

LARRABEE SPRINGS

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WHATCOM COUNTY COUNCIL

Caitac USA Corporation
Bellingham WA

205 West Smith Road
Office: 360.398-8300

Whatcom County Council
311 Grand Avenue
Bellingham, WA 98225

Whatcom County Planning Commission
5280 Northwest Drive
Bellingham, Washington 98226

Honorable Members of the Whatcom County Council and Whatcom County Planning Commission,

2009 marks Caitac's 20th anniversary as a corporate citizen of Bellingham and Whatcom County. Much has changed over the years but not our commitment to our core business ethos of "sincerity" or our commitment to this community.

Reading County Executive Pete Kremen's recommendations for Whatcom County's ongoing Urban Growth Area Review makes it clear Whatcom County continues to struggle with many of the same issues it has struggled with for most of the past decade.

Caitac is a proud member of this community and we are honored to serve the community through the North Bellingham Golf Course, an award winning hotel, an office and retail complex and residential properties. Together these businesses provide almost 150 job opportunities for local families.

As members of this community we share your concerns over the many complex and emotional issues we all face regarding our economy, education, safety, growth management, preserving open spaces, avoiding sprawl, minimizing traffic, preserving farmlands and protecting our environment, all the while striving for a vibrant, diverse local economy. Each is critical and has guided our vision for a sustainable community called Larrabee Springs which includes:

- Being the first LEED ND neighborhood in Whatcom County
- Incorporation of alternative energy sources
- Incorporating transit from day one
- Providing plentiful public parks, recreational facilities, a swimming pool, and an interconnected trail system

- Funding for farmland conservation and salmon recovery
- Allowing Bellingham to grow with grace by creating a complete, compact, and connected community that is smaller and denser than most Bellingham neighborhoods with a commitment to open spaces, jobs and public amenities such as a multiuse Soccer and Recreation facility for our well-deserving youth.
- Supporting education with a badly needed and valuable elementary School site for the Meridian School district.
- Larrabee Springs has the potential to help resolve some very serious problems facing Whatcom County at the present time including the accommodation of growth while preserving agricultural land and preventing sprawl.


More than twelve years ago Whatcom County and Bellingham agreed Larrabee Springs should be considered for inclusion into the County's housing mix in succeeding Comprehensive Plan updates. Several intense studies have been conducted on Larrabee Springs over the last decade by the County and the City. The City of Bellingham's Comprehensive plan, as adopted, requires the inclusion of Larrabee Springs into the city's planning mix to achieve the plan's goals. And, Larrabee Springs is docketed on the County's agenda.

Including Larrabee Springs in Bellingham's Urban Growth area this year could provide a defensible, vetted, quantified, interim and long term solution to some of the planning problems the county currently faces. The inclusion of Larrabee Springs would give the County GMA compliant breathing room as it seeks solutions to serious problems created countywide by the land supply shortage in Bellingham.

We earnestly request the Council give serious consideration to the inclusion of Larrabee Springs, this year, into the City of Bellingham's UGA. We have enclosed a white paper which we believe will be useful as you deliberate your options for building the vision shared by all residents of Whatcom County.

We gratefully appreciate your review of the enclosed material and our request.

Respectfully Yours,



N. Ishii
Executive Vice President
Caitac

Preserving Community Character In A Metropolitan County

The Importance Of Modern, Mixed Use, Planned Communities In Preserving Agriculture, Reducing The Environmental Impacts Of Growth, Enhancing Neighborhood Character And Constraining The Dispersion Of Housing In Metropolitan Counties Similar To Whatcom County: Larrabee Springs As An Example

Based on the U. S. Department of Agriculture Report:

Development at the Urban Fringe and Beyond: Impacts on Agriculture and Rural Land

And on the Urban Land Institute's Report:

A ULI Working Paper on Land Use Policy and Practice: Greenfield Development Without Sprawl: The Role of Planned Communities

Analysis provided by:

Public Policy Perspectives

Jack and Clayton Petree: Bellingham, Washington

360: 733 – 1303

Preserving Rural Character In A Metropolitan County

On reading County Executive Pete Kremen's recommendations for Whatcom County's ongoing Urban Growth Area Review it becomes clear Whatcom County continues to struggle with many of the same issues it has struggled with for most of the past decade.

