


CITY OF PULLMAN

Public Works and Planning Departments

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MEMORANDUM

TO: Pullman Planning Commission

FROM: Pete Dickinson, Planning Director 

FOR: Meeting of September 23, 2009

SUBJECT: Draft College Hill Core Neighborhood Plan

DATE: September 16, 2009

At your September 9 public forum related to the draft College Hill Core Neighborhood Plan, the Commission received oral comment from a number of citizens. The city has also received written input before, during, and after that session. Documentation thus far submitted on this topic is as follows:

Letter from Marjorie M. Pratt, dated 8/28/09 (provided to Commission at 9/9/09 meeting)

Letter from Pullman League of Women Voters Chair Sue Armitage, dated 9/7/09 (provided to Commission at 9/9/09 meeting)

Letter from College Hill Association Chair Allison Munch-Rotolo, dated 9/9/09, with enclosure (enclosed as Attachment "A")

Notes from Eileen Macoll, dated 9/9/09 (enclosed as Attachment "B")

Letter from Bobbie Ryder, received 9/16/09 (enclosed as Attachment "C")

During the September 9 session, Commission member Shannon requested information about landlord licensing. Staff is currently accumulating this information, and it will be transmitted to the Commission soon.

Also, in accordance with the review schedule, the Pullman Police Advisory Committee met to discuss the draft plan on September 14. At that session, the committee had some preliminary questions and comments, and its members agreed to consider the matter again at its October 12 meeting.

Memorandum to Planning Commission
September 16, 2009
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The action requested by staff for your meeting of September 23 is to conduct a workshop to review and amend the draft plan as appropriate. In performing this activity, please be mindful that the draft plan is a general policy document that provides direction for future specific implementation measures (such as rezone proposals or detailed architectural design standards).

Once the Planning Commission has revised the draft plan in accordance with its preferences, staff will schedule a Commission public hearing on the matter. The tentative date for this hearing is October 21.

Attachments



College Hill Association

635 NE Illinois

Pullman WA 99163

Pete Dickinson, Planning Director
City of Pullman
325 SE Paradise
Pullman WA 99163

RECVD FAXED

SEP 09 2009

SENT DRAFT
PULLMAN PUBLIC WORKS

September 9, 2009

Dear Mr. Dickinson and Planning Commissioners:

The Board of College Hill Association extends thanks to the City of Pullman Planning Department and Planning Commission for the opportunity of providing input on the 8/21/09 draft of the College Hill Core Neighborhood Plan. We recognize the efforts of you and your staff in producing this draft and we look forward to a lively discussion of its contents in the ensuing months.

We are pleased to provide the enclosed comments on the draft plan for your consideration. In addition to the detailed comments we offer the following general remarks.

- What is a neighborhood plan if not a tool for initiating and managing change? The College Hill Neighborhood planning process was initiated because of density-related neighborhood problems. Further increasing the already high density on College Hill is very unlikely to mitigate those problems. The proposal to rezone any part of the College Hill Core to higher-than-present allowable density levels (GOAL 2C) will almost certainly cause more harm than good.
- Complaint-based code enforcement has not been as effective as originally hoped. We strongly support proactive code enforcement (GOAL 3A) and all of the proposals outlined in GOAL 3.
- The notion of architectural design standards for College Hill and the City at large has been stuck at the "consider" stage for some years now. In fact, this has been a perennial City Council goal since 2006. The Planning Commission needs to take action here. The wording of GOAL 2A should be changed to "Adopt and implement architectural design standards....."
- The purpose of GOAL 2B (rezone area "A" from R2 to RT) should be to protect the historic setting of the National Register College Hill Historic District. Protecting only a PORTION of the district is insufficient. GOAL 2B should apply to the ENTIRE College Hill Historic District.
- The current draft of the plan appears to give highest priority (GOAL 1) to communicating, promoting, and encouraging "respect". We think that this is not where the City should focus its efforts at this time as many in the community are already promoting neighborliness. Rather, priority needs to be given to the concrete actions that only the City can take including: architectural design standards for new construction, a systematic program of historic preservation, and proactive code enforcement.

Please feel free to contact me if you would like clarification on any input we have submitted. You can count on College Hill Association to participate fully in the neighborhood planning process.

