an increasing proportion of households are childless, the stimulus for neighborhood cohesion declines. It is likely that the rise in feelings of isolation among some segments of society is due, in part, to the decline in numbers of children in our communities.

#### Increasing Diversity of Families with Children

As the presence of children has been weakening in society, the kinds of families in which children are present has been diversifying. To a large extent, the change has meant that more children are being raised in disadvantaged families than ever before. This is a key trend to keep in mind for the future, for it is the children of today who will provide the labor force of the next decades. Since there are fewer children being born, providing advantages for more of them now is all the more important. Some trend data from the past helps focus on the changing circumstances of children.

There has been a startling increase in babies born out-of-wedlock. Data for King County only are not available. But within Washington State the percentage of babies born out-of-wedlock has increased nine-fold since 1950. In 1950, approximately 2 percent were born out-of-wedlock; by 1985 this had increased to over 18 percent. Rather than having a "shotgun" wedding, mothers are today more likely to keep the baby without benefit of legitimacy.

Children are much more likely to live with a single mother than ever before. This is partly a result of the rising trend in illegitimacy as well as the rising divorce rate. In King County, in 1970 the ratio of married couple families with children to single parent families was 7:1. By 1980, this ratio had declined to 5:1 in King County, and in 1987 is probably closer to the current national ratio of approximately 4:1. This represents a steep decline in the proportion of children being raised in the traditional nuclear family. To the extent that a single parent has less time available for child-rearing, may be more exhausted and tired from both working and being a parent, and to the extent the single parent is more likely to live under serious financial constraints, children today are growing up with less parental guidance and in more stressed situations.

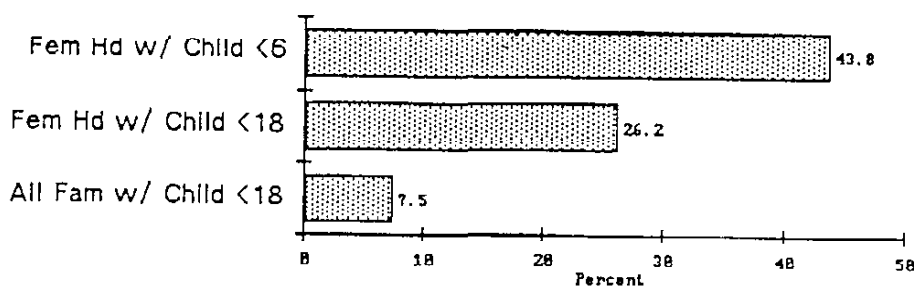
Children today are much more likely to live in poverty than in previous years. According to the Census in 1969 in King County, 6.8 percent of children lived below the poverty level; by 1979 it was 8.1 percent. Since 1979 rates have increased substantially. Assuming the same percentage point change as in the nation, King County's 1986 poverty rate for children would about 12 percent. In fact, poverty rates are higher for children than any other age group. Poverty is highly concentrated in single parent families. Poverty is also correlated with the age of the youngest child. When the youngest child is less than school-age, a single mother is nearly twice as likely to be living in poverty (44 percent) than all single mothers with children less than 18 years old (26 percent) (see Figure 3). Furthermore, rates of poverty for female-headed families are nearly four times the rate of all families with children. While the poverty rate for all families with children in King County in 1979 was 7.5 percent, the poverty rate for female-headed families with children was 26 percent.

Finally, children are today much more likely to live with a working mother than ever before, irrespective of whether the family is a single parent or married couple family. Nationally, last year (1986) was the first year ever that more than 50 percent of

mothers of children less than 6 years old were in the labor force. In King County in 1980, over 40 percent of married women with small children and over 60 percent of unmarried mothers with small children were in the labor force (see Figure 4). The rates are even higher for mothers with older children.

