

Build Within Program needed

UB 6-23-19

Walla Walla city and county is tasked with supplying affordable homes to a growing local demographic.

Sadly, the city and county jumped on an earlier bandwagon of stocking the area with vacation and second and third homes. That removed a fair amount of rental housing from the market. Thinking tourist money would roll in hand over fist, however, the cost to the Valley's daily inhabitants has been substantial and far exceeds the tourist income.

There has been a request to build 400 homes out in the Prospect/Cottonwood area on 100 acres, which has been met with community defiance, and rightly so on many factors. A month or so ago, I sent the following concept — the Build Within Program — to our county commissioners. The development of farm land needs to be controlled.

The Build Within Program is for all residents within the annexed areas of the city boundary. The program is not available to developers. Landowners can borrow funds from the city/county to subdivide their property.

This is not a loan to develop, only to subdivide. Once the property has been subdivided accordingly, the city/county places a lien on the new property. The landowner then places the property for sale with a realtor. Once the property sells, the lien is paid back, and the landowner receives the profit.

Example: Subdividing cost \$10,000 and the property sells for \$40,000. The landowner receives the difference after fees and loan pay back. The main contingency for this program is that it is for 100 percent occupancy dwellings and not for vacation homes, vacation rentals or businesses. This program is not for the tourist industry.

This is a win — win program for the community. By allowing landowners to subdivide, it spreads out new dwellings over the whole city. Many landowners do not have the upfront funds available to subdivide, this program fixes that. The city/county would need to review zoning and make zoning changes as needed for this program.

Driving around the Eastgate area, I discovered ample property that could be buildable within the city boundary accommodating single residence lots to lots that could fit duplexes up to sixplexes if designed correctly.

There are well over 400 possible dwelling sites available within the city boundaries with this program. Thus, the Hayden home development out on Cottonwood could be terminated.

Amy White
Walla Walla