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December 17, 2020

Mr. Claude Pierret, Chairperson  
Franklin County Planning Commission  
Franklin County Planning Department  
Attn: Derrick Braaten  
502 W. Boeing Street  
Pasco, Washington 99301

Dear Chairperson Pierret and Planning Commissioners:

**Subject: Comments on proposed City of Pasco Urban Growth Area (UGA) Expansion Request, Franklin County file # CPA 2018-03.**

Sent via email to: [planninginquiry@co.franklin.wa.us](mailto:planninginquiry@co.franklin.wa.us)

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on proposed Pasco UGA Expansion. Futurewise works throughout Washington State to support land-use policies that encourage healthy, equitable, and opportunity-rich communities, and that protect our most valuable farmlands, forests, and water resources. Futurewise has members across Washington State including Franklin County.

Futurewise has been engaged in the Pasco UGA expansion and comprehensive plan for a couple of years and we have raised issues about the expansion into agricultural lands. We are asking the Franklin County Planning Commission to recommend denial of this expansion of the City of Pasco UGA into valuable agricultural lands and onto areas that adversely affect the operations of the Tri-Cities Airport. In addition, the City's growth can be accommodated in other ways such as the new zoning amendments being considered by the City of Pasco.

## The benefits of Urban Growth Areas (UGAs)

The Growth Management Act (GMA) requires urban growth areas and limits their size for many reasons. **One of the most important is that compact urban growth areas (UGAs) save taxpayers and ratepayers money.** In a study published in a peer reviewed journal, John Carruthers and Gudmaundur Ulfarsson analyzed urban areas throughout the United States including Benton County.<sup>1</sup> They found that the per capita costs of most public services declined with density and increased where urban areas were large.<sup>2</sup> **Compact urban growth areas save taxpayers and ratepayers money.**

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<sup>1</sup> John Carruthers and Gudmaundur Ulfarsson, *Urban Sprawl and the Cost of Public Services* 30 ENVIRONMENT AND PLANNING B: PLANNING AND DESIGN 503, 511 (2003) enclosed with this letter with the filename: "Urban sprawl and the cost of public services.pdf."

<sup>2</sup> *Id.* at 518.



**Compact urban growth areas also help conserve water long-term.** Large lots and low densities increase water demand, increase leakage from water systems, and increase costs to water system customers.<sup>3</sup> So accommodating the same population and jobs in the existing UGA can reduce future water demands and costs.<sup>4</sup>

**Urban growth areas encourage housing growth in cities and protect rural and resource lands.** To examine the effect of King County, Washington’s urban growth areas on the timing of land development, Cunningham looked at real property data, property sales data, and geographic information systems (GIS) data. These records include 500,000 home sales and 163,000 parcels that had the potential to be developed from 1984 through 2001.<sup>5</sup> Cunningham concluded that “[t]his paper presents compelling evidence that the enactment of a growth boundary reduced development in designated rural areas and increased construction in urban areas, which suggests that the Growth Management Act is achieving its intended effect of concentrating housing growth.”<sup>6</sup> He also concluded that by removing uncertainty as to the highest and best use of the land that it accelerated housing development in King County.<sup>7</sup> This study was published in a peer reviewed journal.

Reducing development in rural areas and natural resource lands can also have significant environmental benefits, such as protecting water quality, working farms and forests, and fish and wildlife habitat.

One of the most controversial issues related to urban growth areas is whether the restricted land supply causes increases in housing costs. Carruthers, in another peer reviewed study, examined the evidence for the Portland urban growth area and concluded that it was not increasing housing costs because the city’s high-density zoning allowed the construction of an abundant housing supply.<sup>8</sup>

**Urban growth areas help keep our existing cities and towns vibrant and economically desirable.** In a peer reviewed study, Dawkins and Nelson found that the city of Yakima’s share of the metropolitan housing market increased after adoption of the GMA.<sup>9</sup> This and other measures showed that center cities in states with growth management laws attract greater shares of the metropolitan area’s housing market than center cities in states without growth management aiding center city revitalization.<sup>10</sup> This reduces the tendency to move out of existing center cities.

