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March 12, 2009

Jeroldine Hallberg
1800 Continental Place
Mount Vernon, WA 98273

Dear Jeroldine:

This letter is to express the Skagit/Island Counties Builders Association's (SICBA) position on Skagit County's UGA Open Space Concept Plan. SICBA is a roughly 650-member association representing the voice of the local building industry. Please include this letter as SICBA's written public input on this proposal for review by the Skagit County Planning Commission.

SICBA members care deeply about the quality of life in our region, and understand that a large part of maintaining our quality of life is in protecting treasured open space. SICBA supports the aims of this plan to identify and protect open space corridors within and between existing urban growth areas. We do have some reservations about the "Open Space Impact Fees" mentioned as a means to generate revenue to fund this plan.

We ask that Skagit County consider instituting any revenue generating measures on a more widespread basis than through impact fees upon an already economically unstable building industry. Open Space is a benefit felt by all county residents, so any proposal to make one individual industry pay for this luxury would not seem appropriate.

The plan does mention a potential countywide UGA open space levy, which would seek a special countywide property tax levy. This seems like a more reasonable approach to fund the countywide Open Space plan. Additionally, SICBA encourages Skagit County to maintain the current zoning on property within the proposed open space maps after the plan is adopted, as to not adversely affect present property owners.

If you have any questions regarding SICBA's position on Skagit County's UGA Open Space Concept Plan, please feel free to call the SICBA office at (360) 757-6916 or e-mail me at cory@sicba.org.

Sincerely,

Cory Ertel
SICBA Government Affairs Director

