

February 12, 2022

Board of Commissioners  
Yakima County Courthouse  
128 North Second Street  
Yakima, WA 98901

RE: Town of Naches Emergency UGA Amendment LRN2021-00001/SEP2021-00010

Dear Board of Commissioners,

My name is Jeff Davis and my spouse and I are homeowners who reside at 9140 Old Naches Hwy just east of Naches. Our parcel (17140342021) is adjacent to parcel 17140342023 and within 190' of parcel 17140342004, both of which were proposed by the town of Naches for inclusion in their Urban Growth Area.

The purpose of this letter is to reiterate my previous comments at the Yakima County Planning Commission Public Hearing meetings on Sept 8 and Oct 13, 2021 and express our continued opposition to the town's proposal to include the above-mentioned parcels in their UGA.

We are opposed to including those two parcels for the following reasons:

- \* Including these two parcels in the UGA and changing them to R1 zoning doesn't fit in with the rural/agricultural nature of the surrounding properties. Nearly all of the surrounding parcels are larger parcels, active or recently inactive farmland, with only one or two houses. An R1 designation would allow an island of densely concentrated residential development of up to approximately 80 houses (the number mentioned by the town's representative during the Oct 13 hearing). A development of that size and density would be completely out of character with the surrounding properties.
- \* Farming operations (such as crop spraying) on existing adjacent farmland would be impacted by the close proximity of such a large residential development.
- \* Parcel 17140334008 to the south and west of the two being proposed seems like a more appropriate candidate for inclusion in the UGA. This 21-acre parcel is closer to the town's sewer treatment facility and is already adjacent to the residential zoned McDowell Addition neighborhood. We understand there is pending litigation involving this property, but the town could wait until that matter is resolved.
- \* The town's representative stated at the October 13 public hearing that continued dropping enrollment in Naches Valley School District (NVSD) has been mentioned in other public comment letters as a reason for including more residential development within the UGA. We disagree with this conclusion. The NVSD is the second largest (geographically) school district within the ESD 105 service area and serves a much larger population than just those residing within the Naches UGA.

In fact, the NVSD prominently states on their website homepage that the...

*"Naches Valley School District is proud of its **small size, rural setting, supportive community, and dedicated staff.** The district provides quality educational programs for 1,250 students."*

That statement seems to embrace the rural nature of the district and doesn't appear to align with claiming more residential development is needed to save the district from an uncertain future. There is already plenty of county land available within the large geographical size of the district that is suitable for new residences on larger sized parcels, which would provide for continued enrollment growth while preserving the rural nature of the area.

- \* A common theme in most of the public comments during previous hearings is that lifelong residents of the Naches area, as well as those who've chosen to move here, appreciate our small community and the rural and agricultural nature of the surrounding area. The town's representative mentioned at the October 13 meeting that many of the comments were based on feelings and that factual comments should be given more weight in decisions. We want to make it clear that it is a fact that we moved here from Kirkland in 1998 and have lived at our current residence ever since because we wanted to live in a more rural setting rather than in/near high-density residential developments. It's also a fact that when you look out in every direction from our parcel, and from the parcels of my neighbors, you will see larger parcels with single residences and very large parcels of active and inactive farmland, some of those with single residences as well. This rural and agricultural nature of our area is what we and most of our neighbors want to preserve. It is true that there are very strong feelings and opinions regarding this, but they are based on underlying actual facts which the town doesn't seem to want to acknowledge.
- \* Another theme that has been evident in the public comments is there are many who are concerned about that fact that the town's administrator and representative for this proposal is also a private developer who could potentially benefit personally in the future should the proposed parcels be included in the UGA. We're not claiming this is an actual motivating factor behind the proposal, but the optics and perception it creates are definitely concerning to many in our community. I think it would go a long way towards addressing those concerns if Mr. Ranger would be willing to factually state on-record that neither he nor anyone in his family has a current or future financial interest in the development of any of these proposed parcels.

We support the town of Naches and want to see it thrive into the future while preserving its small-town character appreciated by so many. We believe attaining that goal is possible without zoning changes that will replace large swaths of prime surrounding agriculture land with large high-density residential developments.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide input on these matters.

Jeffrey Davis  
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