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<sup>3</sup> United States Environmental Protection Agency, *Growing Toward More Efficient Water Use: Linking Development, Infrastructure, and Drinking Water Policies* pp. 3 – 5 (EPA 230-R-06-001: January 2006) last accessed on Dec. 17, 2020 at: <https://www.epa.gov/smartgrowth/growing-toward-more-efficient-water-use>.

<sup>4</sup> *Id.* at p. 8.

<sup>5</sup> Christopher R. Cunningham, *Growth Controls, Real Options, and Land Development* 89 THE REVIEW OF ECONOMICS AND STATISTICS 343, 343 (2007).

<sup>6</sup> *Id.* at 356.

<sup>7</sup> *Id.* at 356 – 57.

<sup>8</sup> John I. Carruthers, *The Impacts of State Growth Management Programmes: A Comparative Analysis* 39 URBAN STUDIES 1959, 1976 (2002). Carruthers included Washington’s GMA in his analysis but concluded that it was too early to tell if it was successful since it had only been in place for seven years in the data he analyzed, but he believed the GMA had promise if “consistently enforced.” *Id.* at 1977.

<sup>9</sup> Casey J. Dawkins & Arthur C. Nelson, *State Growth Management Programs and Central-City Revitalization*, 69 Journal of the American Planning Association 381, 386 (2003).

<sup>10</sup> *Id.* at 392 – 93 (2003).





**Urban growth areas promote healthy lifestyles.** Aytur, Rodriguez, Evenson, and Catellier conducted a statistical analysis of leisure and transportation-related physical activity in 63 large metropolitan statistical areas, including Seattle, Tacoma, and Spokane from 1990 to 2002.<sup>11</sup> Their peer reviewed study found a positive association between residents' leisure time physical activity and walking and bicycling to work and “strong” urban containment policies such as those in Washington State.<sup>12</sup>

**Compact urban growth areas, because they allow shorter automobile trips and encourage walking, bicycling, and transit use, reduce per capita greenhouse gas emissions,** such as CO<sub>2</sub>. In Washington State, transportation activities are the largest contributor to greenhouse gas emissions, generating 44.6 percent of our state's global warming causing gases.<sup>13</sup> The Washington Climate Advisory Team (CAT) wrote that we must reduce the amount of driving we do if we are going to meet the state's greenhouse gas emissions requirements.<sup>14</sup> A new peer-reviewed scientific paper has documented that to meet the necessary reductions in greenhouse gas pollution higher residential densities are needed.<sup>15</sup> Nationally, densities must increase on average by 19 percent.<sup>16</sup> The paper concluded this can be achieved by a “mix of small apartment buildings and modest single-family homes ...”<sup>17</sup> These are exactly the housing types that the City of Pasco is considering adding to their development regulation that have the potential to substantially increase the city's zoning capacity, as discussed below under heading, “The City of Pasco is considering development regulation amendments that will increase residential capacity and will reduce or, potentially, eliminate the need for the UGA expansions.”

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<sup>11</sup> Semra A. Aytur, Daniel A. Rodriguez, Kelly R. Evenson, & Diane J. Catellier, *Urban Containment Policies and Physical Activity: A Time-Series Analysis of Metropolitan Areas, 1990–2002* 34 AMERICAN JOURNAL OF PREVENTIVE MEDICINE 320, 325 (2008) last accessed on Dec. 17, 2020 at:

[https://scholars.unh.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1001&context=hmp\\_facpub..](https://scholars.unh.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1001&context=hmp_facpub..)

<sup>12</sup> *Id.* at 330.

<sup>13</sup> State of Washington Department of Ecology, *2017 greenhouse gas data* webpage last accessed on Dec. 17, 2020 at:

<https://ecology.wa.gov/Air-Climate/Climate-change/Greenhouse-gases/2017-greenhouse-gas-data>; *Leading the Way: A Comprehensive Approach to Reducing Greenhouse Gases in Washington State Recommendations of the Washington Climate Advisory Team* p. 57 (Feb. 1, 2008) last accessed on Dec. 17, 2020 at:

<https://fortress.wa.gov/ecy/publications/SummaryPages/0801008b.html>.