Yours truly,

Allison Munch-Rotolo

Allison Munch-Rotolo
Chair

enclosure

Attachment "A"

Comments on:

City of Pullman's College Hill Core Neighborhood Plan Draft (8/21/09)

Submitted by:

The Board of College Hill Association (9/9/2009)

General Comments:

Many thanks are due to City of Pullman Planning Staff for bringing the College Hill Neighborhood to the next phase of neighborhood planning. The draft plan is concise, readable, and will become a useful document for years to come. College Hill Association, a private nonprofit organization established in 1992 for the purpose of improving the quality of life in the College Hill Neighborhood, is deeply appreciative of the City's efforts toward our mutual goal of neighborhood improvement.

A few general comments/suggestions:

- This document is not the appropriate venue for a comprehensive history of the neighborhood. Nevertheless, the heritage of any neighborhood helps to shape it in ways that may become forgotten over time. That history can also be an important source of identity—and even pride—to area residents. The plan could touch on just a few highlights in neighborhood history, such as College Hill's earlier designation as "Mechanic's Hill". A short list of references (perhaps supplied by the Whitman County Historical Society) could identify sources of additional information.
- One issue not mentioned anywhere in the plan is the loss of both neighborhood elementary schools (Adams and Edison) and how significantly this has affected the perceived "livability" of the neighborhood.
- To the extent possible, more maps (perhaps clustered together as appendices) and the use of color would help illustrate different land uses, zoning areas, and areas targeted for infrastructure improvements.
- Historic Preservation is put forth as a neighborhood goal, but other goals and implementations strategies within the document (such as the proposal to re-zone the Maple Street area) would directly conflict with this goal. The College Hill Core's historic building stock is one of the neighborhood's strengths. The goal of protecting historic resources should be given higher priority in the neighborhood plan, perhaps right after any recommended changes to the zoning code. A systematic program of historic preservation will help to achieve other goals, especially 3 & 4.

INTRODUCTION:

- CHA supports the goal of achieving a high-quality, diversified neighborhood, as outlined in the Vision Statement on page 21.
- The problem statement outlined on page 1 (and in Description of Issues section starting on page 13) misses the mark. CHA has participated in every possible neighborhood-related meeting and/or discussion. At no time have stakeholders described themselves as having "land use conflicts". Is litter or a lack of streetlights a "lifestyle conflict"? These terms are not meaningful because they aren't problems that College Hill stakeholders can understand. If it is necessary to use these terms, then they should be defined and documentation provided.
- Our new neighborhood plan should help the College Hill Core play to its strengths (convenient location, pedestrian-friendly living, a stock of historic buildings with character, vitality, and a great diversity of residents, many of whom live in a true spirit of community) while working to overcome its weaknesses (pandemic ordinance violations,

litter, poor property maintenance/conditions, incompatible new development, and all manner of density/congestion effects). We believe the neighborhood would be better served in the long run by a very frank presentation and discussion of those strengths and weaknesses and goals that target them.

DESCRIPTION:

Demographics:

- CHA has repeatedly requested that the Planning Department use enrollment numbers reflecting actual (and projected) *Pullman on-campus* enrollees, which can be obtained through the WSU Office of Institutional Research. The standard "Pullman" enrollment figures (used here) include WSU Distance Degree Program students and Nursing Program students, regardless of their place of residence/study. The total fall headcount for *on-campus* students for Fall 2008 was significantly lower than that reported here. Most of the University's anticipated on-campus growth will be in the areas of summer enrollment and graduate programs—a trend which paints a slightly different picture of housing needs.
- How does the age distribution of the neighborhood compare to Pullman at large?

Land Use:

- This section would benefit from a color-coded map.
- The terms "single-family" and "multi-family" structures, while perhaps widely understood by professional planners, are not particularly useful to neighborhood stakeholders. Many owner-occupied homes contain no families, and many families live in multi-dwelling structure. Could the word "family" be replaced with "unit" or "dwelling"?
- Also, many neighborhood structures have a basement studio apartment or detached guest house. These living arrangements are often undocumented and do not fit conveniently in the single/multi dichotomy that is used throughout this document. They are low-density, but neither single nor multi.
- The paragraph on historic designation of neighborhood structures (page 5) should be qualified with the word "potentially" to read: "many of the structures are *potentially* eligible..." The actual eligibility criteria for National Register designation are a bit more nuanced than a structure's age and integrity. In the case of the College Hill Historic District, the designation was awarded because the district "is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history" and because it "embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction". Some properties in the College Hill Core would be eligible for National Register designation because they are "associated with the lives of persons significant in our past".

