

Schroader, Kathy



From: Kerri Altom <kerrialtom@gmail.com>
Sent: Thursday, September 17, 2015 3:51 PM
To: Cnty 2016 Comp Plan
Subject: Comprehensive Plan Comments

Attn: Oliver Orjiako

I am requesting that the following letter be part of the public record, as submitted within the public comment period for the Comprehensive Plan Update.

I am a fourth generation Clark County resident. I was born and raised in Battle Ground, where most of my family and a lifetime of friends still live. I know landowners who don't want to be told what they can and can't do with their own property. They are often the loudest voices at the barbeque, but they are definitely not the majority.

For every person I know who demands their private property rights, I know the stories of dozens who bemoan the way sprawling development has deeply hurt them. It is not just the painful changes in scenery. It is not just the unmanageable increases in land value. It is not just the time-wasting traffic. More than any of these hits to their quality of life, our rural community is hurt by the loss of rural identity.

Community identity is a tough thing to talk about. We lack the words. But it is a powerful thing. In a rural community it is a sense that the natural world is a big part of everything, and when it is diminished things are thrown off balance. When our farmers can't afford to produce food anymore, our community loses a resource. When wells run dry and gardens shrivel up, families lose self-sufficiency. And, when forests and fields are covered in asphalt and concrete, we all lose a connection to the natural world. In time, what would be the point of "Harvest Days"?

Some will assert, "That's the price of progress." But it doesn't have to be. In the case of Battle Ground, planning for more high density housing near businesses and schools while retaining and protecting farm and forest lands provides an option to retain rural character while allowing for economic growth. But that pattern of development won't happen as long as we keep opening up big tracts of agricultural and forest lands to be developed into sprawling subdivisions.

The voters of Washington State passed the Growth Management Act to provide guidance to our government. It dictates the terms for planning our communities' future. It asks that our local leaders control and direct our growth by identifying and protecting critical areas and natural resource lands, designating urban growth areas, preparing comprehensive plans, and implementing these

comprehensive plans through capital investments and development regulations. A proper application of those dictates to Clark County would result in protecting the rural character of places like Battle Ground while investing in its economic vitality. Implementing Alternative 1 is a reasonable step in that direction, but Alternative 4 would achieve the opposite.

Putting private property rights and personal profits over the best interest of the community is absolutely not a rural value that I grew up with. Folks on Wall Street may be happy to strike a deal like that, but not in my hometown. I urge the County Council to implement Alternative 1, allowing for economic growth while protecting the best assets of our communities.

Respectfully Submitted,

Kerri Altom

Friends of Clark County

Board of Directors