<sup>14</sup> *Leading the Way: A Comprehensive Approach to Reducing Greenhouse Gases in Washington State Recommendations of the Washington Climate Advisory Team* p. 57 (Feb. 1, 2008).

<sup>15</sup> Benjamin Goldstein, Dimitrios Gounaridis, and Joshua P. Newell, *The carbon footprint of household energy use in the United States* 117 PROCEEDINGS OF THE NATIONAL ACADEMY OF SCIENCES OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA (PNAS) 19122, p. 19122 (Aug. 11, 2020) last accessed on Dec. 17, 2020 at: <https://www.pnas.org/content/117/32/19122> and enclosed on the data CD included with the paper original of this letter with the filename: “19122.full.pdf.” PNAS is a peer-reviewed journal. PNAS Author Center last accessed on Dec. 17, 2020 at: <https://www.pnas.org/authors> and enclosed on the data CD included with the paper original of this letter with the filename: “Author Center \_ PNAS.pdf.”

<sup>16</sup> Benjamin Goldstein, Dimitrios Gounaridis, and Joshua P. Newell, *The carbon footprint of household energy use in the United States* 117 PROCEEDINGS OF THE NATIONAL ACADEMY OF SCIENCES OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA (PNAS) 19122, p. 19128 (Aug. 11, 2020).

<sup>17</sup> *Id.*





## The proposed UGA expansion paves over working farms designated by Franklin County as agricultural lands of long-term commercial significance

Franklin County has designated most of the land in the proposed UGA expansions as agricultural lands of long-term commercial significance. The Franklin County Growth Management Comprehensive Plan<sup>18</sup>, adopted February 27, 2008, on page 93 says:

“In Franklin County agricultural lands of long-term commercial significance are soil classification 1-3 according to the Land Capability Classification of the USDA Soil Conservation service. Further, the County’s Prime, Unique and of State and Local Significance soils as generally shown and mapped by the Franklin Conservation District on Map 8, are also described as agricultural lands of long-term commercial significance in Franklin County.”

Map 8 is on page 96, is entitled Agricultural Lands, and shows large areas included in the proposed UGA expansion as Agricultural Lands. These areas consist of large parcels well suited to agriculture.<sup>19</sup>

Furthermore, in a new report, the American Farmland Trust has identified much of the UGA expansions as “nationally significant agricultural land.”<sup>20</sup> Nationally significant agricultural land is a designation for farmland that is best suited for long-term cultivation and food production.<sup>21</sup> It was developed by the *Farms Under Threat* study in consultation with experts.<sup>22</sup> The report exposes the threats facing working farms and policy efforts, state by state, to slow the pace. The U.S. Department of Agriculture Natural Resources Conservation Service identifies 2,898.6 acres, 83.5 percent of the proposed UGA expansions, as prime farmland and farmland of statewide importance.<sup>23</sup> These are U.S. Department of Agriculture classifications for highly productive

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<sup>18</sup> *Franklin County Growth Management Comprehensive Plan* p. 96 (Agricultural Lands map) (Adopted Feb. 27, 2008 Resolution Number 2008-089) accessed on Dec. 17, 2020 at: [http://www.co.franklin.wa.us/planning/documents/2008ComprehensivePlan-Entirepdfwebsite\\_000.pdf](http://www.co.franklin.wa.us/planning/documents/2008ComprehensivePlan-Entirepdfwebsite_000.pdf) and on the data CD enclosed with the paper version of this letter with the filename: “2008ComprehensivePlan-Entirepdfwebsite Franklin Cty.pdf.”

<sup>19</sup> Franklin County, WA online parcel map last accessed on Dec. 17, 2020 at: <https://franklinassessor.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=1c0b3e3a373841cca3472986794aa073> and on the data CD enclosed with the paper version of this letter with the filename: “2020-12-17 Franklin County Parcel Map.pdf.”

