How About *Centers and Communities* Instead of Centers and Corridors?

*Are Spanaway and Parkland really ready for 8 story buildings in the next ten years? When the Centers and Corridors proposal comes back to the county council this spring we think the plan should be changed to become a *Centers and Communities* proposal, that allows the neighbors to decide how the next building boom will shape their communities.*

*With funding available to convert Spanaway into a Transit Oriented community, the only way to increase the number of dwellings per acre to support a transit system will be to re-develop the single story homes and business along the transit route. This is a harbinger of how the face of Parkland and Spanaway will change the look and feel of the community over the next 10 years.*

This coming transition from suburbia to urban high-rises will create friction for people who invested in this suburban lifestyle. The Growth Management tools that we used to curb suburban sprawl and try to make these neighborhoods and communities more livable with more parks and services, is no longer capable of containing this next land boom of 94,000 people county-wide.

Tall buildings are going to challenge us to maintain bird habitat and keep clear creeks flowing. The priority will be to build affordable housing for displaced people gentrified out of their homes. Only in apartment buildings of four stories or less will the price be low enough for graduating high school students to afford independent housing with their minimum wage jobs.

New tall buildings and the runoff from large parking lots will pollute local creeks in winter. Those same creeks will then run dry in summer, with the extremes of changing climate that have brought droughts to Lakewood in recent years.
There is an opportunity to solve both pollution and runoff water problems by incorporating rain gardens along the borders of parking lots and in apartment courtyards. These leafy and attractive installations can soften the view of the three-story structures and also recharge the aquifers below them.

Livability is an important component to consider. For transit-oriented development to succeed, a system of bike lanes and sidewalks are required. These will make it easier for students to walk or bike to neighborhood schools and other folks to stroll down for coffee or lunch.

The failure of the previous Centers and Corridors plan was that it remapped the County's Urban Growth Area in a way that valued highest commercial use, over the community interests of the current residents.

The tension between the need to use our remaining urban lands more efficiently with high rises and the needs of the residents who own property can be resolved after an appeal by Futurewise and others has returned the center proposal back to the Pierce County Council for revision.

People who survived the last two land booms need a say in their future. They have poured their taxes into building several high schools, new parks, neighborhood libraries and expanded fire districts for an urban area of 215,000 people.

Now is the time to get involved in re-writing the Center and Corridors Proposal into a solution that builds community, focused on life in the community, rather than a priority on commercial development along sprawling corridors.