

Bachtold developer blinding community to impact

The proposed annexation of the Bachtold property to support the Cottonwood-area development is ill conceived and supports an erosion of the values and culture that have made Walla Walla the gem it is today.

As for the development itself, enough has been said here about the substantive concerns of traffic, infrastructure and the environmental impacts, and more will be said through other channels. But not much has been said about how this contentious situation came about in the first place.

What of the out-of-state developer that

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convinced a long-standing local family into thinking they had no other market for their 100-acre family-owned wheat field? This predatory developer sought them out after targeting the property before it was even put up for sale.

It convinced that patriarch to sign an exclusive deal that forbids him from discussing the terms, and gives it the right to purchase the property for an indeterminate period of time. The seller wanted to secure the financial future for his family, and most likely was persuaded by what is no doubt a generous payday for he and his family.

Who could blame them? But, as a result, this company that builds developments that even Tri-Cities regrets, plans on constructing the largest subdivision in Walla Walla County, in an area far enough away from the services of the city it must first be annexed — with whispers of “affordable” housing — this multimillion dollar corporation is willing to spend millions to build this development for an expected profit of \$75,000 per home.

Outside companies building unnecessarily large and dense subdivisions isn't part of the Walla Walla culture. It isn't about helping the community grow responsibly, it isn't about seeing local businesses thrive from the construction. It is understandably so, about the business of profit.

An out-of-state corporation has figured out a plan to make \$30 million or so in profits by leveraging the legacy desires of a respected local family, the community's concern about housing availability and the arguable perception that this approximately 400 homes will somehow make it easier for minimum-wage employees and their families to find affordable housing.

It hopes to blind our community to the reality that this development will be out of touch with its environs, the character of Walla Walla and our often articulated desire to avoid becoming a Bend or Tri-Cities.

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