



Discussion Points, Tax Base Spreadsheets:
Corps of Engineers' Incorrect Flood Analysis Will Create Unnecessary Long Term Burden for the Community and its School Districts

- 1) Burlington-Edison and Mount Vernon school districts have a much different tax base structure. B-E still has most of its assessed value in the rural areas, although property tax base growth in the urban area continues to increase relative to rural areas, and will continue to do so. Mount Vernon, on the other hand, gets its property tax base overwhelmingly from the urban area.
- 2) Notice Burlington's urban area tax base increased 145% during this period. Mount Vernon's increased 102%. Notice also that the both school districts' total tax base did not increase as much as the urban component (113% for Burlington; 97% for Mount Vernon). This indicates valuation growth within the urban areas significantly outpaced valuation growth in the rural areas. The trend, as we would expect given GMA, is that the urban areas are carrying and will carry more of the total property tax base load for the schools.
- 3) Note that both districts have increased their total property taxes about the same amount (59% for Mount Vernon, 57.5% for Burlington-Edison). Household income during that time increased by 29%. One statistic indicated home ownership in Skagit County is 70%. Every household property tax situation is different, but generally you can see that these numbers will give people a sense of being squeezed. More reason, in my view, to provide care and feeding to the urban areas' commercial and industrial tax base.
- 4) As a Mount Vernon resident, I am concerned and even dismayed by these figures and what they portend for the future. Even with healthy growth and a general sense in the community of good economic conditions, both Mount Vernon and Burlington school districts were unable to pass a bond issue. That won't get easier as the growth in our tax base is reduced (see "what if" our tax base growth was 70% of what we have experienced over the past 9 years). The wrong hydrology and hydraulic models will be very bad for Mount Vernon and Mount Vernon schools over time, with negative repercussions throughout the valley. Mount Vernon is already significantly lagging behind Burlington in tax base increase. Now, Mount Vernon is taking the bulk of the County's residential growth (tax loser for the City as well as a loser for capital programs for the school district – i.e., need new high school and new middle school and a couple of new elementary schools) and will be further handicapped, if not crippled, in its commercial/industrial development if the Corps hydrology prevails.
- 5) Burlington, meanwhile, has just as bad of a problem in the short term (20 years) if the Corps hydrology prevails. The difference for us is, in that period of time, Burlington can probably protect itself and get its levees certified, even against the Corps hydrology. I don't think Mount Vernon can ever protect its commercial Riverbend area with the Corps hydrology. Still, in the next 20 years, both communities would be stuck with the imposed new flood elevations and the reduced tax base growth that would follow. For 20 years. At the end of that time, what will our community look like, compared to what it could have been?

These numbers tell me that our school districts – which depend on property tax growth to provide reasonably adequate financial resources to educate our kids – will be burdened tremendously and unnecessarily by the results of the Corps' incorrect analysis. And the burden will be hidden, insidious – how do you show what could have been, if "what could have been," never happens due to constraints built in to the economic base?

There is much more research and analysis that could be conducted here. I will add information as time goes by.

<http://www.ofm.wa.gov/localdata/skag.asp>

<http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/53/53057.html>

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