Whatcom County is not alone in this struggle. A 2001 report by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, *Development at the Urban Fringe and Beyond: Impacts on Agriculture and Rural Land* investigated the challenges facing metropolitan communities, like Whatcom County, who seek to preserve traditional rural lifestyles and farming as an economic base as population growth takes place today, and in the future.

In terms of the Executive's proposal for Whatcom County's future, it is instructive to examine some key findings of the Agriculture Department's study. Among other findings, the study concluded that:

- Urban expansion in the United States, "...is not seen as a threat to most farming..."
- "The consequences of continued large-lot development may be less sanguine, since it consumes much more land per unit of housing than the typical suburb."
- **"Local governments generally do not develop adequate capacity to plan for and manage growth until it is too late to effectively channel development—** Because urban growth processes are well understood, strategically directing development to the most favorable areas well in advance of urban pressures offers the greatest hope for controlling growth. Local governments often fail to appreciate impending growth facing them, and generally lack capacity to develop adequate responses before growth overwhelms them." (emphasis theirs)
- Most definitions of true sprawl have some common features including:
 - "Low-density development that is dispersed and uses a lot of land;
 - Geographic separation of essential places such as work, homes, schools, and shopping;
 - And almost complete dependence on automobiles for travel"

The Agriculture Department's study, along with associated material dealing with the subject, points to some strong synergies possible between agriculture and expanding populations in nearby metropolitan areas as well as some important issues tending to harm the rural landscape.

One thrust of the document, confirmed by personal conversations with one of the principle authors, is that agriculture within a few miles of an urban fringe usually adapts to the presence of the city and prospers. The opportunity to profitably farm near a city can be considerably enhanced by proximity to a metropolitan area. A Joe's Garden, Boxx Berry Farm or any farmer providing produce at one of the local Farmer's Markets depends on a significant metropolitan population for customers. Farms that might be

marginal in a rural area can continue to exist and serve the community due to the availability of the supplemental income some farmers require to allow them to stay on the land.

The real problem for agriculture, the report indicates, especially agriculture similar to that represented by Whatcom County's dairy industry, is large lot development at distance from the urban fringe; development like that seen in Whatcom County's unincorporated rural areas.

The drivers of large lot development at a distance from a metropolitan area are many and diverse. Often, there is nothing that can be done to reduce their impact. The Ag Department's document points out, for example, that the availability of Internet and cable, (or similar alternatives) increase the likelihood that some who might otherwise be forced to live in a city will be able to choose to live in more remote areas of the county because they can work at home electronically. It would be difficult to legislate confining Internet to the cities.

On the other hand, especially in a growth management venue, governments have some powerful tools capable of providing significant reduction in the rate of rural dispersion seen in some areas. As just one example, data made available by Whatcom County's Planning Department in a variety of venues demonstrates conclusively that an adequate supply of land inside the County's Urban Growth Areas (UGAs) with a variety of choice regarding housing type results in large increases in the percentage of population growth accommodated in our cities. In times when choice has been restricted in the cities, more growth occurs in the rural areas of the county. (see attached document)

The demonstrated reductions in the dispersion of growth to the County in times of abundant land supply within the cities can come as no surprise to anyone. The fact that adequate land supply providing for a variety of lifestyle choices in the cities can reduce growth in rural areas is the cornerstone of the GMA; the very reason the GMA was passed in the first place.

Development Without Sprawl: The Role Of Larrabee Springs-Like Communities In Preserving Whatcom County's Rural Character And Farm Infrastructure

The Executive's several hundred pages of discussion regarding his proposal for Whatcom County helps clarify the importance of the long proposed Larrabee Springs community. A state-of-the-art, intelligent growth community, a project like Larrabee Springs is likely to have significant ability to solve some of the challenges the County is confronted with as it plans to preserve quality of life, environmental preservation and economic health for Whatcom County over the next several decades.

