

**COMMENTS TO REGARDING THE FOOTHILLS SUBAREA PLAN DRAFT (OCT, 07)**  
**January 15, 2009**

I am Lou Piotrowski and my address is 9999 Mt. Baker Hwy. Thank you for the opportunity to share my comments with you.

As a member of the Foothills Subarea Plan Advisory Committee, I am in favor of adopting the Foothills Subarea Plan as it was drafted in October 2007.

The many reasons to retain the Columbia Valley Urban Growth Area are listed and fleshed out in the Subarea Plan Draft. Therefore, I support the first recommendation of the PDS Staff Report to retain an urban growth area in the Columbia Valley.

A recent survey conducted by the Whatcom County Growth Management Coordinating Council showed that 62% of the respondents said that growth in the rural areas had been too great during the last 10 years.<sup>1</sup> Respondents favored growth in the Urban Growth Areas.

The report concluded that about 40% of the respondents indicated "small cities and small urban growth areas in Whatcom County should become their own economic centers so there would be less of a need to go to Bellingham. More population growth can locate in these small cities and small urban growth areas to be near jobs."<sup>2</sup>

More than 19% of the respondents indicated, "each community takes a share of future population growth that is similar to their share of the existing population."<sup>3</sup>

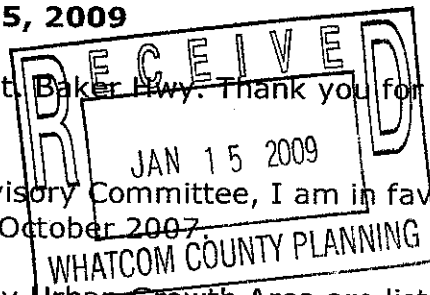
Rural Character was also identified as a valued feature of the County. Visitors, critical contributors to the Foothills economy, come winter and summer to enjoy the recreational opportunities in our region. Past studies show the rural aspect of the Foothills plays an important role in attracting visitors.

All of these findings strongly support encouraging future population growth the Urban Growth Areas in the county and discouraging growth in the rural areas. I support that perspective, and therefore, reject the second recommendation in the PDS Staff Report to establish a population projection of 5,000 until 2031 in the Columbia Valley UGA.

Whatcom County has had a high growth rate over the first 8 years of this century, 14.49%.<sup>4</sup> Comparing the growth of the 10 most populated counties in the state reveals that while Whatcom County ranks 9 in population, it is number 6 in percentage of growth since 2000.<sup>5</sup>

Migration to Whatcom County amounts to 74% of our growth during those same years and that is higher than all of the other counties listed, save one, Thurston County.<sup>6</sup> That requires homes to accommodate those families.

The Advisory Committee spent considerable time regarding population projections for the Columbia Valley UGA. The high growth population assumption figure from ECONorthwest was not accepted. A figure between the baseline assumption and the high growth assumption was selected because of land suitability and availability, water availability, and the need for a town center to encourage commercial establishments, increase jobs and revitalize the Columbia Valley community.



As to the need for additional capital facilities in the UGA, the county has been derelict in its duty to provide a capital facilities study during the last decade as required by the GMA and the County Comprehensive Plan. Capping the growth of the Columbia Valley appears to again penalize residents and landowners for an extraordinary period of time.

I believe we should encourage all of the UGAs to provide for growth appropriate to their portion of the population and land availability and request that the Planning Commission support the Population Projections for the Columbia Valley Urban Growth Area found in Foothills Subarea Plan Draft developed by the Advisory Committee.

Respectfully Submitted,

Lou J. Piotrowski

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<sup>1</sup> Whatcom 2031 Questionnaire Summary, December 19, 2008

<sup>2</sup> Ibid

<sup>3</sup> Ibid

<sup>4</sup> 2008 Population Trends for Washington State, Office of Financial Management website - <http://www.ofm.wa.gov/pop/poptrends/default.asp> (see the attached spreadsheet)

<sup>5</sup> Ibid

<sup>6</sup> Ibid

**COMPARISON OF GROWTH IN THE TEN MOST POPULATED COUNTIES IN WASHINGTON STATE**

2008 Population Rank	Name of County	2008 Population	2000-08 Population Increase	2000-08 Percent Growth	Percent Growth Rank	2000-08 Natural Increase	2000-08 Migration Increase	2000-08 Percentage Migration	2000-08 Migration Rank
1	King	1884200	147154	8.47%	8	91424	55730	37.87%	8
2	Pierce	805400	104582	14.92%	5	40599	63983	61.18%	5
3	Snohomish	696600	90576	14.95%	4	37309	53267	58.81%	7
4	Spokane	459300	41061	9.82%	7	15631	25430	61.93%	4
5	Clark	424200	78962	22.87%	1	23879	55083	69.76%	3
6	Kitsap	246800	14830	6.39%	9	9782	5048	34.04%	9
7	Thurston	245300	37945	18.30%	2	7357	30588	80.61%	1
8	Yakima	234500	13319	5.98%	10	19739	-6420	-48.20%	10
<b>9</b>	<b>Whatcom</b>	<b>191000</b>	<b>24174</b>	<b>14.49%</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>6312</b>	<b>17862</b>	<b>73.89%</b>	<b>2</b>
10	Benton	165900	23025	16.16%	3	9462	13563	58.91%	6

Source: 2008 Population Trends for Washington State Washington State Office of Financial Management Website - <http://www.ofm.wa.gov/pop/pop Trends/default.asp>