

OUR READERS' OPINIONS

Bachtold annexation is about smart planning

There seems to be a misunderstanding regarding the information on the Bachtold annexation and development. It is true that the final development plan has yet to be submitted. That said, the city of Walla Walla actually scheduled a meeting with some of the affected home owners and shared information along with a conceptual plan of the development at that meeting.

The city shared a map of over 400 proposed homes sites. That was previous to the new zoning regulation. The city now allows varying lots in size from 9,600 square feet, 7,200 square feet and 6,000 square feet. For the Bachtold annexation this means for 9,600-square-foot lots that 454 homes could be built, for 7,200-square-foot lots 604 homes could be built and, finally, for lots of 6,000 square feet 727 homes could be built. The city's planning department is working with the developer to present a final plan to be voted on by the City Council and reviewed at a public meeting.

Issues like traffic studies, SEPA review, drainage plans, etc. must be reviewed to avoid making this project a huge liability to the city and residents.

The known problems to build on this land are challenging at best. Table Rock was a similar type development so why

6-14-19
not allow more of the same? The reason is simple, Table Rock probably shouldn't have been built.

Parts of Table Rock flooded in 2005, and since then, the city has completed significant work to try and resolve these issues. Unfortunately, the drainage issues have still not been solved almost 20 years later. The potential for problems in this proposed area would seem significant and expected.

The city loses 15 percent on every dollar it spends on annexations, according to the city's Development Services Department. This approach might make sense on smaller projects that actually offer benefits that support this cost. This project is over 100 acres with several hundred homes along with huge demands for infrastructure.

The developer must address these issues — but it is not liable for all of it, the city will be. Unfortunately, this project will not help solve affordable housing. With proposed home prices at or around \$350,000 and miles away from city services, it will do little, if anything, to solve this problem.

This issue isn't about anything other than smart planning for the future of Walla Walla. Having residents engaged and voicing opinions is the best way to get to the best outcome.

Brad Walker
Walla Walla