Housing:

- How is the number of dwelling units estimated? Is there data on the size (e.g. # of bedrooms) per dwelling unit?
- It would be helpful to see absolute numbers, not only percentages. We know (from the demographics section reported above) that the population of the College Hill Core grew from 4,810 to 5,561 between 1990 and 2000. Could the apparent decline in owner-occupancy during those years actually reflect a very stable absolute number of owner occupants, who constitute an ever smaller percentage of the population as new dwellings are added? (225 since 1990)
- Does "median contract rent" control for size of the dwelling unit? Now that many rental agencies offer contracts to individuals, are comparisons of median contract rent meaningful? Perhaps we need a per capita contract rent?

- Could recent median sales prices also be included to give a more up-to-date indication of actual affordability?
- In the paragraph on housing inspections (page 9) we learn that there have been about 18 requests for voluntary housing inspection in the past 18 months, and that roughly half of those requests were generated from the College Hill Core. Perhaps this is better addressed in the Housing Conditions section on page 14, but what about the *results* of those requests? What types of issues prompted the requests? What types of issues can and cannot be addressed through the program? What proportion of inspections detected violations of the housing code? When landlords are found to have provided unsafe housing, what penalties have they incurred?

Public/Private Facilities and Services:

There is no mention of schools in this section. Currently, school age children throughout the entire Northeast quadrant of the City are bused to the elementary school of their choice (assuming space availability, which has historically not been a factor limiting choice). School choice with district-provided transportation can be seen as a plus, but many area residents cite the closure of College Hill's two elementary schools (Adams and Edison) as a reduction in service that has made the area less welcoming and livable to long-term residents.

DESCRIPTION OF ISSUES:

There is no mention of population density as an issue affecting the neighborhood, but it is directly related to (if not the only cause of) many of the issues cited below. The College Hill Neighborhood Study (2007) was commissioned because of concern that the area had reached or even exceeded its carrying capacity.

Land Use Compatibility and Historic Preservation:

The Housing section cites 225 new dwellings in the College Hill Core since 1990, most of which are probably 3- or 4-bedroom units. It would also be helpful to see statistics on demolition permits within the College Hill Core and the City at large over that same time period. Although many large-scale new projects have been inserted without any demolition, demolitions are one indicator of the "disruption in neighborhood fabric" alluded to here.

Housing Conditions:

- As mentioned earlier (in the Housing section) it would be helpful to present data on the verified "housing inadequacies".
- Whether housing is owner-occupied or renter-occupied should not be a factor in applying a zoning district. There is low-density residential rental property located throughout the City of Pullman.
- The section on Property Maintenance could be joined with this one. Housing conditions and property maintenance issues are likely to be strongly correlated.

Disruptive Behavior:

- Pullman Police Department statistics, if available, would be more helpful than anecdotal data. Any input from the Police Department would also be helpful.
- Who pays for garbage service at the "attractive refuse containers"?

Property Maintenance:

- This section could be joined with Housing Conditions (above), and property maintenance and housing conditions are likely to be strongly correlated.

- Several years ago WSU ADCAPS did a study which disproved the association of property maintenance problems with absentee landlords. In fact, most problem properties are locally owned or managed. The study was presented at Better Neighborhoods for Pullman is available through ADCAPS. Shouldn't it be cited in this section?
- Does the City keep data on nuisance ordinance complaints/violations? Can those be reported here?

COMMUNITY RESPONSES:

Historic Preservation:

Additional information for this section:

- In 1979 WSU implemented a Public History track in the MA/PhD History Program. Students in this track have been conducting inventories of historic Pullman buildings since that time. All (or nearly all) historic College Hill Core buildings have been inventoried and in some cases are being re-inventoried on an ongoing basis.
- WSU purchased and rehabilitated 3 historic B Street residences.
- The city adopted a Historic Preservation Ordinance in 2006, which encouraged the rehabilitation of two historic structures in the College Hill Core: the Greystone Church and the Brewster House on Maple Extension.
- The city installed signs at each of the 5 entry points to the College Hill Historic District. The signs were commissioned and purchased by College Hill Association and designed by WSU students.

Housing:

WSU also purchased and demolished several unsafe houses.

Infrastructure:

ASWSU held a "Students for Safety" fundraiser last fall and similar events are planned. Have these recent efforts led to improvements in lighting?

Property Maintenance:

The community improvement representative position—what %FTE?

Clarifications:

- CHA strongly supports MO/PI, but we did not participate in its implementation.
- CHA's "Yard of the Semester" program is specifically targeted to *student*-maintained properties.