Relative to Bellingham's existing neighborhoods, Larrabee Springs will be smaller than the average neighborhood in size. The project will feature higher residential densities than most neighborhoods with the density moderated by the very significant amounts of open space. The proposal features far more parks and recreational opportunities than most of the city's neighborhoods provide and will be highly oriented to transit. The level of public amenities planned for Larrabee Springs is unmatched in Bellingham's neighborhoods. The development is concentrated around an existing golf course with intimate connections to work, homes, schools and shopping provided for. It will be the antithesis of the sprawling, auto dependent, low density development style all too often seen today.

In terms of the County Executive's proposal for Whatcom County's future growth, challenges the Executive, the County Council, citizens and others struggle with as we all plan together for Whatcom County's future include:

- How do we assure existing lands dedicated to agriculture are preserved for the future?
- How do we work to achieve the Whatcom County Council's long desired, and now adopted, goal of preserving 100,000 acres in Whatcom County dedicated to agriculture?
- How do we follow the Growth Management Act's mandate to direct growth, where possible, to urban areas while also assuring we preserve and enhance the community character we so value in those urban areas?
- How do we assure the necessary and expensive infrastructure required to allow growth where planned can meet GMA mandates to insure growth planned for is growth that can take place when and where planned?
- How do we reduce the rampant dispersion of unnecessary growth to rural areas seen in recent years along with the excessive greenhouse gas emissions, expensive infrastructure investments and pressure on rural land supplies that sprawl creates?
- How do we address the fact that the Land Capacity Analysis for Bellingham, Whatcom County's largest city, shows an inadequate land supply for the population proposed for it despite the over counting of nearly 3,000 housing units presumed for land not zoned to accommodate those units?
- How do we address the fact that the counting of lands not zoned to accommodate growth in both the smaller cities and in Bellingham will require extraordinary change in the character of existing neighborhoods?
- How can we overcome the problems we face in that much of the single family housing most citizens want as a housing choice is available in only the rural areas of the county rather than the urban areas? Single family housing in our cities, especially in Bellingham, is becoming ever more scarce. Cities like Bellingham have identified serious shortfalls in appropriate land supplies for single family housing in briefings for Planning Commissions and Councils.
- How do we assure the Growth Management mandate that development regulations be adopted contemporaneous with Comp plan amendments to insure that growth planned for is growth that can actually take place is met in the process addresses by the Executive?

The planning literature demonstrates the inclusion of the Larrabee Springs neighborhood in Bellingham's Urban Growth Area (UGA) could provide Whatcom County with meaningful tools able to address each of the issues the Executive and Council struggle with as they seek the best possible future for the County's citizens. For some of the issues of concern Larrabee Springs would provide interim "breathing room," allowing the County time to more completely address vexing, difficult to solve,

problems. Regarding other challenges, the inclusion of Larrabee Springs would point the way to more permanent solutions to on-going problems.

Greenfield Development Without Sprawl: The Role of Planned Communities

In 2004 the Urban Land Institute released a ground breaking work titled *Greenfield Development Without Sprawl: The Role of Planned Communities*.

Read in concert with the Department of Agriculture's work on development at the Urban Fringe it can be seen that Planned Communities like Larrabee Springs are seen by the national planning community as critical to efforts aimed at reducing sprawl and preserving rural lands and lifestyles.

Important findings pointed to by the Urban Land Institute's document include:

