

## Kate Blystone - Fwd: Blaine UGA reduction Process

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**From:** PDS  
**To:** David Stalheim; Kate Blystone  
**Date:** 10/1/2009 4:08 PM  
**Subject:** Fwd: Blaine UGA reduction Process

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>>> Brian Piwek <bpiwek@mac.com> 10/1/2009 1:45 PM >>>  
Whatcom County Council  
c/o Pete Kremen

During the past several weeks the issue of the Blaine UGA (BUGA) reduction has become a topic of interest to us in the West Blaine UGA (WBUGA). While the entire UGA reduction process has a single and clear mandate and may be very mathematical therefore mechanical in nature there are a number of issues, although not central to the mandate that should be duly noted and taken into consideration.

There are at least two very different stakeholder groups who will be affected by the changes:

- The landowners who are holding considerably large blocks of land for future development;
- The current homeowners who live in the area and who may desire additional services in the future, not currently provided by Whatcom County.

On the first point there have been enough comments made to date. However I would like to offer additional prospective and also support the points already made:

- Under normal economic conditions land development is best left up to the economic levers to control, primarily supply and demand;
- Judging by the number of For Sale signs in the BUGA it appears that indiscriminate land development, and therefore increasing inventory, at this time would only serve to reduce home and land prices further and therefore equity for current homeowners, perhaps in one of the worst economic periods in our history. Reducing a Urban Growth Area is a solution to limit land development and although intervention of this sort is never fully acceptable in a free market system, unfortunately it sometimes it is necessary;
- There appears to be considerable vacant lot inventory to satisfy any short term homebuilding and population growth, if and when the economy can support it;
- There appears to be no need for BUGA to include large blocks of undeveloped land in the WBUGA at this time as the population projections do not support this magnitude of land development growth in the foreseeable future;

On point number two, while it is true that not all of the residents support this view there are a number of us that would like to retain the options we perceive to currently have by being a part of the BUGA and suggest that there might be good reason to leave certain neighborhoods in the WBUGA, specifically the moderately populated area west of Semiahmoo Drive and northeast of Semiahmoo Drive as part of the BUGA. To that point there are arguments that can be put forward:

- During the past number of years there are more permanent residents who are in need of services that will are not provided by Whatcom County either because the County can not or chooses not to provide those services:
  - Snow removal off of Semiahmoo Drive; Cary Lane, Oertel, Normar, (recognizing of course that some of these are private roads) etc.;
  - Sewer service;

- Proper storm drainage system (although work is being done to address this through the BBWARM).
- The Semiahmoo Resort and Golf Club are already part of Blaine and enjoys full service such as a sewer line and most of the area in this discussion lie within a short distance; 1 – 3 miles;
- In the future it may be necessary to be on a full service sewer system and that would be very difficult for the residents in question if they were not part of the BUGA. Notwithstanding the previous statement it needs to be noted that the cost of connecting to the sewer lines today, if it were available, is probably too onerous for most residents in question for a number of reasons:
  - Whatcom County Health Department has just recently expanded the septic inspection requirements, (perhaps in expectation that the WBUGA would be reduced and that a sewer line would not be imminent for the current residents), the result is that residents either:
    - Already have a functioning septic system that meets the County requirements or;
    - Are in the process of going to considerable expense installing a new septic system the meets or exceeds the WCHD requirements;
- Although there are differences of opinions it is difficult to believe that individual septic systems could be the best environmental choice if a modern sewer processing system were made available.

In conclusion, while some of the concerns and issues discussed in this letter are not central to the mandate given to the City of Blaine or Whatcom County Council to reduce the size of the BUGA I respectfully request that these peripheral issues be given due consideration so that any changes will not negatively impact the long term best interests of all the current residents in the WBUGA.

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