

To All Concerned:

My wife Dee and I have owned and operated Village Books in the Fairhaven urban core for nearly 32 years. We have also owned and operated Paper Dreams for nearly 30 years. In addition, we live in the middle of the core, at 1010 Mill Avenue, #302, above our bookstore. We are parties of record for the Fairhaven Urban Village Plan.

We are firm believers in the designation of Fairhaven as a tier one urban village and believe that all planning efforts should be aimed at facilitating its development as a regional urban commercial center, which it has become over the time we have lived and operated here.

For that to happen, it's essential that small businesses and developers who will provide places for small businesses have very clear rules governing the development of the urban corps. The rules must allow buildings which are economically feasible to build and operate and which will provide reasonable rents for tenants.

I am concerned that vague references within the draft plan do not provide those clear rules or expectations and that they will not only inhibit the proper development of the corps, but will embroil the City of Bellingham in distracting and costly litigation—something we went through with the development of our building.

I am equally concerned that the plan is not sufficiently specific to protect the residential neighborhoods surrounding the core, and that specific language needs to be adopted that fits the vision of the community.

While I understand that resources are limited and there is a concerted effort to complete this plan this year (an objective we certainly support), I would urge that the quality of the product of this planning process should be the prime objective. It will guide development decisions in the core for at least two decades—and, likely, longer.

Thank you for seeking the input of all concerned citizens. I will submit further comments at future official public hearings.

Sincerely,

Chuck Robinson
Co-owner, Village Books & Paper Dreams