

Helen Jackson
1232 Franklin Street
Bellingham WA 98225

July 28, 2010

Planning Commission
City of Bellingham
210 Lottie Street
Bellingham WA 98225

Dear Commissioners:

In a recent meeting with York Neighborhood Association representatives Jeff Thomas, Interim Planning Director, asked if the York Neighborhood Association had a previous agreement with the Planning Department to support the Rezone of Area 9 in exchange for YNA's support of infill in other areas of the York Neighborhood. No previous agreement exists, but we thought this would be evident in our proposals. We did relate that infill in three Areas (1, 2 and 8) and the rezone of Area 9 was a compromise made by approximately 200 participating neighborhood stakeholders, who have varying and opposing opinions about infill in York, in order to reach a consensus both at the neighborhood level, and in consideration of GMA and City Comprehensive Plan goals.

It appears that the limited Planning Staff time allotted for the YNA Plan Update may have prevented support for our proposal of a Rezone for Area 9. If Staff had been able to regularly participate in this lengthy process (where we voted to include Area 8 in the Samish Way Urban Village and worked during the process to resolve neighborhood concerns and continued support, requested reduced parking in Area 2 to add infill, and voted to support future housing in Area 1, while proposing a lesser density in Area 9 to preserve the historic character east of Ellis) their decision might have been different. Had Staff been able to be more involved, Area 9 might well have been a proposal viewed as a consensus builder that Planning Staff would now recommend.

The Commission should weigh the hundreds of housing units and thousands of square feet of commercial space which the YNA proposal supports for potential infill in Areas where consistent historic housing does not prevail against the reasons for requesting decreased density in Area 9. (Please see attached documents for YNA support of Area 8 in the SWUV, as this was approved by City Council previously.)

Gathering Opinion

During the Update process, YNA conducted a survey to determine values and problems/needs as identified by a significant and diverse group of stakeholders. The three main values identified in this polling – as well as the one previously conducted by the City (2005):

1. Historic housing and unique character of the neighborhood
2. Location with proximity and easy access to many destinations, and

3. The strong sense of community within the York Neighborhood.

Problems were identified as: lack of city enforcement of building codes; poor upkeep of some properties; lack of crosswalks;

Needs were identified as: more parks, more open space and trails, design standards, affordable housing, adequate parking, sidewalks, and traffic calming.

Over one hundred forty (140)* stakeholders responded to York's survey question:

"York's historic character should be protected by:"

"York should become a Historic District"	96% Agree
"New construction should have design standards to fit with historic character"	91% Agree
"Historic homes should be protected from bulldozers"	92% Agree
"Historic character is not important":	90% Disagree

Survey data points unequivocally to historic preservation as a top priority for York residents.

Informed by these findings, the YNA Planning Committee met monthly for one and a-half years to discuss, write and edit a complete and comprehensive Neighborhood Plan Update and determine related legislative Land Use and BMC proposals. Results were taken to the YNA Board and presented at General Meetings periodically for comment and revision. When the P&CDD discontinued accepting complete Plan rewrites (announced August 2008), YNA looked at proposals that were time sensitive, survey responsive and comprehensively responded to neighborhood stakeholder, City, County and GMA 20 year visions, policies and goals.

Chosen proposals were presented at a General Meeting, in the Yorker Newsletter, and another stakeholder survey was conducted. Proposals receiving more than a two-third majority vote were again presented in the Yorker Newsletter and at a General Meeting before submittal to the City in December, 2008. (At the meeting held on November 19, 2008, the YNA Board voted unanimously in favor of submitting stakeholder supported proposals.)

Area 9 Rezone

Today

Looking at Land Use in each Area in York, we found that Area 9 embodies consistent historic single family housing with few exceptions, though the present zoning allows for more intense usage and density. The area provides affordable housing for several hundred residents with above-average occupancy rates per unit to families, students, young professionals and other individuals, along with some offices and a preschool.

We found that no homes have been legally converted to the presently allowed zoning since it was established in 1982. However, there are numerous homes that have been converted into illegal duplexes, triplexes, rooming houses and detached ADU's that are not included in the City's figures representing number of existing housing units. The alley between Franklin and Ellis presently has parking problems, with 'No Parking' or 'Reserved Parking' signs a common sight. We found the value of these historic homes continue to assess at or above similar properties city-wide.

Conditions Have Changed Sufficiently

Built as Single Family Residential, zoning was established when Ellis St. was part of State HWY 99 with zoning more intense than that along Lakeway Dr. and with a height limit of 35'. In 1980, when zoning regulations changed with GMA, the present zoning was adopted with an increased 45' height limit. Reasons given were the marginal desirability based on age of housing, arterial traffic and continued speculation.

The YNA Planning Committee looked at how conditions have changed sufficiently since these properties were classified under the current zoning and the immediate previous zoning.

- Old housing is highly regarded as historic housing with National and State policies and regulations that encourage its continuance. Many cities have developed design standards to protect historic areas and buildings.
- The City of Bellingham along with volunteers conducted research and applied for National Historic District (NHD) status for areas in three Bellingham neighborhoods. The northern end of Ellis from Lakeway is now part of a NHD. The neighborhood plans to apply for NHD status for similar properties on the southern end of Ellis. If redeveloped, Area 9 would no longer qualify.
- Area 9 provides affordable housing for hundreds of residents of low to medium incomes. The Rezone provides for additional affordable commercial space and the opportunity for live/work units making the location on an arterial desirable. Both affordable housing and commercial space are needed in Bellingham. Redeveloped properties would necessarily be more expensive.
- Curb cuts and parking are no longer allowed along Ellis. Redevelopment, whether it is office or apartments buildings, brings more vehicles; the alley between Ellis and Franklin Streets would become a thoroughfare and parking would overflow into adjacent SFR Area 5.
- At the suggestion of P&CDD, historic neighborhoods in Bellingham plan to work together in the future to develop design standards and guidelines that support continuance of the historic areas and buildings. These would govern single-family as well as multi-family development.