<sup>20</sup> American Farmland Trust, *Farms Under Threat Washington* webpage last accessed on Dec. 17, 2020 at: <https://csp-fut.appspot.com/> and map of nationally significant farmland is on the data CD enclosed with the paper version of this letter with the filename: “ATF National Significant Farmland North of Pasco.pdf.”

<sup>21</sup> Julia Freedgood, Mitch Hunter, Jennifer Dempsey, and Ann Sorensen, *Farms Under Threat: The State of the States* p. 64 (American Farmland Trust: 2020) accessed on Dec. 17, 2020 at: [https://s30428.pcdn.co/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2020/09/AFT\\_FUT\\_StateoftheStates\\_rev.pdf](https://s30428.pcdn.co/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2020/09/AFT_FUT_StateoftheStates_rev.pdf) and on the data CD enclosed with the paper version of this letter with the filename: “AFT\_FUT\_StateoftheStates\_rev.pdf.”

<sup>22</sup> *Id.*

<sup>23</sup> Soils Pasco Proposed Urban Growth Area (UGA) Expansion June 2020 on the data CD enclosed with the paper version of this letter with the filename: “Soils Pasco Proposed Urban Growth Area (UGA) Expansion June 2020.xlsx;” Soil Map—Franklin County, Washington (Pasco UGA Expansion NW Part) pp. 1 – 23 (6/4/2020) on the data CD enclosed with the paper version of this letter with the filename: “Pasco NW UGA Expansion Soil\_Map.pdf” and in a





farmland.<sup>24</sup> As the above quotation shows, they are also designated by Franklin County as agricultural lands of long-term commercial significance.<sup>25</sup> Most of the land in the UGA expansion alternatives are also currently used for agricultural production.<sup>26</sup>

“Since before statehood, fertile soils, available irrigation water, sunny skies and long summer daylight hours have made agriculture a cornerstone for economic development” in Franklin County.<sup>27</sup> The American Farmland Trust estimates that between 2001 and 2016, 97,800 acres of agricultural land was converted in Washington State “enough land to generate \$61 million in annual revenue.”<sup>28</sup> Given the economic value of agriculture to the City of Pasco and Franklin County and the productivity of the farmland in the proposed UGA expansions, we urge the City Council to deny the proposed UGA expansions.

In addition to these important policy reasons for not paving over farmland, the Growth Management Act (GMA) prohibits including agricultural lands of long-term commercial significance within an UGA unless the county or city has a purchase or transfer or development rights program adopted and implemented for those lands and they are protected as agricultural lands of long-term commercial significance.<sup>29</sup> We were unable to find a purchase or transfer of development rights program or agricultural comprehensive plan designation or zone in either the Pasco Municipal Code or the newly adopted comprehensive plan. So it is not legal to include the agricultural lands of long-term commercial significance in the UGA to comply with the Growth Management Act and to maintain Franklin County’s economically important agricultural industry.

## The proposed UGA expansions will interfere with future expansion of the Tri-Cities Airport and bring residences closer to the airport, making operations more difficult and adversely impacting the new residents

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separate email; Soil Map—Franklin County, Washington (Pasco UGA Expansion NE Part) pp. 1 – 28 (6/4/2020) on the data CD enclosed with the paper version of this letter with the filename: “Pasco NE UGA Expansion Soil\_Map.pdf” and in a separate email.

<sup>24</sup> 7 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) § 657.5(a) & (c).

<sup>25</sup> *Franklin County Growth Management Comprehensive Plan* p. 93, p. 96 (Agricultural Lands map) (Adopted Feb. 27, 2008 Resolution Number 2008-089).

<sup>26</sup> Soil Map—Franklin County, Washington (Pasco UGA Expansion NW Part) p. 1 (6/4/2020); Soil Map—Franklin County, Washington (Pasco UGA Expansion NE Part) p. 1; American Farmland Trust, *Land Cover and Use* (2016) on the data CD enclosed with the paper version of this letter with the filename: “AFT Existing Use 2016.pdf.”

