

## COALITION OF SOUTH NEIGHBORHOODS

Edgemoor / Fairhaven / Happy Valley / South / South Hill/Samish  
'Planning together to protect our Community quality of life'

Bellingham City Council 210 Lottie Street  
Bellingham, Wa 98225

Subject: Padden Creek Housing Project Up-zone

Honorable City Council Members,

Neither the Planning Department nor the applicant have satisfactorily addressed the following critical concerns raised in the May 3rd letter from the Coalition of Southside Neighborhoods opposing increased density for the already enormous Padden Creek housing development.

1. It is contrary to Bellingham's desired direction in housing growth. Increasing density on the edge of the City would dilute housing 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. Padden Creek is so isolated most people who live there would rely on cars. Doubling the allowed density of housing at the edge of the City would make effective transit services, already strained, even more difficult than it currently is in Bellingham. It is unlikely that WTA would ever have a bus route into the Padden Creek Trails development.

3. The project's single access road is a potential hazard to the occupants and emergency services. The Padden Creek 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 forest fire, or if the predicted high impact earthquake blocked the only access road. Doubling of density would put an increased number of future residents at risk.

4. The project will intensify already severe area traffic impacts. According to the City staff report, the additional daily trips from the proposed expanded development could degrade the south leg of the Connelly/34th street intersection to LOS F. While the addition of a signal at the north bound freeway ramps will prevent backups on the freeway, the signal and additional traffic generated by increased density would only make worse the east-west traffic at the already LOS F freeway exchange.

5. The project will adversely affect the area's watersheds. Please note the letter from Susan Kaun to the Planning Commission. Storm water management requirements are not

sufficient to prevent water-born pollution (pet waste, vehicle pollution, chemically managed landscape runoff, etc.) from degrading Padden Creek and Chuckanut Creek.

6. The proposed increased density is opposed by the citizens of South Bellingham and would be a burden for all Bellingham tax payers.

Not only the near neighbors, but the neighborhood associations of all the six Southside neighborhoods are opposed to increased density for the Padden Trails development. Any time infrastructure is extended into vacant land the cost is subsidized by tax payers.

We would like to draw your attention to the additional important point:

The staff report says the Planning Department will apply best available science to any future (enlarged) development proposal, yet they do not ask the question: Is increased high density on the edge of the City in an environmentally sensitive area compatible with the best available science or indeed common sense? Unfortunately, the comprehensive plan amendment and rezone review procedures as executed by the City's Planning staff amounts to merely checking to see if the application is compatible with the comprehensive plan. The procedures do not take into account what we know about smart growth, efficient transit, safety of future residents, best environmental knowledge, or the will of the citizens who will have to subsidize and bear the financial and environmental costs of this already huge development. It seems that the lessons of Chuckanut Ridge have not been learned.

There will be a new environmental chapter to the Comprehensive Plan adopted this year that may make it clear increased density in undeveloped sensitive areas is inappropriate. Green space development does not pay for itself and Bellingham can not afford to give increased value to a development at the edge of the City.

We strongly urge you to recommend against any increase in density for the Padden Creek housing project.

Thank you,