Figure 3

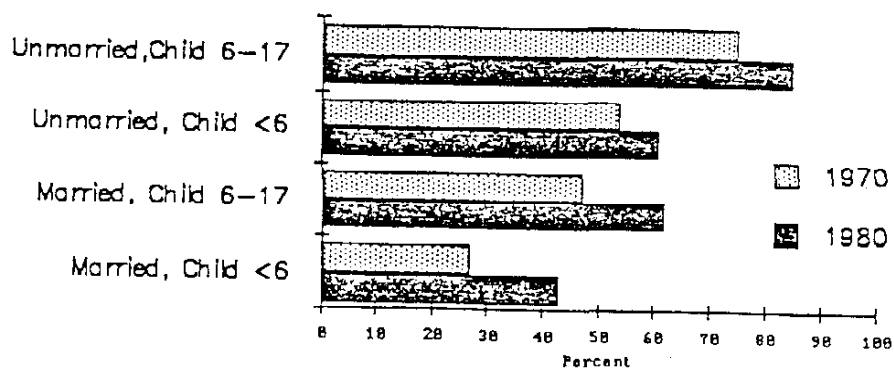
### Poverty Rates Among Different Family Types King County 1979



Source: 1980 US Census for Washington State

Figure 4

### Mothers in the Work Force King County 1970, 1980



Source: 1970, 1980 US Censuses for Washington State.

Furthermore, there continues to be an increase in the labor force participation rates of mothers. As Figure 4 shows, for each family type, mothers in the work force increased substantially during the 1970s decade.

Although the participation rates of women and mothers in the labor force have reached historic highs, there has been little adaptation and change in childcare arrangements. In 1986, Secretary of Labor William Brock stated: "It's just incredible that we have seen the feminization of the work force with not more adaptation than we have had.... It is a problem of sufficient magnitude that everybody is going to have to play a role: families, individuals, businesses, [and] government." In most cases, mothers of preschool children are left to themselves to find or create a childcare situation that simultaneously is within the limits of their incomes and meets their work schedules. This can be an exceedingly difficult task even with sufficient financial resources. A recent cover-story in *FORTUNE* magazine noted the rise in stress, absenteeism, and reduced productivity among female executives who are mothers of small children. In a survey of these women, 59 percent had missed a day of work in the preceding 3 months due to family obligations. Moreover, concern for the children is also taking it toll on the husbands of working mothers. They report more stress on the job as they worry about how their children are being cared for.

Lack of inexpensive childcare is a key reason for the higher poverty rates of mothers with preschool children, particularly single mothers. When wages are low and do not cover the cost of childcare, the mothers cannot work and instead she goes on welfare. In Washington State the pilot Family Independence Program (FIP) will begin to address this problem.

#### Implications of Trends in Families

What has been described above are past trends and consequences in the family in King County. These trends are important to recognize for it is the children who comprise the future for King County as well as the state and nation. The future health and welfare of the society will be, in part, dependent upon the current characteristics and upbringing of the future members of society. Because children are becoming increasingly scarce, and because trends point to conditions that place them in increasing jeopardy, anything that can be done to provide children with advantages in childhood will help them into a successful adult life. Society will simultaneously reap the benefits of productive and well-adjusted adults.

Further, from the self-centered point of view of the baby boom generation, today's children will comprise the main supporters during the baby boom's retirement years beginning in 2010. Because of future changes in age composition of the population, the ratio of workers to retirees will decline from today's ratio of over 3 workers to one retiree, to approximately two to one. Future workers will have a greater burden placed on them by the retirement population. If their productivity levels also decline, retirees as well as the entire population will be placed at greater risk.

What the future really holds is, of course, difficult to tell. It could be that fertility rates will increase. This would mean that children will grow in number as well as percent in society. This could result in a greater focus on the welfare of children since more adults (parents) would have a stake in children's issues. A return to family values could accompany a rise in fertility. This might mean declining divorce rates and also declining single parent families. It is extremely difficult to forecast future fertility trends and demographers have been notoriously unreliable in this area.



Even without a rise in fertility, recently there has been increasing attention focused on children. Schools systems, which deteriorated substantially in the 1970s, are receiving renewed attention although there is still a long way to go. Increasingly, business and the private sector is being drawn into the issue of education since quality of the labor force directly affects productivity levels. The *Wall Street Journal* regularly covers developments in the relationship between education and business.

Moreover, some, though not a lot, of attention is being directed toward the issue of daycare. The key to the success of the pilot FIP program in Washington State will be inexpensive daycare for former welfare mothers. Some businesses are beginning to pay closer attention to the family demands of employees. To the extent that the near future will mean labor shortages, working mothers may be able to initiate and bring about more flexibility in work environments. This means that both business and government will have to be more adaptable to the needs of labor.