- To accommodate future growth, "Many see infill...as the responsible, resource-conscious way to meet the need."
- "But infill strategies, even if universally accepted, cannot happen fast enough or in great enough numbers to make much of a difference by 2025. Portland, Oregon, projects in its metropolitan regional plan that 70 percent of near-term growth will be on Greenfield land versus built-up areas. Other U.S. jurisdictions predict numbers closer to 90 percent."
- "While it is often lumped with sprawl, Greenfield development offers the most practical, affordable, and achievable chance to build without sprawl, given its potential to create large-scale, conserved open lands and sustainable modern infrastructure."
- "The basics of smart growth can already be found in a limited number of Greenfield communities that demonstrate that (sic) a holistic approach to meeting the needs of growth and development."
- "Any agenda for positive, sprawl-free Greenfield development involves three prerequisites:"
 - "A preestablished regionwide system of sustainable open space..." (see Bellingham and Whatcom County's Parks and Open Space plans).
 - "Ways to reduce car trips: more and higher concentrations of mixed-use development – especially in areas accessible to public transit..."
 - "A diverse mix of housing types, sizes, and prices within regions and communities, and, where possible, within neighborhoods."
- "Achieving these prerequisites seems to require what only a larger project can offer."

Larrabee Springs is more properly characterized as infill, rather than as Greenfield development. Much of the land Larrabee Springs will occupy surrounds an already developed and operating public golf course. Thousands of jobs, a multitude of recreational opportunities, Whatcom Community College and

the heart of the County's shopping and service infrastructure already exist within a half hour's walking distance, or an easy commute by bicycle or transit, from almost anywhere in the proposed community. Once constructed, Larrabee Springs itself will provide additional jobs, recreational opportunities, a school, shopping and services for both its own residents and for its neighbors. Nevertheless, whether one chooses to characterize Larrabee Springs as infill or as Greenfield development, the Larrabee Springs project will be master planned to meet and/or exceed all the parameters discussed by the ULI 's professional planners as being vital to the success of a larger community plan.

What is Larrabee Springs proposed to be?

Larrabee Springs is proposed to be a progressive, state of the art, new neighborhood for Bellingham. Development will be guided by strict, LEED Neighborhood Development, design standards to achieve a mixed use, intelligent growth community surrounding the North Bellingham Golf Course, an already existing public course next to the Bellingham City Limits that Northwest citizens have enjoyed for more than 13 years.

About 2,000 housing units accented by a small urban village with a festival square will be available to a broad range of community organizations. The owners of Larrabee Springs believe the festival square would be an ideal location for another farmer's market, as well as for the concerts and other cultural events a festival square is meant to accommodate.

The LEED for Neighborhood Development rating system integrates the principles of smart growth, sustainability, urbanism and green building technologies as well as an affordable housing component into a national rating system for the best in neighborhood design. To qualify, a community like Larrabee Springs must meet the standards of third party certification that the LEED promise made is a LEED promise kept.

The owners of Larrabee Springs have expressed willingness to sign binding documents requiring them to follow through on planning initiatives the ownership has been voluntarily proposing for years. Larrabee Springs will provide quality parks and open space for the enjoyment of all Whatcom County residents. Larrabee Springs has already agreed to provide land for a much needed elementary school site to the Meridian School District along with associated soccer fields and other sports facilities, once building permits are possible. Larrabee Springs will be a transit oriented community of a sort never seen before in this area of the country. The community will also be master planned to offer a range of other modern amenities of the sort required to attract citizens to an urban setting.

The proposed Larrabee Springs is surrounded by, and already partially occupied by, both urban and suburban levels of development. To the south, homeowners in Larrabee Springs will literally be able to borrow a cup of sugar from neighbors already selecting home sites in one of Bellingham's newest, fully permitted and under construction neighborhoods, The Reserve at Cordata. To the East, large lot suburban development lines the newly expanded State Highway we all call the Guide Meridian. The Guide is rivaled only by I-5 in terms of the amount of traffic handled each day. To the North the Smith Road provides a physical separation between Bellingham and lands to the north identified in county

studies as being more appropriate for agriculture. To the West the Bellingham and Ferndale UGAs are separated from Larrabee Springs by a complex of low density suburban rural development.

How Can Larrabee Springs Help Address County-Wide Growth Management Problems?

The Ag Issue:

Analysis of the Executive's proposal in the context of the existing Comprehensive Plan zoning map reveals about 1029 acres of land presently zoned Ag will exist in the newly proposed UGAs. These lands are actually dedicated to urban residential development at 4 units per acre with accompanying removal of the Ag Resource designation made mandatory by the Executive's proposal.

