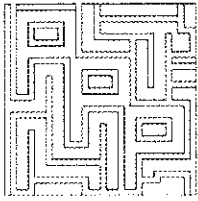


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WHATCOM COUNTY COUNCIL



Public Policy Perspectives

2955 Sunset Drive, Bellingham, WA 98225 (360)733-1303

MEMO: 9/17/09

To: Whatcom County Council and Planning Commission
Re: September 17 Hearing - Executive proposal

Dear Whatcom County Council and Planning Commission,

We ask that you review the following when making changes to UGA boundaries.

Whatcom County has contracted with several consultants to produce a County-wide projection. These are on the official Whatcom 2031 website, under the link titled "Whatcom County Growth Forecasts: Population and Employment Projections" The County consultant projection is for 251,490 persons in 2029 and for 256,952 persons in 2031. The OFM most likely projection is for 258,448 in 2029 and the County extrapolated OFM 1 year for a 2031 most likely projection of 264,400 in 2031. Whatcom County staff and their consultant Berk & Associates concluded that both the EcoNW/Berk projection and the OFM projection are tracking very well with actual growth that has occurred. That time period is similar to now in that there was an economic recession following the events of 9-11.

In early 2008, Whatcom County staff released a study of urban growth 1995 to 2002. The data was used to illustrate to the Growth Management Hearings Board, for the Urban Fringe Subarea Plan defense, that there was very little rural sprawl occurring in Whatcom County. This timeframe is particularly important for several reasons. First, the interim UGAs were established in 1994. Second, Bellingham allowed service extensions into the entire UGA area which made the entire UGA available for urban development. Third, the UGA size and mix of housing types was more broad. A significantly higher level of single-family zoned land was available, especially in the Bellingham UGA. Urban growth during this timeframe was 88.3% *without Birch Bay and Columbia Valley*. Columbia Valley was not designated a UGA until 1999 and staff reports there wasn't reliable population data for those areas. If you apply the 88.3% urban growth figure to OFM most likely this equates to an urban growth of 59,557 persons and when applied to the Whatcom County projection shows a likely urban growth of 53,413. In comparison, the Pete Kremen proposal only provides for urban growth of 46,673.

In addition, Whatcom County also projected urban growth based on several historical time frames. The most recent timeframe studied was 2000 – 2008, in which the urban growth was down to 80.3% of total county-wide growth. When applied to the OFM most likely projection, this shows a likely urban growth of 54,160 persons and when applied to the Whatcom County consultant produced projection, it shows urban growth of 48,573. When compared to the proposed Pete Kremen plan, you can see that he is proposing to plan for only 46,673 persons of urban growth.

The most important things to take away from the above is that Whatcom County has had significant periods of success reducing rural and resource land consumption – we were doing some things well from 1995 to 2002. The plan beyond those years is failing, and the Executive proposal to provide for very little urban growth area is planning for more failure. It is a plan for high rates of growth on rural and resource land. The gap between

Public Policy Analysis For Application In Real World Situations
Jack Petree, Clayton Petree

the unsupported Executive proposed population growth figure of only 254,973 and the data based OFM and the County's own expensive consultant produced project *is additional rural sprawl*, unrecognized by the Executive and hidden in a mountain of paper.

BELLINGHAM

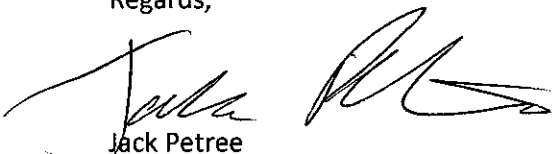
Bellingham affects rural and resource land consumption greatly, when it has adequate land for development and choice. County data used to defend the Urban Fringe Subarea Plan at the Growth Management Hearings Board last year shows that not only was there low levels of rural growth 1995-2002, but that Bellingham captured 62.4% of the total county-wide growth during that timeframe. This is extremely important because this is the amount of growth we should plan for in Bellingham. The executive proposal to only allocate 40.9% to Bellingham is planning to fail. It is a plan that by providing very little urban land for urban levels of development, despite OFM and the County's own consultant concluding that much higher levels of growth will occur, forces the extra 21.5% of people to areas other than Bellingham who then must drive back into Bellingham for work, entertainment, and to visit places only available in Bellingham like Costco, WWU, and the Whatcom County Courthouse.

The latest, most accurate Whatcom County land capacity analysis to date shows that Bellingham is very low on land. There is only sufficient land to accept about 112k people with an unacceptable housing mix of about 3 multi-family units to 1 single-family unit, under the Executive Proposal. In order for Bellingham to return to capturing high levels of county growth, it must provide a reasonable mix of housing, and have the capacity to accept the previously achieved level of 62.4% of county-wide growth. This is key to success, because there continues to be an abundance of lots in rural and resource lands available to people who cannot find their housing type of choice in Bellingham at a price they are willing to pay.

The executive proposal ensures there will be increases in vehicle miles traveled, people will continue to be dispersed all across Whatcom County, and Green House Gas emissions will increase at a time that Whatcom County should be planning to reduce them to 1990 levels.

We urge the Whatcom County Council to utilize real data to formulate an additional option that plans to succeed, rather than this option that guarantees failure.

Regards,



Jack Petree
Clayton Petree