It does seem apparent that if no responsive actions are taken to improve the lot of children today, there will be serious social and economic consequences in the future. It is also true that with some effort (probably considerable effort), the plight of children can be turned around. However, it takes education and realization on the part of the body politic as to the seriousness of the situation and what might happen if nothing is done.

#### **Redistribution of Population and Jobs within King County**

In this section, the forecasted redistribution of population and jobs within King County is examined. This redistribution is perhaps one of the most important trends that will affect the future of King County, the nature of governance, and the interface between Seattle City and the Eastside, and among the Eastside and South King County cities. In essence, both population and job growth will be heaviest outside of Seattle, thus challenging Seattle City's traditional dominance of the region.

It is not the intention here to focus on approaches toward restructuring King County government. Rather the intention is to point out one consequence of this growth pattern and the crucial importance of providing accessible and inexpensive means of transportation in order to preserve and improve the health of the entire King County economy and its people. In fact, at this time there exists a window of opportunity to improve the economic position of traditionally unemployed and disenfranchised segments of the population that tend to reside in the central city area. But the opportunity rests on easy accessibility to jobs.

#### **Forecasted Growth Patterns within King County**

The pattern of growth currently taking place within King County is well-known. While Seattle City has been losing population (between 1970 and 1980 there was a 7 percent decrease in population size), the number of people in the Eastside and South King County has been growing markedly. In fact, during the 1970s, the Eastside was the third most rapidly growing subcounty area in the nation. This growth pattern is expected to continue into future, at least to the year 2000 (see Table 5) and probably beyond.

Table 5  
Forecasts of Population and Job Growth  
in King County

	1980	1990	2000
<b>POPULATION</b>			
City of Seattle	493,846	481,703	480,945
Other King County	775,903	905,613	1,157,975
<b>Percentage Increase</b>			
City of Seattle		-2.4%	-0.1%
Other King County		16.7%	27.9%
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<b>JOBS</b>			
City of Seattle	403,349	441,000	514,406
Other King County	296,212	365,504	489,166
<b>Percentage Increase</b>			
City of Seattle		9.3%	16.6%
Other King County		23.4%	33.8%
Source: Puget Sound Council of Governments, <i>Population and Employment Forecasts 1984</i> .			

Similarly, jobs will grow faster outside Seattle than in the City. According to the COG forecast by the year 2000, the number of jobs outside the City will approach the number of jobs within the City.

It is important to be aware of this growth trend since it affects an individual's accessibility to jobs, services, and businesses that are necessary to maintain a decent living. Social service agencies note that one of the most difficult problems facing low income people is a means of inexpensive and accessible transportation to jobs, health care facilities, and other destinations. In fact, according to Elizabeth Toth, Executive Director of the Center for Family and Children's Policy and Program Development in Seattle, transportation is the number one problem facing low income people in their daily existence. There is currently concern about the increasingly difficult traffic situation south of Seattle, which is making it difficult to get to and from work, or to and from shopping. There is an increasing need for more roads and public transportation. There is also an increasing need to reduce the distance between place of residence and place of work.

## Job Shortages and the Mismatched Potential Labor Supply

Concurrent with the population and job growth changes in King County is the development and increasing intensity of labor force shortages in entry-level jobs. Labor shortages are taking place not only in King County but across the nation. The cause is the low birth rates that prevailed during the 1960s and 1970s. The so-called baby bust generation is beginning to enter the labor market in entry-level jobs, but the small sized cohorts are creating labor shortages. As was shown in Table 3, the number of 16-24 years olds was predicted to fall by 22 percent between 1980-1990, and only grow by 4 percent in the next decade.

The shortages are being felt particularly by restaurants, the hospitality industry, banking, and other businesses which provide jobs that do not require a college education. It has been a long time since Americans thought about labor shortages in a wide spectrum of occupations, but business is beginning to feel its effects.

