

To: Whatcom County Planning Commission

From: Mike Head

January 15, 2009

Public Comments for the Foothills Subarea Plan

My Name is Mike Head and I am a 32 year resident of the Mount Baker Foothills Sub-Area. I strongly urge the Planning Commission recommend Alternate 3, which removes the Columbia Valley UGA and designates LAMAIRDs under the provisions of the Growth Management Act.

I do appreciate that Whatcom County recognized that the Sub-Area Plan as submitted, had "Significant Environmental Impacts with the likelihood that it contained more than a Moderate Adverse Impact on the Environment, under SEPA guidelines".

In the SEIS Major Conclusions, it states **Alternate 1** will lead to increased Traffic, increased High School Enrollment, Greater need for Fire Protection & Emergency Services, as well as Law Enforcement and additional Water and Sewer Connections resulting in increased Water Usage.

**Alternate 2** allows for a Larger UGA and would lead to Sprawling Development in a rural area of Whatcom County without Provision of Essential Services.

**Alternate 3** with it's lower Population Projections has the "Least Environmental Impacts on the Foothills Subarea Region".

Page 11 of the SEIS States: "If Funding is not available, then many of the Impacts in the SEIS will not be appropriately addressed". The SEIS contains no Estimates for the potential Capital and Operating costs for Mitigation Measures for these impacts.

The Majority of the Mitigation Measures that are listed in the SEIS are addressed simply by putting dollars to the Adverse Impacts. How much cost are we talking about here? Certainly the County could put an estimate to this in present and

future dollars. Are we talking 100 Million, 125 Million, and or How About 150 Million? And who is paying these costs?

On September 15<sup>th</sup>, I submitted a letter to Whatcom County Planning and is in the Public Comments. In that letter, I estimated that a 20 year cost difference between Option 1 and Option 3 would be \$113 Million Dollars in today's dollars.

I would suggest that it will be Whatcom County Tax-Payers that will pay for the majority of these costs.

As an Example: In September of 2006, the Mount Baker School District signed a Mitigation Agreement for a new School in Columbia Valley. The total amount of money the School District would receive for building this school from the Developers was \$1,327,216. This is a drop in the bucket especially when a new school can cost in excess of 15 Million Dollars. Our School District is strapped for Cash and all the existing schools are still in dire need of many facility improvements as described in a Long Term Facilities Task Force Report 2006.

My Whatcom County Taxes increased by 20% between 2007 and 2008 and I hate to think I will be, like so many who are forced off their land during retirement years due to the inability to pay Property Taxes as a result of irresponsible development.

Under Alternate 3, the LAMAIRD proposal of Approximately 775 Acres will be removed from the UGA and Zoned for 5, 10, or 20 Acre Parcels. Keep in mind there are already 3,853 residents in Columbia Valley based on 2006 Population Projections.

I would suggest that the existing Un-Developed Lots in the Existing Developments Zoned UR-4 can accommodate reasonable growth over the next 20 Years and If 775 Acres would become available under Alternate 3 with an Average Parcel size of 10 Acres at 2.4 residents per household it would accommodate an additional 186 Residents to the area while maintaining the **Rural Character the Foothills Deserve.**

This is Mitigation I can understand.