



HOME BUILDERS ASSOCIATION OF WASHINGTON COUNTY
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Public Hearing
Proposed Moratorium
Testimony

I am speaking tonight on behalf of our membership, which consists of new homebuilders, developers, remodeling contractors and those companies supporting the building industry, including, but not limited to financial institutions, building material suppliers, engineers, architects, excavators and sub-contractors. It is the consensus of our membership, and we believe the building industry as a whole, that a moratorium at this time is not necessary, and that implementing one would have a negative impact on the industry, and those individuals in the County who have not as yet realized the American Dream of affordable home ownership.

The Board of County Commissioners when first discussing implementing a moratorium stated the reasons for doing so were concerns over the declining water shed and the impact this decline would have on those persons utilizing wells for their water supply, and their concern that these same lots would be utilizing septic systems that should they fail the County would be required to step in and replace with public sewer service. However, once the draft moratorium was issued, it became clear that these issues are secondary to stopping development outside the Urban Growth Area until such time as the WC Planning Department and Legal Counsel have the time needed to implement all the ordinances and rezoning the adoption of this plan dictates.

On the issue of the declining water supply in the County, we submit to you a study done by Triad Engineering for a proposed subdivision in the County outside the UGA. This study was interpreted by Mr. Terry Moorsehead, head hydrologist for Earth Data, a company that evaluates, monitors and remediates a wide array of environmental problems in soil and groundwater. They also perform environmental assessments and provide solutions to wastewater disposal and water supply issues. In his opinion letter, Mr. Mooreshead makes the point that not all water pumped from wells leaves the property, that a significant portion of the water used is returned via the septic system,. He further states that a percentage of Stormwater that would normally leave an undeveloped site is returned utilizing the required

Stormwater practices. On the septic system issue, with today's stringent federal and state regulations concerning the building of these systems, the odds of one failing, let alone an entire development failing are too high to calculate.

We understand the Commissioners misconception that development outside the UGA is occurring at an uncontrolled rate. However, we must point out that there is in fact, not rampant development going on outside the UGA. I ask you to please refer to the information we have supplied. We have taken the information supplied by the Planning Department listing the sub-divisions both in progress and in consideration, which was supplied to the Commissioners on October 1st, as well as permit information supplied by the Permits and Inspection Department and assimilated it for both inside and outside the UGA.

The data indicates, as shown in table number 1, that this year there have been a total of 1353 lots approved for new homes. Of this 1353 only 334, or less than 25% of this total is outside the Urban Growth Area. It also shows that while those 334 lots encompass more total acreage than those inside the UGA, the number of units per plan is approximately 90% less than inside the Urban Growth Area, and the average lot size outside the UGA is approximately 6 times larger. This table also shows that over the last 4 years the number of permits issued each year has increased by less than one percent. It also shows that in spite of the fact that more lots were approved this year than last, if the trend of the first 9 months of this year continue, there will be less permits issued this year. This data clearly shows that it is indeed a misconception among the general public that there is rampant uncontrolled growth going on in this County today. When in fact, growth is occurring at the same rate it has over the last five years.

What we ask the Commissioners to consider is the ramifications this moratorium in conjunction with the new Comp Plan will have on those individuals living in the County that have not as yet been able to purchase a new home. Statistics show that the average price of a new home in the County today is \$142,614, an increase of \$8000 over last year. To qualify for this home a family would need an annual income of just under \$45,000, which is well above the average median family income in the County, and this is not taking into consideration any other financial obligations this family might have. To curtail development outside the UGA is to increase the price of land inside the UGA, and the price of the home being built on that land. Everyone

must realize that as with any product, when the costs involved in its production increase, these costs are passed on to the consumer and are not absorbed by the manufacturer.

I would also like the Commissioners to consider what declaring a moratorium will do to Economic Development in the County. Housing starts are an indicator of the health of an area, and are used in evaluating the appropriateness of relocating businesses. Enacting a moratorium is a red flag to anyone considering relocating here , especially when the moratorium is enacted based on growth. Business are prone to relocate to areas where growth is occurring, not where it is being stifled.

In closing I would like everyone here tonight to remember two things, developers do not create growth, they service it, and builders build the houses jobs go home to.