The developing labor shortage is seeing increasing attention in the media. Articles in the *New York Times*, *Wall Street Journal*, and other newspapers have recently been reporting on the labor shortages within specific industries such as fast-food restaurants. One consequence is that these businesses are now being forced to offer more than minimum wage to attract employees. Often the wage is \$1.00 or more over minimum, but one article reported that in some parts of the country, a busboy may command an \$8.00 an hour wage. A recent article in the *Seattle Post-Intelligencer* addressed the issue in the Seattle area. McDonald's, Taco Time, and Dick's Drive-Ins were all quoted as having to make adjustments to attract employees, including offering higher wages, more flexibility in work hours, and benefits such as help with college tuition. Help-wanted signs in windows are showing up much more often than in recent history.

## Solutions

On the other side of the coin, there does exist a pool of underutilized and unemployed labor, many of whom could fill these jobs. It is comprised mainly of minorities and people who have had a lower commitment to the labor force in the past. On a national level, it has been estimated that 46 percent of adult black males are not working. They are either retired, unemployed, or not even looking for work (e.g., the "discouraged worker" syndrome). If they can be pulled into the job force, a whole series of societal challenges can be met, since many of these potential workers are low-income and disadvantaged.

Assuming that the national rates of joblessness hold in Seattle, a key problem inhibiting the solution is that while a substantial portion of this potential labor pool resides in the Central Area, many of the new jobs are being offered in the commercializing areas outside of Seattle City. Most of these areas are not easily accessible by mass transit. Thus, unless one owns a reliable car, a daily commute to and from work is virtually impossible for these people. Expanding public transportation options is clearly needed.

A second solution is to promote residential mobility to areas of high job growth. This solution would require development of more low-income housing outside of Seattle City. Politically this may be difficult. However, by stressing the current need for more inexpensive housing among several segments of the population (young families with their

exceptionally low rates of home ownership, the larger retirement population down-scaling into smaller dwellings) it may be easier to promote such housing.

There is an element of time that is important in thinking about the labor shortages. Such shortages in entry-level jobs are expected to last only temporarily until the baby bust generation is fully absorbed into the job force. At the end of the century, the population of young adults will begin to grow again as the echo boomlet born in the early 1980s begins to join the labor force. At this time the job shortages in entry-level jobs will be over, and it will be more difficult to employ those who tend to have lower commitment to the labor force. In other words, the labor shortages are providing a window of opportunity now and for the next fifteen years which can be utilized to help improve the economic health of the low-income population.

## CONCLUSIONS

This report points to several policy implications that are directly related to King County government. First, the need for accessible transportation to and from jobs is acute. Given future growth predictions, the need will become more intense. Transportation is central to the health and well-being of King County.

Secondly, affordable housing outside Seattle could help reduce the disadvantages of living in the more isolated Central Area, including the lack of jobs. Businesses outside Seattle would then have a larger labor pool to draw upon during the current period of labor shortages. It is frustrating to know about job vacancies and to know there is a potential labor supply, but accessibility to the jobs prohibits an easy solution.

Thirdly, in assuming responsibility for its own employees, King County government should ensure that it is doing what it can, directly or indirectly, for the children of its employees. This includes providing flexible work hours where jobs permit, support for daycare centers, flexible benefit packages that could trade-off one set of pretax benefits for another (such as daycare), and support for further education of employees and the educational system. Because characteristics of employees have changed so rapidly (more females, more single mothers with children, and more living close to the poverty line) in recent years, management has sometimes lost touch with what conditions are like on the home-front. A recent national survey of business executives revealed that the average CEO assumed that most of their employees were members of a traditional nuclear family, with a married couple, homemaker wife, and children. In fact, this idealized type only represents about 7 percent of all households. The reason for concern about children is simple: they represent a declining segment of the population, and their living conditions have deteriorated substantially over the last 15 years. At the same time they constitute the future of the society.

In the longterm future, the key development will be the retirement of the baby boom generation. The period 2010-2030 will present one of the greatest challenges to society, because the population will become increasingly older, more dependent, and needing very costly and labor intensive services. It seems prudent to begin making some plans for this future, for it will certainly be unavoidable. Ensuring a future educated and productive labor force for that time period is absolutely crucial. At some point in the future, there will need to be more low cost housing built for senior citizens, and new systems of less expensive health and maintenance care. It is also important to remember that this generation of retirees will likely not be as well-off as the current generation of retirees. In the future income from Social Security will be relatively lower due to the decline in worker to retiree ratio.

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