Additions:

- CHA sponsors monthly neighborhood clean-ups each fall, following home football games. All labor is performed on a volunteer basis by WSU students engaged in community service through WSU's Center for Civic Engagement and by long-term neighborhood residents. Pullman Disposal Service donates haul-away services.
- Starting Fall 2008, WSU students established an "Adopt-a-Block" Program, providing comprehensive services to defined portions of the neighborhood. These services include litter, leaf, or snow removal and in some cases other forms of general assistance. The WSU Center for Civic Engagement would be able to provide hours of service donated to this program.

VISION STATEMENT:

We support a vision for a safe, healthy, livable, and sustainable neighborhood for all residents. We are skeptical of using shared norms or community spirit as a mechanism for achieving this vision.

While there is not consensus about the precise definition of "community", most academic disciplines characterize it as a group of people or organisms living in a shared environment. College Hill residents (whether long- or short-term) are clearly living in a shared environment. **The neighborhood's difficulties lie in the fact that much of that environment is owned by people who do *not* share the living environment, and who view the area *not* as their neighborhood or community, but as a resource to be harvested (and perhaps even exploited).** If the neighborhood plan is to be based on a spirit of community, then it needs to validate the aims and intentions of the people actually living in that community.

GOALS AND IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES:

GOAL 1:

- We value respect and we think a unified theme for Pullman could be a helpful idea. However, we do not believe this can provide the basis for an effective neighborhood plan.
- Most all of the implementation strategies listed under this goal seem to rest on an assumption that student behaviors are the sole cause of the neighborhood's problems, and that if we could cultivate a climate of "respect," the neighborhood would be well on its way to improvement. There are other major factors contributing to the problems the neighborhood faces, and a campaign for responsible living would not address those.
- The goals in this plan that really matter (zoning, historic preservation, open space, parking) have very little to do with respect or responsible living. The City of Pullman cannot cause people to respect each other and should direct its efforts to areas where it can realistically effect change.
- As a modification to GOAL 1, consider replacing the words "actively promotes respect among all users" with "actively promotes neighborhood improvement and investment". The resources directed toward delivering pamphlets could instead be directed toward educating current and prospective property owners about the goals of the neighborhood. Further implementation strategies might include small loans or other financial incentives for rehabilitation of derelict properties, infrastructure improvements (like those which would have been available in the University District proposal), and a comprehensive program of historic preservation.

GOAL 2:

A *harmonious* mix of housing and other uses is an excellent goal for the neighborhood.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

2A: The language should be changed to: "Adopt and implement architectural design standards..."

- Last year (2008) Pullman's City Council adopted as goal #6: "*Pursue the creation of design standards within the College Hill Historic District and becoming a Washington Certified Local Government Program for historic preservation*". You may recall that the legacy for this goal extends back several years. In 2007 City Council adopted as goal #11: "Consider and make some decisions regarding the recommendations of the global review of College Hill issues including *architectural design standards...*" And in 2006 City Council adopted as goal #15 "Conduct a global review of College Hill issues *including architectural design standards...*" (emphases added).
- Earlier this spring (2009) CHA presented to the Planning Commission "Integrating New Construction into an Existing Historic Area", a PowerPoint slideshow illustrating some

highlights in compatible and incompatible new construction in the College Hill Core. Clearly architectural design standards have been considered for some time. The appropriate goal at this time should be their adoption.

2B: The entire College Hill Historic District should be re-zoned not only to protect low-density residences, but more importantly, to protect the fragile character of a recently established National Register district. For this reason, it would make little sense to re-zone only a portion of the district.

2C: The College Hill Core already houses 23% of Pullman's population on 4% of its land, resulting in a host of density-related issues. We do not believe re-zoning the Maple Street area to achieve "land use compatibility" would be of any benefit to the neighborhood. Our reasons for opposing this particular suggestion are many but include the following:

- the area's particular historic significance
- the area's strategic location as a historic corridor leading from historic downtown Pullman and the Greystone Church to the College Hill Historic District
- the many long-term residents and "quiet uses" of the area
- the area's documented parking problems (92-99% occupancy according to Nelson-Nygaard)

2D: We support this strategy

2E: We'd like to know more about this re-zone. Is it necessary? The B Street properties are entirely compatible in the neighborhood setting, whereas a re-zone might open up the potential for incompatible uses.

GOAL 3:

Attractive, well-maintained properties—another excellent goal

3A: CHA has long-requested proactive code enforcement and enthusiastically endorses this strategy to achieve the goal of well-maintained properties

3B: This strategy is vague and needs to be operationalized. The strategy of working "cooperatively but firmly" is the current operative procedure and has not yielded demonstrable results.

