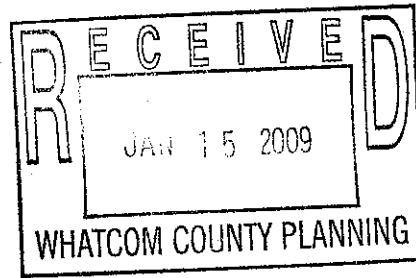


January 15, 2009

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Whatcom County Planning
5280 Northwest Drive
Bellingham, WA 98226-6907

RE: public comments to planning commission regarding Foothills subarea plan

Dear planning commission,

I would like to see the Columbia Valley UGA removed and replaced with LAMRID status. We have a unique opportunity to avoid obvious future consequences before they come to pass. I ask the planning commission to consider a plan that includes commercial zoning that could provide services for the current residents in a rural area without unnecessary urbanization and exacerbation of existing problems. Let Paradise heal. I also ask the county to adopt low growth policies in the county and direct urban growth to Bellingham and other existing urban areas.

Population and the future

The influx of population in Paradise and Peaceful was due to factors that have evaporated - cheap housing and cheap gas. There is no longer a dramatic economic incentive to move to area. Therefore it is not logical to forecast this population burst to continue. It seems this trend will actually start to reverse. We need to be cautious in these changing times and make Whatcom County resilient to the uncertain future we face. I feel that urbanizing twenty-four miles from town makes Whatcom County weak and vulnerable. The days of building far-flung communities reliant on long commutes are over.

Whatcom County 2031 questionnaire

Best places for growth: Bellingham and *coincidentally* cities located along I-5 corridor

Worst places for growth #1 rural areas #2 Columbia Valley

Worst places for jobs #1 rural areas #2 Columbia Valley

62% of respondents perceive too much rural urban growth has occurred in past ten years

Let me make it clear - this plan being proposed is considered the worst and the worst piled on top of too much. The obvious public opposition to this type of growth should be taken into account. If not, some explanation of why public input would be solicited but disregarded should be forthcoming.

Overcoming concerns of UGA removal

It is stated in the SEIS a potential impact of UGA removal is that development and growth could occur at a more rapid rate in rural areas because the supply of building lots is limited to Paradise and Peaceful. This is an apples and oranges argument as alluded to in the same SEIS document. The financial barrier of purchasing acreage at a premium is not conducive to rapid growth in the rural areas. The next statement is actually an excellent reason for UGA removal. **Adopting a lower population projection and downsizing the UGA could cause growth to go into other urban areas.** This exactly what needs to happen!

Rural Highway

The WA DOT has documented concerns about its ability to fund highway improvements that serve foothills subarea traffic. This is another reason to take a cautious approach and remove the UGA before its development.

Proposed findings of fact and reason for action in staff report

In regards to the subarea advisory committee, public participation and final recommendations to planning I have been disappointed. In my own personal opinion I feel the subarea committee was a stacked deck in favor of urbanization and public input not supporting their foregone conclusion was effectively ignored.

#8 Foothills Questionnaire Vision: The public input overwhelmingly prioritized rural character and the results were not used by the committee to draft the plan.

#11 Over thirty people spoke at the draft SEIS hearing only three in favor of UGA.

#13 GMA goal #1 relating to urban growth is to "encourage development where adequate public facilities and services exist or can be provided in an efficient manner" There are NO existing facilities or services and CAN NOT be provided in an efficient manner, hence the high cost of mitigation.

I respectfully request the planning commission take my sincere comments into consideration and suggest the following:

#1 Adopt low growth policies in the county and direct urban growth to Bellingham and other existing urban areas.

#2 Remove the Columbia Valley UGA and replace with LAMRID status. Let Paradise heal.

#3 Designate commercial zoning that could provide services for the residents of Columbia Valley.

Respectfully,


Brady M. Webb