

OUR READERS' OPINIONS

Flooding grave concern for Bachtold annexation

I am writing in opposition to the proposed Bachtold annexation.

In 2004, I was one of the first to move into the new Table Rock subdivision. A year later, I stood on my front porch as the largest flood I have witnessed in my nearly 40 years living in Walla Walla went right past the bottom of my driveway. It was as if the Walla Walla River had come down through the Bachtold property and meandered through the new Table Rock subdivision before heading out to find a way down to the Columbia.

I immediately pulled out my camera and took dozens of pictures as the dreams of many of my neighbors found themselves literally under water. I looked at those pictures again this morning, and they were as shocking as the day I took them.

I personally knew some of the people whose lives were most deeply affected. I also knew well the couple who had developed the new subdivision. My heart went out to all of them. The developers did their very best under extremely difficult circumstances. They tried to make whole the people whose lives had been turned upside down by the flooding. They worked with local government to put in systems that would lessen the probability that it

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might happen again.

Still, the flood changed many things. For example, originally there were plans for second and third phases of the Table Rock development. These were canceled, presumably because of the problems caused by the flooding.

I have read the SEPA Environmental Checklist regarding the proposed Bachtold annexation. I have also read the relevant section of the city of Walla Walla's website regarding runoff. I remain deeply skeptical. If you had been on my porch in 2005, you would be too.

One reason for my skepticism is that any system to handle runoff has to deal with a very serious problem: Dirt. If you walk around the area, you will see that every ditch put in to hold runoff is quickly clogged with dirt and becomes more-or-less useless.

I understand the need for additional affordable housing. The taxpayers of Walla Walla need to know that this annexation will cost them money. If we are going to spend our hard-earned cash on such a high density development, it is obvious to me that we should avoid an area with a known and recent history of significant flooding.

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