3C: Great idea, but the suggested name could lead to confusion. There is already an "Adopt a Block" Program in which WSU students adopt defined geographic areas (blocks or streets). In this program, long-term residents serve as "block liaisons" by communicating area needs to the group and also signing off on community service hours for the WSU Center for Civic Engagement. Were such a City program implemented the block liaisons might also serve as block monitors (but separate names could be helpful).

3D: Another great idea, but we'd like to see this go a little farther. Currently there is no mechanism in place to let a citizen know that a complaint has been received or what the response has been. We would like the neighborhood blight reporting system to generate a log of complaints and responses similar to the police log.

3F: CHA enthusiastically supports localized zones targeted for property maintenance improvement.

GOAL 4:

- Couldn't the goal of safe and healthy housing be included in **GOAL 3** above? Performing exterior surveys of housing is a great idea and could be coordinated with proactive code enforcement 3A above. There is likely to be a strong correlation between property maintenance issues and housing deficiencies.
- All of the implementation strategies seem helpful, but there was no documentation provided in the Housing Conditions section to demonstrate a significant problem with

unsafe/unhealthy housing. For this to be a distinct goal, shouldn't we know more about the problem that triggered it?

GOAL 5:

Well-maintained infrastructure is another excellent goal for the neighborhood.

- It would be helpful if the neighborhood plan included a schedule of planned infrastructure improvements, perhaps with an illustrative map.
- Could the block monitors (suggested in 3C) be enlisted to perform a comprehensive survey of infrastructure and to suggest improvements?
- Considering that the College Hill Core supports 23% of Pullman's population (and much of its visitor traffic) does it receive its "fair share" of the infrastructure budget?
- This goal is of great interest to area residents, especially WSU students. Could the plan establish an annual planning/progress meeting to facilitate continuous communication and improvement?
- WSU students are actively engaged in raising money for improvements in lighting; are the funds being spent?

GOAL 6:

- Things can always be improved upon, but most College Hill residents (both short- and long-term) seem accepting of a tight parking situation in what is, after all, a relatively urban environment. It would be foolhardy not to plan for parking, but at the same time, let's recognize that any current or future parking issues are an outcome of zoning designations and the constant pressure to build to the maximum-allowable density in a neighborhood that was originally established with single-dwelling houses. If growth is controlled, the demand for parking will be controlled.
- If providing sufficient parking is an important neighborhood goal, then the operative principle should be "First, do no harm". Do not rezone Area B from R2 to R4, which would only exacerbate the already tight parking situation there (92-99% according to the Nelson-Nygaard Parking Study).
- Could WSU work with Alive, marketing courses, etc. on a campaign to discourage bringing cars to campus?
- To improve parking for visitors to Reaney and McGee Parks, consider posting signs with the message "Parking is for Park Visitors Only"

GOAL 7:

For the past several years, CHA has advocated a systematic program of historic preservation as the best strategy for long-term neighborhood revitalization in the College Hill Core. This strategy has been successful in many other communities, especially those in urban environments where there have been significant demographic shifts and where rental housing has become dominant. Unfortunately, the goal of protecting historic resources is given only lip-service in this draft plan.

- Though crucial to Pullman's advancement of historic preservation, CLG is a city-wide program that is entirely *voluntary* and will not necessarily protect ANY historic resources in the College Hill Core.
- In protecting historic resources, the operative principle should again be "First, do no harm." Do not rezone Area B from R2 to R4, which would only result in a loss of historic resources and a lovely residential setting.
- Apply the RT rezone to ALL of the College Hill Historic District (not a portion of it).

- All of the listed implementation strategies are already underway. We should develop goals that take us to the next level.
- The historic preservation goal should given much higher priority in the neighborhood plan because:
 1. the stock of historic buildings in the College Hill Core is one of the neighborhood's great strengths; the neighborhood plan should play to that strength
 2. the need is urgent as deferred maintenance threatens many historic structures, which are an important—and finite—community resources for both the neighborhood and the entire Pullman community
 3. preservation planning will attract new kinds of investors and long-term residents who will improve property conditions
 4. preservation actions will discourage irresponsible use of our community's historic and cultural resources
 5. historic preservation will contribute to the diversity and economic vitality of the entire Pullman community
 6. a critical mass of preservation-minded investors and residents will stabilize the neighborhood and in turn address other goals, including aesthetic and behavioral issues

One could look to many otherwise comparable communities (e.g. Bellingham, Ellensburg, Missoula) to see how a local preservation program can inspire investment and community revitalization to great success. We need to take this step here in Pullman.