<sup>27</sup> *Economic Development Plan Franklin County, Washington* Res. 2016-211 p. 5 last accessed on Dec. 17, 2020 at: [http://www.co.franklin.wa.us/planning/documents/2016EconDevPlan\\_May\\_2019.pdf](http://www.co.franklin.wa.us/planning/documents/2016EconDevPlan_May_2019.pdf) on the data CD enclosed with the paper version of this letter with the filename: “2016EconDevPlan\_May\_2019.pdf.”

<sup>28</sup> American Farmland Trust, *Farms Under Threat: The State of the States Agricultural Land Conversion Highlight Summary Washington* p. \*2 (2020) accessed on Dec. 17, 2020 at: [https://storage.googleapis.com/csp-fut.appspot.com/reports/spatial/Washington\\_spatial.pdf](https://storage.googleapis.com/csp-fut.appspot.com/reports/spatial/Washington_spatial.pdf) on the data CD enclosed with the paper version of this letter with the filename: “Washington\_spatial.pdf.”

<sup>29</sup> RCW 36.70A.060; *Futurewise v. Benton County and the City of Kennewick and the Kennewick Industrial District, LLC*, Eastern Washington Region Growth Management Hearings Board Case No. 14-1-0003, Final Decision and Order (Oct. 15, 2014), at 30 – 36 of 38.





Like the high-quality farmland, the Tri-Cities Airport is an important regional economic asset.<sup>30</sup> Unfortunately the UGA expansion will cutoff future expansion opportunities at the north end of the runway.<sup>31</sup> The area at the end of the airport immediately west of Road 44 and north of Burns is designated Low Density Residential by the City of Pasco.<sup>32</sup> The planned residential uses close to the airport will adversely impact the operations of the airport and the airport operations will adversely impact the residential uses.<sup>33</sup> In contrast to residential uses, agricultural uses are compatible with airport operations.<sup>34</sup> “Agricultural use of land near an airport permits the owner of the property to efficiently use land while providing an additional benefit to the community for airport protection.”<sup>35</sup> This is another reason to recommend denial of the UGA expansion.

### The City of Pasco is considering development regulation amendments that will increase residential capacity and will reduce or, potentially, eliminate the need for the UGA expansions

The Washington State Supreme Court has held that a “UGA designation cannot exceed the amount of land necessary to accommodate the urban growth projected by the [State of Washington Office of Financial Management] OFM, plus a reasonable land market supply factor.”<sup>36</sup> In other words, the UGA expansion must be needed to accommodate Pasco’s growth. The City of Pasco is currently considering three development regulation amendments that have the potential to substantially increase the city’s zoning capacity. These amendments are to:

- Allow at least one duplex, triplex or courtyard apartment on each parcel in one more residential zoning districts;
- Allow cluster zoning (lot size averaging) in all zoning districts that permit single-family residences;

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<sup>30</sup> “The Tri-Cities Airport (PSC) is the largest airport in the Southeastern Washington and Northeastern Oregon region and the fourth largest air carrier airport in the state of Washington with connections to eight major hubs.” Port of Pasco, Tri-Cities Airport • PSC webpage accessed on Dec. 17, 2020 at: <https://www.flytricity.com/> and enclosed on the data CD included with the paper original of this letter with the filename: “Tri-Cities Airport webpage part.pdf.”

<sup>31</sup> City of Pasco, LU-1 Future Land Use Map last accessed on Dec. 17, 2020 at <https://www.pasco-wa.gov/DocumentCenter/View/62156/Map-Folio-Updated> and enclosed on the data CD included with the paper original of this letter with the filename: “Map Folio Updated.pdf.”

<sup>32</sup> City of Pasco, LU-1 Future Land Use Map.

