



# CITY OF BLAINE

## COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT SERVICES DEPARTMENT

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ALL COUNCIL MEMBERS  
WHATCOM COUNTY COUNCIL

October 12, 2009

Whatcom County Council  
311 Grand Ave, Suite 105  
Bellingham, WA 98225

Dear Council Members,

I attended the Whatcom County Planning Commission meeting on October 1, 2009, wherein the Commission voted to recommend County Executive Kremen's proposal for the Blaine UGA to the County Council for approval.

The Commission focused primarily on Drayton Harbor water quality and wetland protection, while giving little, if any, consideration to population forecasts or to the UGA recommendation from the City of Blaine. This is despite the fact that virtually none of the West Blaine UGA drains into Drayton Harbor. This area drains almost entirely to Semiahmoo Bay and Birch Bay after traveling overland and through drainage swales and creeks where natural systems have time to function and maintain water quality. Future development would include engineered systems to work with those natural systems to preserve water quality in the receiving waters.

The Blaine City Council passed Resolution 1520-09 which expressed the importance of maintaining green spaces between communities, protecting critical areas, and providing existing development with sewer and water infrastructure. But, most importantly when it came to the West Blaine UGA, the Blaine City Council also took into consideration the long term plan for expansion of the recreation-oriented residential community that makes up the unique community in West Blaine, as is demonstrated by Resort Semiahmoo.

The City believes the unique demographics of Semiahmoo and the future residents of similar development in the West Blaine UGA should be considered. The demand for primary and secondary residences is an important factor in the ongoing growth in West Blaine. The market for these homes is based more on the national and international investment markets than it is on the local economy. The demand in this area is not locally generated, and is not tied to the job market in Whatcom County.

If the County does not provide desirable locations for vacation and recreational housing, there is real risk that the demand may shift towards estate properties in agricultural and resource lands of the County and elsewhere. For these reasons, I wish to reiterate the City's recommendation to retain the *entire* West Blaine UGA. Retaining the *entire* UGA is prudent not only for Blaine's realistic growth projections but because of the economy of scale in providing infrastructure to a larger area and population.

I feel compelled to say that the concept that UGAs can be reduced during the ten-year review in areas important to a community's future, makes planning for UGA development nothing more than an academic exercise, and it prevents cities from responsibly planning for realistic long term growth. Why plan - and more so, why build facilities based on future growth, if the UGA which you are gearing up to serve may just disappear in the future?

The Blaine City Council believes Blaine and other cities in Whatcom County should be as self-determining as possible. Otherwise citizens will lose faith in their local government's ability to determine the vision and future of their community.

Please consider these vital points before reaching your final decision. It is important to our community. It is important to our future.

Sincerely,



Bonnie Onyon  
Mayor

cc. David Stalheim, Director  
Whatcom County Planning and Development Services  
5280 Northwest Drive  
Bellingham, Washington 98226