Additional implementation strategies should be considered. For example, to slow the rate of demolition, what if the neighborhood plan stipulated that historic buildings in the College Hill Core should be replaced with open space (8A) or well-designed parking lots (6E/6H)? This would serve as an incentive for GOALS 3, 4, & 7 (well-maintained properties, safe housing, historic preservation), but could also help to achieve GOALS 6 & 8 (parking and open space). If parking and open space are important public goods (and clearly they are) then the City may have the right/responsibility to take such action.

GOAL 8:

We support the goal of providing open space in the College Hill Core.

- In the spirit of GOAL 9 (continuous communication and collaboration), we would encourage the City to work closely with neighborhood residents when considering any opportunities to acquire open space.
- Perhaps there would opportunities for public/private partnership in achieving this goal? Pullman Civic Trust?
- If the implementation strategy 6G (fee-based parking concessions) is acceptable, then perhaps developers should be granted similar concessions for providing open space or maintaining a historic façade?

GOAL 9:

We support the goal of continuous communication and collaboration to enhance neighborhood quality. Although we would prefer to mobilize community efforts toward a different strategy of neighborhood improvement (one that is not norms-based), we clearly support the overall goal of cooperation and transparency. Pullman's Planning Department already deserves high marks in this area.

SEP 11 2009

SENT DRAFT
PULLMAN PUBLIC WORKS

1 Eileen Macoll
2 Vice-President, Whitman County Landlord/Tenant Association
3 Sept. 9, Planning Commission Special Meeting
4
5

6 First, a bit of housekeeping. In the future could line numbers be added to
7 these documents. In the interest of time, this would get everyone to the same
8 place in the document more quickly.
9

10 Page 9, para 2 begins a discussion of housing conditions on College Hill.
11 The indented paragraph 3 appears to be an excerpt from that 1997 study.
12

13 The document goes on to explain the inspection program available to the
14 residents of Pullman that is offered through Mr. Colvig's office.
15

16 Unfortunately, There are no results of these inspections included in the report.
17 No indication of what specific life/safety items may have come to light or how
18 they were resolved. For informational purposes this data would have been very
19 helpful.
20

21 This portion of the report leaves the inaccurate and unhealthy impression that
22 nothing has changed since 1997.
23

24 It disregards the effects of the dramatic increase in RENTAL housing stock in
25 the community. Does not take into account the EFFECT in the market of the
26 increase in the vacancy rates. And it ignores the efforts and positive results of
27 the various stakeholders in improving housing on College Hill.
28

29 Certain statistics ARE given on the number of inspections, and if my math is
30 correct this breaks down to only 6 inspections PER YEAR on College Hill.
31 Of the 5,561 residentsthis resolves to .108 , one tenth of one percent, or
32 more simply, because I am running out of fingers and toes, one out of one
33 thousand. But again, there are no results included here so we just don't know
34 what happened in regard to these inspections.
35

36 Page 14, para 2, again refers to the 1997 report and the inspection program
37 but no results are given and refers to the anecdotal evidence on the subject.
38

39 For far too long we have been rattling along on this anecdotal evidence and the
40 emotional but unsubstantiated testimony of individuals before the Commission
41 and City Council. In these times of keen fiscal awareness this is just not good
42 enough. We need to know more about what is really going before allocating
43 taxpayer dollars.
44

45 I would be curious to see a sum total of what the City has spent on the various
46 studies, Studio Cascade, Nillson/Nygaard, the telephone survey, etc. and the
47 staff time spent on meetings such as "Better Neighborhoods for Pullman" and
48 the preparation of this, and other reports. Just curious.....

1
2 **BTW, at the Sept. 3 meeting of the Whitman County Landlord/Tenant**
3 **Association, Judge Douglas Robinson spoke to our group and concluded his**
4 **remarks by saying the he has seen a dramatic DECREASE in the number of**
5 **cases of landlord/tenants disputes of ALL TYPES. And by his lights, this speaks**
6 **loudly to a dramatic IMPROVEMENT in the rental housing climate in Pullman.**
7

8 **Parking**

9

10 **Everyone gets their turn in the barrel on the parking issue, so here I go.....**
11

12 **Two big changes in the Parking situation in general, (and effecting College Hill)**
13 **have occurred since I came here in 1973.. I believe that 1973, or maybe 1972**
14 **was the first year that FRESHMEN were allowed to have cars. The result of**
15 **course, was a whole bunch more cars on campus heretofore not seen. The**
16 **OTHER big change and probably more significant in terms of numbers, is that**
17 **in the late 70's to early 80's there was a dramatic increase in the number of**
18 **WOMEN students who brought cars to school. Maybe we can get an**
19 **anthropologist to tell us why this happened.....but it did happen.**
20

