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Date: 2/17/2009 5:36 PM
Subject: Columbia Valley UGA and the EIS Process

We take this unique opportunity to address most of the leaders in Whatcom County who have the courage to face the many challenges represented by the increasing numbers of new neighbors arriving and the decisions needed for smart growth planning. Upon arriving in 1974, our experience and observations of all the counties communities, from the early mainly Canadian owned recreation communities in the Foothills, Birch Bay, and Sudden Valley, to the present sustainable growth our small cities have experienced, where the main residential base in these rural areas are now moving to full time occupancy. It has been obvious as we serve these new needs in infrastructure, transportation, education, there has been a continuous growth in revenue for the good of all of Whatcom County. It is likewise a critical moment for the Columbia Valley, a place that time and reliable services has almost forgotten. It is time to take its place in building a reliable community, with good leadership whether or not it ever gains enough political will to declare itself a "city". The existence of the Columbia Valley UGA for almost 10 years is a blessing. It's status may be an accident of forethought, or a well thought out leadership position by the the then Whatcom County Council, but it matters not. It is. It is the best tool to guide an EIS study of all other unincorporated UGA's. If infrastructure and capital expenditures "should" have been spent during its tenure and were not, the density by design for that area, will both help the tax base of not only that area, but of the entire Foothills. And with the example of the Sumas rebirth due in part to homeowner growth, and a pragmatic development of a related light/heavy industrial base that will bring back a community not dependent on the exchange rates of our neighbors. The Columbia Valley needs to achieve a "critical mass" of new and rehabilitated homes, some commercial service land for their needs, and a "place" for light industrial service businesses and secondary manufacturing of the areas resources. With this being said, we ask the Council to exercise its sound judgment, retain the Columbia Valley UGA, complete an EIS of all existing UGA's in unincorporated areas, and allow for future growth as the lots, developments, and future needs evolve based upon sound population projections, and not on the needs of Whatcom County planning with obstacles placed by "no growth" posturing. The Columbia Valley is a destination for many new families due to affordability, and that will assure that steady home valuations will build a real community that pays it's share of the operational cost of all of Whatcom County. It is time to guide that growth and meet the density requirements of the GMA.

Regards.
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