

OUR READERS' OPINIONS

Right idea, wrong location

This letter concerns the proposed annexation of the Bachtold property on the south side of town and the plans to put a huge, affordable housing development on the site. This is not a proper location for this type of development and does not provide a workable solution for the affordable housing problem.

There have been many local concerns voiced regarding the location, but for those searching for an independent opinion on locating affordable housing, please refer to the experts at Smart Growth America. Smart Growth America is a national nonprofit that works with everyone involved in the process of urban planning and development to think strategically about building better towns and cities.

They published a document in April 2017 titled "Providing Well-Placed Affordable Housing in Rural Communities" (bit.ly/2w4qwP6). I would encourage all interested parties to read this in full.

The publication stresses the importance of affordable housing and strategies to make it most effective. About location, here is some of what they have to say.

"...(N) ewly added affordable housing that is built is often located far from jobs, hospitals, grocery stores and schools creating high transportation costs and hardship particularly given that many of these households do not have reliable access to transportation. Access to work by other means — including walking, biking, or public transit — can dramatically reduce expenses for low income households, by decreasing or eliminating vehicle maintenance and fuel as regular costs. When affordable housing is placed such that travel to work is possible without a car, it is far more effective. If it is located in neighborhoods with these options, households are able to live without a car or with one fewer car and the monthly cost of it. As is often the case, they may simply use their car less often. Providing affordable housing and locating it within a short walk to these necessities is key to helping lower-income families in rural areas not only get by, but also prosper. Doing so does not need to come at high cost for local governments."

Placing affordable housing on the Bachtold property, miles away from services, does not help the people it is intended to benefit. Please don't ruin this gorgeous, rural landscape with a failed attempt at solving the affordable housing issue. Listen to the experts!

Dick Counsell
Walla Walla