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MAY 09 2011

COALITION OF SOUTH NEIGHBORHOODS
Edgemoor / Fairhaven / Happy Valley / South / South Hill

City of Bellingham
Planning

'Planning together to protect our Community quality of life'

May 3rd, 2011

Bellingham City Council

210 Lottie Street

Bellingham, Wa 98225

Subject: Padden Creek Trails Rezone

Honorable City Council Members,

The Coalition of South Neighborhoods opposes any increase in density for the Padden Creek Trails development. The Padden Creek Trails property is 113 acres of rugged steep slopes with wetlands in the valleys and ravines. The developer has permits from 2006 to build 220 units on the site. The recently docketed application proposes to increase this number to 615 units, effectively tripling the size and impacts of this already questionable project.

The South Neighborhoods believe overall density in this environmentally sensitive area should not be increased for the following reasons:

1. It is contrary to Bellingham's desired direction in housing growth.

Over the last decade the City has evolved a policy of smart growth. That is higher density in the downtown core and in designated urban villages. Residential neighborhoods at the edge of the City should be low-density transitions to very low density outside the City. Approving this very high-density development on the edge of the City would dilute market demand for the areas where it should go such as the downtown, waterfront, and urban villages.

2. It is yet another "automobile only" development.

Sustainable development provides housing for people where they can live without owning cars. Padden Creek Trails is so isolated most people who live there would rely on cars. High density multi family housing at the edge of the City would make effective transit services, already strained, even more difficult than it currently is in Bellingham.

3. The project's single access road is a potential hazard to the occupants and emergency services.

The Padden Creek Trails development is a large cul de sac that would be a nightmare for residents trying to get out and for emergency services trying to get in if there is a fire, or if the predicted high impact earthquake blocked the only access road.

4. The project will intensify already severe area traffic impacts.

The "stair step" road from the Fairhaven Parkway freeway exchange uphill toward Lake Padden and the project is already inadequate. The addition of several thousand daily trips from the proposed expanded development will likely overwhelm the crowded and inadequate Fairhaven Parkway freeway exchange. Much of the resulting traffic will flow into the Fairhaven urban core increasing traffic problems there.

5. The project will adversely affect the area's watersheds.

Increased density is an injurious idea from an environmental point of view. At this time the Padden Creek Trails property provides clean runoff in both the Padden Creek watershed and the Chuckanut Creek watershed. The Partnership for Puget Sound has identified preserving watersheds as one of its highest priorities in order to protect the Puget Sound and its tributaries. Run off from roads is polluted by motor vehicles. Run off from buildings and chemically managed landscaping damage wetlands, creeks and the Sound. Increased density would result in more vehicles, more pet waste and more landscape chemicals. Current storm water management requirements are not sufficient to prevent water born pollution from leaving the site.

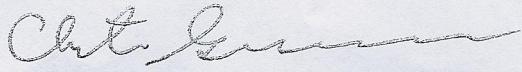
There are positive things that could result from a redesign of the project such as the use of flexible (tool kit) housing types. It may decrease development costs and therefore the cost of housing. A new plan would be subject to the Critical Areas Ordinance. For these reasons we would support reworking the proposal if it does not include increased density.

We urge you oppose any increase in the density for the Padden Creek Trails project.

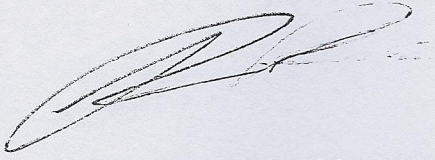
Thank You,

Coalition of South Neighborhoods

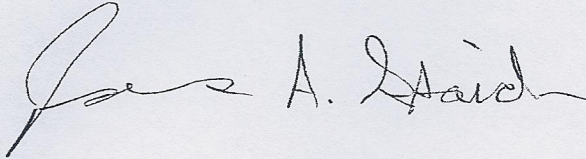
cc Mayor Dan Pike, Planning Director Jeff Thomas



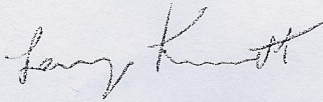
Christopher Grannis, President South Neighborhood



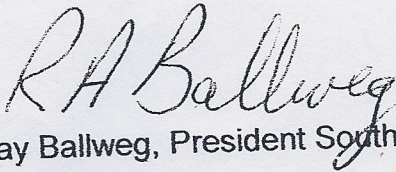
Brad Rose, President Edgemoor Neighborhood



James Spaich, President Happy Valley Neighborhood



Larry Kimmet, President Fairhaven Neighborhood



Ray Ballweg, President South Hill Neighborhood