Retaining the Ag Resource designation on the lands would require they be removed from the UGAs. The effect on the city's land capacity element would be dramatic. In the short term the growth planned for those 1000 acres would have to be absorbed into the small towns on top of, almost literally, the homes already planned for the towns. In the long term the towns would be landlocked with the quality of life, economic and environmental choices cities and towns are supposed to have restricted.

The economic and social health of Whatcom County's smaller cities is vital to quality of life for all the people of Whatcom County including those people living on farms and in the rural areas surrounding those small towns.. Representatives of Larrabee Springs have worked with farm groups and interested citizens in the public forum to find ways to address the challenge of maintaining adequate land supplies for the small cities in the context of farmland preservation. Progress is being made but, the road to success is long and difficult. Based on the planning literature, a project like that represented by Larrabee Springs can be an important part of the answer.

An impediment to success is the shortage of land supply in the cities which puts pressure on Ag lands, not only in UGAs but throughout the County. If we plan to solve a problem tomorrow but the land has already been consumed today, what have we gained?

The Larrabee Springs community will be home to between four and five thousand residents at the persons per housing unit being utilized by the county in its calculations.

The Executive has pointed out in his proposal, insufficient housing opportunities in a city like Bellingham, "...can lead to increased pressure on rural and resource lands."

The availability of a range of housing choice contained in a state-of-the-art, intelligent growth community designed to principles already known to attract purchasers to an urban setting means the 2,000 housing units Larrabee Springs will ultimately contain can significantly reduce pressure on county lands.

What will be the result, should the City of Bellingham's adopted and GMA compliant Comprehensive Plan request to include Larrabee Springs be introduced into the county's urban housing mix?

One result would be more time to truly work out ways to preserve existing Ag lands for the future. To preserve Ag land not already occupied by higher density development than is appropriate for the preservation of farming while also preserving the future vitality and livability of our small cities.

In considering all this it is very important to remember that Larrabee Springs will surround an already developed golf course on land found not to be suitable to be designated Ag lands of long term commercial significance.

The Rural Environment:

The literature on the environmental impacts we all see when growth is dispersed across the landscape rather than encouraged in appropriate areas is replete with references to excessive greenhouse gas emissions, too high infrastructure costs and the consumption of land for very low density housing homes rather than for more appropriate uses.

The impacts of dispersion is one reason the recent Whatcom County legacy project found, according to testimony by the advocacy group, Futurewise, "Sixty-nine percent of Whatcom County residents want to protect working farms and forested foothills and focus growth in our existing cities."

Larrabee Springs is presently a golf course on land sharing a boundary line with the Bellingham City Limits. When built the community will be one of the more densely populated of all Bellingham neighborhoods yet it will provide the full range of single family, cottage, townhouse and multi-family housing types needed to attract people away from a desire to settle on lands more properly preserved as working farm and forested foothills.

Data produced by Whatcom County as part of the County's ten-year review demonstrates conclusively that people will choose to live in an urban setting rather than disperse across the County landscape if they are provided with the choice needed to do so. Between 1995 and 2002, when land supplies in the UGAs were more plentiful than today and, appropriate lands could actually be provided with services and built upon, more than 90% of the people moving to Whatcom County settled in those UGAs. In the years since, restrictions on building in the UGAs coupled with lack of attention to land supplies and housing mix in the cities have reversed the progress made in the late '90s. Today, once again, the County's data demonstrates a large percentage of those moving to Whatcom County are building in the county's rural areas.

In providing choice of a sort demonstrated to attract people who might otherwise choose to live in the countryside, Larrabee Springs provides exactly the alternative groups like Futurewise and others are calling for when they participate in the process.

The owners of the land that will become the Larrabee Springs neighborhood are committed to on-going discussion with the County, the City of Bellingham, and with groups like Futurewise, Sustainable Connections, Farm Friends and others. The goal is to assure that when the Larrabee Springs neighborhood does become a reality, it functions in ways that will help address the problem of growth's dispersion throughout Whatcom County.