<sup>33</sup> FAA Southern Region Compatible Land Use Planning Task Force, *Land Use Compatibility and Airports* p. i, pp. V-10 – V-11, p. V-30 last accessed on Dec. 17, 2020 at:

[https://www.faa.gov/about/office\\_org/headquarters\\_offices/apl/noise\\_emissions/planning\\_toolkit/](https://www.faa.gov/about/office_org/headquarters_offices/apl/noise_emissions/planning_toolkit/) and enclosed on the data CD included with the paper original of this letter with the filename: “Land Use Compatibility and Airports.pdf;” Washington State Department of Transportation Aviation Division, *Airports and Compatible Land Use Volume 1* pp. 38 – 43 (Feb. 1999) last accessed on Dec. 17, 2020 at:

[https://www.faa.gov/about/office\\_org/headquarters\\_offices/apl/noise\\_emissions/planning\\_toolkit/](https://www.faa.gov/about/office_org/headquarters_offices/apl/noise_emissions/planning_toolkit/) and enclosed on the data CD included with the paper original of this letter with the filename: “WSDOT Airports and Compatible Land Use Vol 1.pdf.”

<sup>34</sup> FAA Southern Region Compatible Land Use Planning Task Force, *Land Use Compatibility and Airports* p. V-11.

<sup>35</sup> *Id.*

<sup>36</sup> *Thurston County v. Western Washington Growth Management Hearings Bd.*, 164 Wn.2d 329, 351 – 52, 190 P.3d 38, 48 – 49 (2008) (emphasis added).



- Allow attached and detached accessory dwelling units (ADUs) on all parcels containing single-family residences.<sup>37</sup>

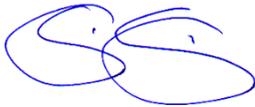
Because much of the City of Pasco is zoned for low-density single-family dwellings, these changes could substantially increase the residential capacity of the City.<sup>38</sup> The City of Pasco Land Capacity Analysis did not include any of this increased capacity.<sup>39</sup> The City must decide whether to adopt these amendments by June 15, 2021.<sup>40</sup> Given the large size of the proposed UGA expansions, 3,488 acres, that these amendments will be decided in six months, and that some or all of these amendments may be applied to the residential UGA expansion area,<sup>41</sup> the Planning Commission should not recommend adoption of the UGA expansions until the additional capacity to be created by these amendments is known. This will help determine whether the full UGA expansion is needed.

Thank you for considering our comments. If you require additional information, please contact Alison Cable at telephone (206) 343-0681 Ext. 114 and email: [alison@futurewise.org](mailto:alison@futurewise.org) or Tim Trohimovich at telephone (206) 343-0681 Ext. 102 and email: [tim@futurewise.org](mailto:tim@futurewise.org).

Very Truly Yours,



Alison Cable  
**Tri-Cities Program Manager**



Tim Trohimovich, AICP  
**Director of Planning & Law**

cc: Rick White, City of Pasco Community and Economic Development Director  
Jacob Gonzalez, City of Pasco Senior Planner

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<sup>37</sup> Memorandum to Planning Commission from City of Pasco Subject: CA2020-001- House Bill 1923 (Duplex, Triplex & Courtyard Apartments) & CA2020-002- House Bill 1923 (Average Lot Size) pp. 1 (Oct. 15, 2020) accessed on Dec. 17, 2020 at: <https://egov-pasco.com/weblink/DocView.aspx?id=914872&dbid=0&cr=1> and enclosed on the data CD included with the paper original of this letter with the filename: "10-15-2020 Pasco PC Meeting Packet Memo on CA2020-001 & CA2020-002.pdf."

<sup>38</sup> *Id.* pp. 4 – 6.

<sup>39</sup> *City of Pasco Comprehensive Plan 2018-2038* Appendix C Land Capacity Analysis City of Pasco, Washington pp. 3 – 6 last accessed on Dec. 17, 2020 at: <https://www.pasco-wa.gov/DocumentCenter/View/61799/Appendix-C-City-of-Pasco-Land-Capacity-Analysis> and enclosed on the data CD included with the paper original of this letter with the filename: "Appendix C City of Pasco Land Capacity Analysis\_20200514.pdf."

<sup>40</sup> Memorandum to Planning Commission from City of Pasco Subject: CA2020-001- House Bill 1923 (Duplex, Triplex & Courtyard Apartments) & CA2020-002- House Bill 1923 (Average Lot Size) pp. 1 (Oct. 15, 2020).

<sup>41</sup> City of Pasco, LU-1 Future Land Use Map.