

May 27, 2011

Transportation, Economy, and Environment Committee
Metropolitan King County Council
516 Third Ave., Rm. 1200
Seattle, WA 98104

Good morning.

This letter is to inform you of the potential debacle about to occur in Southeast King County due to the YarrowBay-proposed Master Planned Developments (MPDs) under consideration by the City of Black Diamond and to request your active participation in helping to address the myriad issues related to the MPDs.

YarrowBay, a well-known major land developer in Western WA, has proposed two major MPDs comprising over 6,000 homes and over 1.1 million sq ft of commercial/business space in the City of Black Diamond. This would quintuple the current population of 4,000 and represent the largest MPDs in King County history. As you are well aware there exists little to no enabling infrastructure in and around Black Diamond to accommodate such a massive change in population and use of services.

Of particular concern to many citizens in the region is the impact on already congested roads throughout southeast King County. Many of these roads are King County roads--all of which will be severely impacted by up to 15,000 more vehicles. Our existing transportation infrastructure already is stretched thin during the morning and evening commutes. The impact of the MPDs, even with proposed improvements, most likely would guarantee multi-hour gridlock, thus severely impacting the quality of life and the economies of residents and businesses in southeast King County.

We thank King County and its expert personnel for participating in last year's FEIS Appeals' Hearings and MPD Application Hearings and helping to inform the City of Black Diamond and YarrowBay. Unfortunately, when approving the MPD Applications last September 21, the City largely chose to ignore the Hearing Examiner's recommendations and the well-informed testimonies of King County personnel and the general Public itself! This is especially true when it comes to the severe impacts which will be placed on the Transportation infrastructure in southeast King County.

The reasons for our writing to you are twofold:

1. To bring you up to speed on what is happening. The Public is doing a Herculean job and the Greater Maple Valley Unincorporated Area Council (GMVUAC) is trying to help, (although many of the people to be affected live outside of our territory), along with many other good organizations.

2. We strongly request the King County Council's Transportation, Economy and Environment Committee take a more active role in helping to work these issues. Your Committee deals with the three major issues related to the proposed MPDs: Transportation, Economy, and Environment. We've already described to you the potential gridlock foreseen for the region's transportation infrastructure. There also are major concerns with the region's economy should the MPDs, upon buildout, cause the City of Black Diamond to go bankrupt, which the City's own financial analyses predicts is a possibility (YarrowBay says it's all in the assumptions--yes, indeed it is!). Finally, although land will be dedicated as Open Space, much of it (i.e., wetlands, bogs, depressions, etc.) isn't buildable! The remaining 750 acres will be clearcut! The impacts on the local and regional environment are almost incalculable: loss of species, wildlife corridors decimated, air and water quality forever harmed--to name a few.

Soon, possibly as early as the end of June/beginning of July, Public Hearings will commence on the YarrowBay Development Agreements. Once again hundreds and hundreds of members of the Public will be out in force to provide well-informed Oral and Written Testimonies. Again, we will request the County participate by sending their experts at DDES, KCDOT, and DNRP to testify. We greatly appreciate their past comments and testimonies, as well as the efforts to date by the King County Executive's Office. However, we believe your Committee also must become more informed and take an active role in this critical matter, since you deal with all the key issues related to the MPDs. We can provide whatever information you need. There are environmental experts who can give you guided tours of the areas in question, with YarrowBay's permission.

Please contact us at your earliest convenience. Thank you.

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