Greetings Friends and Neighbors,

I have now completed my second year on the County Council and would like to report to you some of our accomplishments during this past year. We’ll also take a quick peek into 2015.

I believe all of us feel that Pierce County can be the leader of the South Sound and a great place to live, work and play. The housing market is improving after years of decline allowing our residents to again purchase affordable housing. We have a diverse work environment that includes the state’s second largest employer, Joint Base Lewis-McChord.

We also have a vibrant Port of Tacoma, a growing Fredrickson area with Toray Composites, Hardy and many other small businesses throughout the county. We have perhaps the greatest natural environment in the United States, which extends from the top of Mount Rainier, down our rivers and to the shores of beautiful Puget Sound. Plus we have many county parks and park services for youth and adults and programs for the disabled.

Pierce County is a wonderful place, and I’m honored to represent a portion of it in the 4th Council District. Please don’t hesitate to contact me if you have any questions, comments or concerns regarding county government. I look forward to hearing from you soon!

Sincerely,

Connie Ladenburg
Council Member, 4th District
There have been many years when Pierce County suffered from high crime rates. We are fortunate to now be experiencing a reduction in crime over the last few years. Crimes that are of the most concern to our public fall into three areas: violent crime, property crime and drug crime.

The 4th District is mostly made up of University Place and a large portion of Tacoma. Crime rates are down in the Tacoma area of our district. In University Place, violent crime is up but property crime and drug crimes are down.

I recognize that crime is one of your primary concerns and even though we have seen some improvements our real numbers are still too high. That’s why I supported more funding in the budget for additional police officers and prosecutors to help continue the downward trend in our crime rates.

It is my hope that Pierce County will provide a setting that is safe and livable for all of our residents. I also believe that we should ensure that resources are available to respond to the needs for these provisions. I have been focusing on four areas: Safer communities, Homeless Youth, Human Trafficking, and Behavioral Health.

**SAFER Communities**

Overall, crime rates in the unincorporated portion of the county reflect reductions in property crime and drug crime, however violent crime has seen a slight increase.

**HOMELESS Youth**

Pierce County along with the City of Tacoma, is working on the development of a drop-in crisis center for homeless youth and young adults, which will fill the current void in providing services to this vulnerable population. As a result of a joint City/County public solicitation to secure an operator, Community Youth Services (CYS) will assist in the operation of shelter services and in the identification of a physical site for the center.

The development of the Youth and Young Adult Crisis Center and Emergency Shelter is an important component of the County’s continuum of housing and services for homeless youth. CYS will work closely with local service providers and community leaders to connect youth and young adults with supportive services, including assistance with family reunification wherever possible. The center will also include an overnight shelter. Shelter services will be developed in stages - beginning with a shelter for young adults, followed by a shelter serving youth.

View crime data in your neighborhood at [www.piercecountycrimedata.org](http://www.piercecountycrimedata.org)

An assessment would provide necessary information to better understand gaps in services, impacts and costs of having unmet needs, resources that could help fill the gaps in services, and possible returns on investments by implementing best practice or innovative models. This knowledge would then allow us to take the appropriate response to this social problem.

**BEHAVIORAL Health**

The Council has been receiving anecdotal information with some data about the status of behavioral health issues (mental health and chemical dependency) in Pierce County. We are negatively impacted by the behavioral health crisis in our jails and justice systems. However, we know that the impacts go beyond our jails often having an impact to our communities.

I have proposed that we do an analysis of the mental health system in Pierce County. An analysis would allow the council to determine its role in responding to the behavioral health crisis and to make informed decisions about a comprehensive approach to providing needed services to the behavioral health community.
HUMAN Trafficking

Human trafficking is the illegal exploitation of people – men, women, youth, and children – for commercial purposes and profit. Human trafficking is modern day slavery and is becoming prevalent in many of our urban areas throughout the United States and here in Washington.

In recent years, new laws have been passed that increase and enhance criminal sentences and protect victims. But there is more that can be done to directly affect the victims.

I believe that all of us would agree that victims need to be “rescued” out of this lifestyle. As a County, we should be working with local advocacy groups and non-profits to ensure there are services and interventions preventing the victim from returning to this lifestyle - such as transitional housing, counseling, parental support, and supportive mentoring.

A County at Work . . .

Chambers Creek SHORELINE

As owners of the Chamber Creek Properties, the County bears the responsibility for the continued restorative improvements to the Chambers Creek Properties Shoreline as required by the State Department of Natural Resources.

In 2013, I worked with then-Governor Gregoire for a number of months to secure funding for Chambers Bay’s north dock pier extension and floating moorage project to remove pilings, restore shoreline and construct a new dock. The Legislature allocated $2.5 million of her request to be spent on shoreline cleanup and restoration. $1.3 million of these funds is for the removal of the derelict south and north docks on the Chambers Creek Properties shoreline.

I am happy to report that demolition has been completed. The remaining $1.2 million will be used for remedial removal of accessory pilings, dock materials, and associated non-marine materials from the shoreline.

These docks had fallen into serious disrepair and were no longer viable for use as a fishing pier, moorage structure or public use. The docks had become a hazard to aquatic life and recreational and commercial traffic on Puget Sound.

Completion of the north dock pier extension and floating moorage project and removal of the south and north docks will enhance shellfish harvest beds, protect salmonids returning to the Sound from Chambers Creek. This project will also allow the restoration of eelgrass, other aquatic plants and small sea life.

Chambers Creek Regional Wastewater Treatment Plant UPDATE

Pierce County is making major improvements to the Chambers Creek Regional Wastewater Treatment Plant (WWTP) located in University Place through a massive expansion project that will increase capacity and improve treatment. The goal is to keep the treatment plant capacity ahead of demand and accommodate all current and future customers with a cost effective and environmentally responsible sewer system.

Construction is currently 41% complete and is expected to last through 2016. Residents may have noticed tall tower cranes at the WWTP which are used to move bundles of rebar and other building materials. Deconstruction of the cranes begins in January, with the final cranes scheduled to come down in summer of 2015.

For more information on the project, visit www.piercecountywa.org/WWTPExpansion.
The budget for 2015 continues our investment in key services, and in many cases, improves them. We have provided resources to expedite building permits and ensure that utility services meet the demand needed for renewed economic development. The council continues to support a diverse economic environment that fosters growth in industries from aerospace to agriculture.

Our primary sources of revenue for the general fund budget are property and sales taxes. It is expected that we will see a healthy increase in sales tax in 2015, but property tax has been limited to only a 1-percent increase per year since 2002. This threshold is below the rate of inflation and has placed limitations on the county budget. However, we will see growth resulting from new construction and improvement, which is greater than prior years.

Some of the other sources of revenue come from other taxes, licenses and permits, fines and forfeitures, intergovernmental revenue, interest revenue, miscellaneous revenue, and charges for services. The county expects decreases in revenue from other taxes, intergovernmental revenue and charges for services, however we expect a modest increase in total revenue for 2015.