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Subject: Planning Commission Comments

Comments to Whatcom County Planning Commission regarding the Foothills Subarea Plan

Submitted by Gary Gehling 1/28/09

I am writing in support of the Foothills Subarea Plan as submitted by the majority. I served as chairman of the committee. In the early stages of our proceedings the committee members expressed concerns that the work we were doing was merely making recommendations to the Planning Commission and County Council. Most were concerned that our recommendations would not be heard. County Planning staff assured us that our recommendations would be heard. Throughout the process a large number of comments from the public voiced concerns that the process was for naught and that their voices would not be heard. I assured them that I would do my best to ensure that they would be heard. From my position as chairman, I feel that the recommended draft most closely represents the voices of the majority of the community and that the plan represents a vision for revitalization and diversification of the Columbia Valley UGA, and foothills community. Please uphold my assurances to the public that their voices would be heard.

It is worth noting that the SEIS validates the recommended draft, in that there are no unmitigatable negative impacts. The population allocations have also been validated by the recent (Jan 13) GMCC report. It is important to the foothills community that the majority of the foothills population growth be allocated to the UGA in order to diversify its socioeconomic base and yet preserve the rural character of the outlying areas.

Thank you for listening, Gary Gehling