

From: David Stalheim
To: Matt Aamot
Date: 9/15/2008 8:34 AM
Subject: Fwd: Response to DSEIS - Foothills Subarea

>>> Pete Kremen 9/15/2008 8:17 AM >>>
FYI.

>>> "Joyce Sappington" <sappi42@earthlink.net> 9/14/2008 10:29 PM >>>

Joyce M. Sappington
6239 Chestnut Drive
Maple Falls, WA 99266

To: David Stalheim, Director, Whatcom County Planning and Development Services
Re: Response to DSEIS Foothills Subarea Plan
Mr. Stalheim,

I've had a chance to read over the DSEIS Foothills Subarea Plan. I am a seven year resident of the Columbia Valley and have talked to many of my friends and neighbors regarding the issues as related to the Subarea.

I always encourage them to submit comments and their opinions regarding the Columbia Valley as related to the plan, and the consistent feedback I get is, "I'm for having jobs and a retail center, but it doesn't do any good to write to PDS. No one listens to us." I also hear, "the county is going to do what it wants to do anyway, so why even bother?"

The persistent cry throughout the nation is that government has stopped listening to the people and has established it's own agenda. The voice of the every day, hard working citizen has been drowned out by vocal minorities that are well funded and capable of spinning facts to fit their stance on an issue.

The DSEIS is replete with studies and projections and charts, but it seems the one essential element that is missing is people. Not population projections, but the people who reside in the Columbia Valley now and their needs.

As has been addressed to Planning over and over again, the population of the Columbia Valley consists, overwhelmingly, of low to middle income families and individuals. With the rise in fuel and food prices, every penny is closely pinched, and many still fall short. Having to drive from 10 to 25 miles for work or shopping adds increasing pressure on people's already tight budgets.

We now have reached a place within the Columbia Valley where we have the chance to actually alleviate the economic pressures on local families by creating a commercial center and developing light industry to provide jobs and opportunities. But it is being challenged by minority voices, most of whom live outside this area, that cries out for maintaining rural character.

Rural character is all well and good for farmland and recreational areas; places where there isn't a population of nearly 4000 within a 2 square mile area. But it is not appropriate for this area. Anyone who supposes to call this area Rural Recreational has obviously not driven through it to see the many homes and families that are here. There is no recreation to this area. We don't even have a park for our kids to play in. The constant complaint from the kids in our area is "there's nothing to do!" We have a chance to change that for them.

I can't begin to tell you how many teens have had to forgo summer jobs simply because the cost of fuel has made it prohibitive for their parents to justify driving them to work and home. And those teens with cars who can drive to work are having more and more of their already scant paychecks eaten away by the same. Local retail can provide local jobs, not just for our adults, but for our teens as well. Jobs provide a means for our young men and women to begin exercise some of their freedom, as well as learn responsibilities and work ethics that will carry on far into their adult lives.

The adoption of the Foothills Subarea Committee's recommendations will dramatically change the lives of all who live here in many positive ways. The stay at home mom will have a place to congregate with other moms for coffee and conversation. Single income families will now have an opportunity to supplement their budgets without having to purchase another car or have a chunk eaten up by gas prices. Teens will have a chance for summer and after school jobs without having to commute out of the area to find them. With the opportunity of having a full service grocery store, a local bank, and other retail, shopping won't have to be an all day affair where time and money is wasted because of having to drive a half hour to 45 minutes to reach them. And a new sense of community identity can begin to take shape, replacing the one that is currently imposed upon us.

It would greatly open up the opportunities for providing activities for family involvement in the form of local festivals and events. People previously unengaged will begin to develop a greater sense of involvement in the life of the community. Even those outside the Columbia Valley, who previously have viewed us as anathema, could find their perceptions radically changed with the new vitality infused into the area. No longer would we be considered "those people". And those who currently make statements such as "I won't go around THAT corner" (meaning the corner just west of the Kendall Elementary School), would find themselves benefiting from the services and amenities available and, perhaps, even engaging in the life of this community.

As well, keeping growth centered within a specific area of the Foothills will allow us to maintain the Rural Character as a whole. It won't be spread out from Deming to Glacier. And we won't risk having to revisit the issues facing us today as the needs of the area increase from the growing demands brought on by an increasing population.

I urge PDS to adopt the Foothills Subarea Committee's recommendations as submitted by the majority and to reject Alternative 3 as proposed in the DSEIS.

I ask that this letter be submitted into the public record.