21 **If there is another large pool of potential car users floating around out there,**
22 **I'm not seeing it. Unless perhaps we see a substantial increase in "commuter"**
23 **cars due to increased enrollment of folks living in outlying areas. So I can't**
24 **help but thinking that the parking tsunami is over, and the number of cars**
25 **from here on will hold steady with enrollment.**
26

27 **Page 15, Para 2 does a good job of pointing out the fact that although the**
28 **Nilson/Nygaard study makes mention of the hazards to pedestrians walking on**
29 **College Hill due to parking congestion, accident data DO NOT show that such**
30 **safety issues are actually occurring in the College Hill Core.**
31

32 **I WISH WE HAD the data to illuminate some of the other areas of concern such**
33 **as property safety and maintainance. Good job here on this item, but not**
34 **comprehensive or consistent throughout this document.**
35

36 **On pages 16 through 20 there are dozens of examples of actions that have**
37 **been taken by the City and others, and the positive results to the College Hill**
38 **Community. But on the subject of improvements in the quality and safety of**
39 **rental housing.....the document is SILENT!.**
40

41 **This is inaccurate and unsound. The Rental Housing Committee of the**
42 **Chamber, and more recently the Whitman County Landlord/Tenant Association**
43 **have worked hard in conjunction with property owners, living groups, WSU,**
44 **Pullman PD, Pullman Disposal, and the City of Pullman to identify and address**
45 **concerns on College Hill. I urge the Commission to delve further into this**
46 **troubling deficit of the Draft Plan.**
47
48

1 Pages25 and 26 contain Goals 3 and 4.

2
3 3A. I believe that Chief Weatherly's people ARE engaged in proactive code
4 enforcement and it has made a big difference. I am troubled by the term
5 "observed property maintenance deficiencies" does this mean peeling paint?
6 Or does this refer to life/safety deficiencies? Some definitions to go along with
7 this document would be helpful. There are far too many "terms of art" to suit
8 my taste.

9
10 3C. The most egregious appears in 3C.

11 How do you define an "OFFICAL MONITOR", and does the City have the budget
12 to recruit and train these individuals in the niceties of just what is "sound
13 property maintenance"?

14 Does this include every henhouse, outhouse and doghouse on College Hill?

15 And I would like to ask Mr. Dickinson, Mr. Workman, Mr. Colvig, or Chiefs

16 Dragoo or Weatherly if they have the elbowroom in their budget to

17 administrate this program? What if someone doesn't perform their duties as

18 "official monitor" Who "fires" these folks. Quis custodiet ipsos custodes?

19 But seriously, what if someone gets hurt while on the "job", slips on the ice or

20 whatever, or is overzealous and gets into a problem with a tenant or property

21 owner? I see a world of headache and potential expense to the taxpayers of

22 Pullman for dubious gain.

23
24 3F. However in 3F we have a refreshingly clear coalescence of a lot of
25 meetings and discussion by many stakeholders and that is,

26 **let's get the garbage picked up!**

27 At a recent meeting of the Chamber Rental Housing Committee various

28 landlords and property managers of some of the larger complexes implored

29 Pullman Disposal to JUST PICK IT UP, send the bill, we'll pay it, and sort out

30 the details later. We just can't have garbage piling up everywhere! I won't get

31 into the recycling issue.....let others have their turn.

32
33 **AS WE MOVE INTO SECTION 4.....**

34 4. Section 4 also addresses the issue of safe and healthy housing, but speaks
35 with a very different voice than the previous section. This section reiterates
36 the information about the voluntary housing inspection program and sensibly
37 refers to actual building code violations, as actionable by city agencies. A
38 refreshing contrast to the previous section, which was a little vapoious.

39
40 4C. The Whitman County Landlord/Tenant Association strongly promotes an
41 educational program for ALL landlords and property managers. An example of
42 this program is that we provide for and insist that our members COMPLY with
43 Washington State Law, in that a CHECK-IN/CONDITION report form MUST BE
44 COMPLETED with the LEASE for every tenant in every living situation.

45
46 **THIS IS THE LAW OF THE LAND!!** It is ILLEGAL to collect or retain a damage
47 or security deposit without this important paperwork that protects both

1 parties. The State of Washington requires basic health/life/safety items to be
2 covered in this document. THIS IS NOT OPTIONAL. IT'S THE LAW!

