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Dear Springfield City Council,

I would like this letter to be included as part of the record of your meeting on March 16, 2010

Studies in the Portland area have revealed an interesting fact that we know was mirrored in the Eugene area. Portland expanded their Urban Growth Boundary to include some less desirable land areas while restricting the annexation of more desirable land areas. This was an attempt to promote building in those less desirable areas. The result was that people started buying houses in Vancouver, WA. These results placed a heavier load on their already taxed road system. This, in the long run, will cost more in road repairs and road expansion.

Another less obvious result is fuel consumption and emissions. One household, two working adults driving an extra 20 miles is 80 miles a day, or 10,000 miles each year. I don't know what effect this has on the ozone but I would seem that in their effort to economies in land use they generated an unexpected ecological issue.

Eugene ran into the same issues but with perhaps some far reaching economic residue as well. In 2007, because Eugene had restricted expansion, the price of a buildable lot in Springfield more than doubled, our lot prices went from 25,000 to over 60,000 almost overnight. Because of Eugene's stance on expansion over the years, subdivisions have sprung up in Harrisburg, Junction City, Veneta and Creswell. These houses were bought primarily by people working in Eugene. All of these subdivisions were built on flat fertile farmable ground.

One lesson we could learn is that when people can't find what they want or need at one store they drive down the street to the next, especially if it is on SALE.

I would like to comment on the type of land that is presently in the cities inventory, it seems a large portion hillside. If we could take time to consider the hillside developments that already exist.....

1. Mc Kenzie Hills at South 72nd. is over 30 years old and still has buildable lots available, average price would be over 300,000
2. Mountaingate has been open for I believe 5 years and has a long way to go before it is full. Average price would be 450,000

When we compare that to flat land subdivisions it is plain to see that there is a major difference.

Levi Landing was, I believe, full within 2 years and that was before the height of the construction boom hit.

Hayden Homes has not stopped building homes even in the current downturn. Their average price home is around 165,000

Bruce Wiechert has 5 new starts in his subdivision off Jasper road modestly priced.

I respectfully ask that consideration be given to the ratio between hillside lots (more expensive housing) and flat land lots (moderate priced homes). I don't believe that the existing inventory represents the real picture, in other words we cannot expect half of the houses built in this city over the next 20 years to be hillside homes.

The construction boom starting in the late 1970s was due to population growth, the baby boomers. Prices soared because demand was high we saw rapid inflation followed by a recession. We are in the middle of another baby boom right now.

The construction boom in late 2000, was caused not by population but by changes in the availability of mortgage money, or the relaxing of requirements to obtain a mortgage. People bought more than they could afford leading to a collapse and recession.

I would encourage you to look at the enrollment in our schools for a more accurate needs analysis and since we are in the middle of a baby boom looking to historical data will not give us a realistic view of the demands we will face in the next ten years. Our schools are bursting at the seams and the increase in students is much more than your current projected growth rate which was used in your population study. We may be placing our children in a difficult spot if we don't prepare for their entrance into the market.

In conclusion I want to say history shows that we have been unsuccessful in directing the flow of construction into less than desirable areas. This is driven by economic forces and a family need, not by what or where it is mandated. I believe that environmentally we should encourage people to stay in the urban areas by presenting them with attractive housing that meets their needs. I ask that you review historical data regarding the construction of new homes in the city of Springfield to compile a realistic ratio of hillside vs. flat land homes built in the last ten years. It is my belief that we may already have as many hillside lots as we can expect people to build on in the next twenty years, but I know that there are not enough flat lots!

I am a member of the Mahogany Neighbors group and we have around 200 acres of flat easily accessible buildable land. Our collective ownership also is near current city services. I purchased 20 acres in this neighborhood after listening to all the things that the city was saying in the Register Guard and on local news stations regarding the need to expand their urban growth boundary to continue to offer affordable housing. I don't believe that the current plans that you are discussing adopting provide that. I continue to hope that you will reconsider your residential land needs not just commercial needs. I think that there are several areas that will offer Springfield affordable housing options.