Greenhouse Gas and Vehicle Miles Travelled:

County data demonstrates that Growth Management worked in the early years of our planning for Whatcom County under the GMA. More people as a percentage of total growth chose to live in our cities and fewer were forced to move to rural areas to find appropriate housing choices.

That all changed in the early years of the new millennium when we began to exhaust, and then deliberately restricted land supplies in Bellingham and saw, for a few years, a moratorium in Lynden.

The result of those restrictions was, and continues to be, excessive sprawl into the rural county and, along with that excessive growth, huge impacts in terms of increases in greenhouse gas releases to our atmosphere.

It is possible to calculate the damage.

Imagine 165 homes per year that would have been built in Bellingham are, due to lack of housing choice, are built instead on five acre lots in the county over a 20 year period. The new homes average about 21 miles in distance from the city.

Assuming only one road trip per day to downtown Bellingham is generated by each house, a total of five hundred and ninety million pounds of greenhouse gasses will be generated by that dispersion of growth into the countryside over the twenty years. If two trips of that length per day are taken the vehicles used will spew more than 1 billion pounds of gasses into the atmosphere!

Larrabee Springs will be located within an easy walk of the geographer's center of Whatcom County in terms of jobs location, population growth and transportation opportunities. In terms of greenhouse gas emissions resulting from Vehicle Miles Travelled (VMT) there is no more appropriate place to center a modern mixed use development in all of Whatcom County.

Neighborhood Character:

In a recent interview with the *Lynden Tribune* Lynden's Planning Director, Amy Harksell pointed out, accurately, that the land supply available to accommodate growth in our cities impacts quality of life in those cities. An inadequate land supply, Ms Harksell told the newspaper, "...can and will affect the way our community grows, everything from utility bills to the way neighborhoods look."

Ms Harksell has often pointed to the dispersion of growth into the County's rural and resource lands as being a consequence of a too tight land supply, according to the *Tribune*. In pointing to that dispersion she has also been correct.

Equally, the city's Planning Director points out her city has significantly increased its overall density in recent years even as it has preserved Lynden's essential character as a forward looking and modern community with a traditional rural feel.

The ability to increase overall density without sacrificing neighborhood character is at least in part due to the building of a urbanized community surrounding a golf course at Lynden's fringe, close enough to be an integral part of the community but out of the heart of the City's established neighborhoods.

Larrabee Springs carries the same potential for Bellingham and much of Western Whatcom County. The proposed neighborhood already shares a boundary line with Bellingham. That boundary means the community will immediately take its place as an integral part of Bellingham's neighborhood community without intruding on the established character of the City's neighborhoods even as it provides the choice planners point to as necessary if we are to slow the march of low density growth into our rural areas.

Community Character:

Community character is different than neighborhood character, though the two are allied.

Each of Whatcom County's communities have an ambiance unique to that community; a character or makeup valued by those living in the community.

Many of the smaller communities especially consider the "rural" character of the city to be important.

That does not mean the small cities want to stagnate nor does it mean they do not want to improve on their communities. It simply means they want to grow in ways that retains the best of what they have become while integrating the best the future has to offer into the mix of housing, job and recreational choices the city offers its residents.

As presently configured, the Executive's proposal will force small towns like Everson, Nooksack, Sumas, Lynden and others to achieve average densities inside the towns, depending on the circumstance, that are significantly higher than those presently being planned for by those cities.

That leads to a quandary for the County. If the thousand acres of designated Ag land those housing units are scheduled to occupy are preserved for agriculture then the cities and towns impacted by the designation must accommodate those units inside of the cities on top of already planned for densities.

In the short term there needs to be some discussion about what that means to the small towns in terms of community character.

Long term it means the small towns of Whatcom County will no longer be available to provide the capacity to accommodate growth necessary to meet the County's obligation in future GMA planning exercises. If the small towns are landlocked, we condemn them to a future of on-going internal densification, a densification inconsistent with retaining rural character.

The Cost Of Infrastructure:

The Executive's Proposal contains a Capital Facilities element and the news is, to some extent, grim.

