

October 9, 2014

Public Comment Comprehensive Plan Update

Planning Commission and Staff Members:

I am an accountant. I can create massive excel spreadsheets with multitudes of sortable data and formulas and charts and graphs. I get happily lost in this process for hours upon hours. But if at the end of the process I have not created useful information, my time has been poorly spent. This is the same in planning for those who enjoy this process it is for naught if you create an unusable plan.

I have raised my children in Whatcom County. While doing so I volunteered in a myriad of youth organizations. I have watched hundreds of children grow up here. They now fall into two categories, those like my children who have left for better jobs and opportunities and those who struggle economically to stay here close to their nuclear families. This is a sign of unsuccessful planning.

I have lived in Whatcom County for 28 years. I have known since I have moved here, that the land at Cherry Point is reserved for industrial growth. This is not land that is taking away from any other land uses in our county. It exists, in our plans. Yet there has been no marked growth in the jobs at Cherry Point since I have been here. There have been periods when even the existing companies have struggled to survive. This is a sign of unsuccessful planning.

The Georgian Pacific site has lain empty for 10 years, mired in a cumbersome planning process of endless meetings, reams of studies and endless bickering. 10 years with no family wage jobs, 10 years with no minimum wage jobs. 10 years with no jobs except for the planners and politicians. This is a sign of unsuccessful planning.

We have more park land than any other county in our state, we have sufficient farming acreage, and we certainly should have enough forests and water.

What we do not have is (5) Economic Development. We have failed in our planning to encourage economic development and promote economic opportunity for *all* citizens of our county, especially for the unemployed and for the disadvantaged persons. We struggle to retain and expand existing businesses and have failed to recruit sufficient new businesses and encourage growth in areas experiencing insufficient economic growth such as Cherry Point and the Georgia Pacific site. This is failed planning.

I would urge you as you begin this process to not lose sight that it is more important to create a plan that will facilitate results than to create an unusable yet beautiful spreadsheet.

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