3
4 *As a benefit of membership, the Whitman County Landlord/Tenant Association*
5 *provides sample forms to our folks, but other examples are available from*
6 *other sources.*

7
8 Many of our members provide a tenant handbook that contains all the nuts and
9 bolts information about living off campus in Pullman, and additionally stresses
10 good citizenship, and community involvement. Landlords cannot be
11 babysitters or law enforcement officers. We must respect the civil rights of
12 our tenants.

13
14 I'm not saying that there are not deficiencies and that some things slip through
15 the cracks. But let's not establish broad brush policies where they are not
16 needed, or institutionalize expensive redundancies.

17
18 1G. I know I promised I would do this but lets touch on item 1G of the goals.
19 "Promoting the use of eviction by landlords in appropriate cases."
20 People can only be evicted under a very narrow set of legal
21 circumstances. They must not be denied DUE PROCESS OF LAW and
22 this can easily take six months to a year to actually remove someone.
23 Repeated violations of the nuisance ordinance or numerous complaints
24 from neighbors is NOT grounds for eviction.

25
26 9C. Page 30 calls for increased transparency between the City, WSU and other
27 stakeholders. BRAVO! The meetings of the Landlord/Tenant Assoc. will
28 always be open to guests and interested parties who would like to get to know
29 us or have something specific to share. And I call upon other stakeholder
30 organizations to come into accord with this open door policy.

31
32 I thank the Commission for their time and indulgence.....We have a long
33 way to go here, but there is much more positive than negative at this point.

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35
36 Respectfully submitted,

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39 Eileen Macoll
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RECVD FAXED

Pullman Planning Commission
City Hall
Pullman, WA 99163

SEP 17 2009

September 16, 2009

SENT DRAFT
PULLMAN PUBLIC WORKS

Re: Comments on "College Hill Tomorrow"

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the recently released draft of "College Hill Tomorrow." I think this is a well written document and that it contains some interesting concepts that, as a citizen of Pullman, I support. I appreciate the work that went into creating this report. It does a good job chronicling and articulating ideas and thoughts that have been discussed in various meetings over the last 20+ years. I applaud the City Planners for their work on this document.

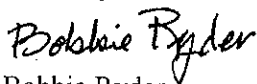
I spoke at the meeting held September 9th and decided to follow my testimony with a letter explaining more clearly what I said at the meeting. There are two items that I find problematic in the document and both are related. The first is that there is no substantive information about infrastructure. We know that what is underground is old and was built to support single family housing. Some of the infrastructure runs under the large and beautiful trees on College Hill. More detailed information about the infrastructure is needed.

The second concern I have is about the definitive statement to rezone from R-2 to R-4. In my comments, I used the analogy about up zoning being like an animal that eats it's young because up zoning disproportionately raises the prices of real estate, which has a counterproductive spiral effect. By raising prices of single family homes that cannot be rented out to cover the mortgages new buyers will inevitably incur, the houses soon become teardowns so that higher density housing can take the place of the historic homes. If the homes are rented, the rents are quite high. Either way, the ones who are hurt are the students and the tax payers. The students pay higher rent, citizens pay higher taxes for the infrastructure upgrades to meet the demands of the increased density. Additionally, when upgrades occur, those beautiful trees we all love are cut down or slowly decline and die because infrastructure runs below the roots which are disrupted when major upgrades tear apart the streets and sidewalks.

What is needed is to **keep the R2 zone** and to establish **Design Standards**. Just as narrow streets act as a traffic calming device, large trees and beautiful older houses with single car garages act to keep density under control. Real estate prices are stabilized. Rent for students is affordable. There remains hope that owner occupants will take the initiative to restore older homes and urban revitalization is a possibility. This is "Smart Growth." Up-zoning would close the door on any chance of keeping College Hill a neighborhood at the heart of our community. The only winners with up zoning are the developers and rental companies, which have run rough-shot over this neighborhood entirely too long. Increasing density is not a one-size-fits-all solution. It only ensures higher taxes, higher rents, and loss of an historic neighborhood as developers try to design and rebuild "on the cheap," which is ironically very expensive. At the meeting most of the people who spoke to this issue were against rezoning or at best resolved to it, but they didn't really know why. The misperceptions about the economic side of up-zoning and the lack of knowledge about infrastructure are serious weaknesses in the plan.

Thank you for creating a concise document to help citizens work through this important planning process.

Sincerely,



Bobbie Ryder
800 NW Larry Street
Pullman, WA 99163

ATTACHMENT "C"