Many of the infrastructure needs the GMA requires cities and counties to meet during a planning period are shown by the County's analysis to be already at failure levels even for the planning period we addressed in 2005. They are not compliant with the existing plan and are demonstrated by the Executive's document to already be non-compliant with GMA and inconsistent with the plan being adopted.

Capital facilities infrastructure is expensive, especially when it must be provided for already built structures. At Larrabee Springs, however, the sewer and water lines required to serve more than 2,000 housing units are already in place and ready to begin operation. The State of Washington and the City of Bellingham, acting with foresight and wisdom, installed the lines when the Guide Meridian was constructed last year, saving millions of future dollars of installation costs.

Even if the lines did not already exist, Bellingham's recent, citywide, analysis of the fiscal returns of development to a community demonstrates a neighborhood like Larrabee Springs, master planned in advance and adjacent to existing capital facilities infrastructure, provides very substantial fiscal "profitability" to the community it enhances.

Based on the City of Bellingham's analysis of similar neighborhood expansions, Larrabee Springs could be expected to profit the City by \$20 million or more during the first 15 – 20 years of its existence.

Because the capital facilities infrastructure necessary to serve Larrabee Springs with sewer and water are already in place, profitability to the City and County could be even greater than the \$20+ million indicated by the City's study.

Two thousand housing units at Larrabee Springs would not only be expected to reduce pressure to grow into Ag Resource lands also designated for growth inside some Urban Growth Areas, it would be expected to significantly reduce the obligation Whatcom County has to provide infrastructure to homes built outside the cities in the County's unincorporated rural areas.

CONCLUSIONS:

Finding, and implementing, solutions to difficult problems is hard work.

Sometimes it is work we, as a society, would prefer to forego. After all, glib answers and agenda driven conclusions make us all happy, until reality comes into play.

The best conclusions regarding the part a development like Larrabee Springs can play in providing some solutions, but not all, to the challenges we all face in Whatcom County comes from the professional planning literature.

The Urban Land Institute is seen by some as being very liberal. At the very least, no one has ever accused the group of being reactionary.

So, it might make sense to hear what some see as the epitome of a group of planners dedicated to progressive environmentalism, socially conscious building approaches, infill to the nth degree and the

advocacy of green building techniques concluded over the past several years. The challenges Whatcom County faces in 2009 are exactly the challenges all the nation faces in resolving growth issues.

As the ULI said in promoting a September, 2009 series of discussions,

"The reality is that if the population grows as projected, developers and residents will need to focus on redevelopment in urban areas and continue to perpetuate greenfield development," - ULI Center for Balanced Development in the West

Urban Land Institute's White Paper on developments like Larrabee Springs reinforces that comment in saying, as a conclusion:

- "Continued growth and the resulting demand for new residences, retail shops and places to work are inevitable."
- "Dialogue of the past 20 years has focused on the real and perceived problems associated with growth, yet only now are we beginning to converse constructively about how to shape new development effectively."
- "Urban infill is an important part of the shaping process, but we must also recognize that even our best efforts at redirecting growth will still result in a majority of new development being located in Greenfield settings."
- "Consequently, we can waste time debating the problems attributed to Greenfield development, or we can focus energy on making sure that Greenfield development is done right."
- "Identifying and agreeing on appropriate areas for development cannot be done through reactive, incremental actions or short-sighted legislation and planning."
- "Visions for the future of our exurban areas must be created by giving stakeholders an appreciation of the significant challenges that need to be addressed..."
- "Policy makers and political leaders must have the will and long-term outlook to make decisions that will benefit their constituents over generations, not just election terms."
- "Real estate developers must be willing to participate proactively in helping define appropriate areas for development, while concurrently supporting conservation and green infrastructure on resource lands."
- "With a projected growth of 60 million people over the next 25 years, no growth and slow growth are not realistic options."
- "If we are to avoid the development patterns of the past and still respond to inevitable market demand for new housing, understanding the value and role of planned communities is absolutely critical."