

Achieving a Wise Future

Wow! Did you get to read the February 10th Bellingham Herald editorial board column entitled "Growth debates must center around saving agriculture"? What a great job! I could hardly have written more wisdom into so few words.

So I won't try. Allow me, instead, to quote their editorial board directly:

"Farms must be protected. And in the rural areas home to rich soils but not currently farmed, we ought to be preserving our options. Few places in Western Washington have had the foresight to do so. In King, Pierce and Snohomish counties, for example, many of the areas that were once home to working farms, places like Enumclaw and Puyallup, are now covered with suburbs.

"Whatcom County does not have to follow that trend. We hope that as we move forward as a community, citizens will call on our leaders to do more to protect rural and agricultural lands. And we hope our leaders will step up and make the tough decisions to make those protections real.

"The debate over Bellingham's urban growth areas was only one part of that bigger picture. There is more hard work to be done. "

How might you leverage your own time and money to promote leaders who are aligned with the wise words of the Herald's editorial board?

Consider supporting an organization in Whatcom County that is doing just that – *Futurewise Whatcom* (www.futurewise.org) – whose very mission is to promote the enforcement of the Growth Management Act. *Futurewise Whatcom* is dedicated to insure that the GMA benefits citizens rather than special interest groups.

The primary goal of *Futurewise Whatcom* is to minimize urbanization of Whatcom County. This includes opposing unwarranted expansion of existing incorporated and unincorporated urban areas, creation of new urban areas, and any developments which are not essentially rural in character. It also includes efforts to preserve agricultural, forest and resource lands, as well as wildlife habitat, and open space.

A secondary goal of *Futurewise Whatcom* is creation of compact, livable cities. We promote *Smart Growth* practices that concentrate development inside existing city boundaries. Such developments emphasize mixed uses in each neighborhood so that people can easily travel from home to work, school, medical facilities, shopping, libraries, parks, and other public places without using motor vehicles (i.e. by bus, foot, and bicycle).

Yes, we need leadership willing to steer us all towards a wise future. And a strong *Futurewise Whatcom* can help us all get there, pressing relentlessly upon our leadership to promote the enforcement of the GMA.

The timing could hardly be more perfect. We have city and county councils so very aligned with the goals and objectives of Smart Growth. This is our time to pass and enforce legislation that will protect our rural areas; protect our farmlands; promote compact, livable cities.

Consider supporting *Futurewise Whatcom*. They happen to be in the midst of an intense, short term, 8-week fundraising drive and your support can help us all achieve a wise future. Besides the website you can also contact Eric Hirst, their Chairperson, at 360-656-6690. Consider volunteering some time in addition to, or instead of, a monetary donation.

Help them help you achieve a future we can all live with.