Future Outcomes

Stakeholders discussed whether this zoning was appropriate or inappropriate given that no change has occurred in almost 30 years, where Lakeway with similar zoning has redeveloped. We looked for detrimental effects of the zoning, and how it affects future outcomes. The present zoning sends a message to property owners that the historic housing is temporary, and investors purchasing multiple, contiguous lots will eventually tear down the present homes to rebuild with buildings of significant increase in density and double any present height. The present zoning provides no certainty to the vast majority of property owners in Area 9, or on adjacent Franklin Street, and continues to prompt speculation.

We heard stories of instances where owner-occupied residences have been sold on Ellis and on adjacent properties on Franklin St because of poor upkeep, noisy and over-populated properties in Area 9. Redevelopment along Ellis would adversely affect property values on the adjacent SFR on Franklin St by blocking territorial views, walling in homes with out-of-size and scale buildings, and exacerbating the present problems of noise, alley traffic and parking.

Finally, we determined that even after 120 years these modest historic homes on small lots offer affordable housing to hundreds; provide a sense of history for the neighborhood and the City with a uniqueness of craftsmanship and quality construction that could not be replicated at this price point; while the present zoning encourages continued speculation and depreciation that will eventually lead to their destruction, devaluing adjacent and abutting properties in this historic area.

If a change in zoning could preserve the historic homes and improve quality of life, now would be the appropriate time for this proposal, before redevelopment occurs. After numerous robust discussions on appropriate zoning, York stakeholders came forward at a General Meeting of approximately 50 on March 29, 2010, with a unanimous vote to include incentives for adaptive reuse in Area 9 and a commercial transition into Area 5, along with the decreased density to 3000 SF per unit.

Public Hearing

During Public Hearings, objections to the Rezone of Area 9 have primarily come from a small group of property owners who own contiguous lots. These four own less than 20% of the properties in Area 9. From YNA's two and one-half year public process, our findings are that the vast majority of stakeholders support the Rezone of Area 9, along with the balanced comprehensive planning proposals for potential infill in the neighborhood. Some stakeholders would not have supported infill proposals without the balance of a rezone for Area 9; while others would not support a rezone for Area 9 without overall increased infill potential in York.

For the PCDD to only recommend the land use and BMC proposals put forward for increased potential infill, including YNA support for the inclusion of Area 8 into the Samish Way Urban Village, disrespects the neighborhood planning process and the willingness of York stakeholders to reach a consensus only by including all of these comprehensive proposals.

The PCDD position disregards City, County and State goals and policies that support citizen involvement in planning for their future and historic value.

I respectfully ask Commissioners to consider the York Neighborhood zoning and BMC proposals as a comprehensive whole, a healthy balance of increased potential infill and neighborhood historic value, in reaching decisions.

Sincerely,

Helen Jackson/YNA Board and Franklin Park Coordinator

York Neighborhood Association
1351 Humboldt St
Bellingham, WA 98225

November 30, 2007

To: Gene Knutson
President, Bellingham City Council

Jim Bishop
Chair, Bellingham Planning Commission

Tim Stewart
Director, Planning & Community Development
City of Bellingham

Re: Letter of Intent requesting updating the Sehome Neighborhood Plan

On behalf of the York Neighborhood Association (YNA), I submit this letter in support of Draft 0.4 of the Sehome Neighborhood Plan update request with respect to the portions regarding the proposed Samish Way Urban Village near and bordering the York Neighborhood.

We have found their process to be open, inclusive and thorough. We find the proposals thus far to be in keeping with the consensus of those present at public meetings and at the York General Meeting where the 0.4 Draft was presented.

We further support the continued process to work toward a Master Plan during which we expect to continue to take part and to publicize to our York neighbors.

YNA came to this position of support through a process in coordination with and parallel to Sehome Neighborhood's process to develop their above proposals. We notified all neighbors and property owners living or doing business close to and within Area 8 of York through a mailed invitation to the recent meeting on this topic. The meeting was well attended by residents and property owners living close to or within York's Area 8, the area that would be included in the master plan for the proposed urban center. The response was favorable from all present, with certain considerations brought forth from residents adjacent to Area 8. All agreed that support of the planning process is something we want to endorse.

Of particular note we endorse LUZASW-2 of draft 0.4 stating "*A master planning effort should be undertaken by the city in partnership with the affected neighborhoods, to define the regulatory changes, development patterns, and architectural design standards necessary to support the development of the Samish Way Urban Center.*"

Respectfully Submitted on Behalf of the York Neighborhood Board of Directors,

Thomas R. Scott
President
York Neighborhood Association
President@YorkNeighborhood.org
360-961-4440



Anne Mackie
<mackieaf@gmail.com>
08/09/2010 01:29 PM

To <planningcommission@cob.org>
cc <HAven@cob.org>, <CKoch@cob.org>, <NOliver@cob.org>
bcc
Subject YNA Applicant Response for York Neighborhood Plan
Amendments

Planning Commission Members:

Attached are two documents as part of the public comment for the Planning Commission work session, August 12, 2010, on the York Neighborhood Association's Plan Amendments:

- 1) YNA Applicant Response 08-09-10
- 2) YNA Stakeholder Meeting 08-09-10

Sincerely,

Anne Mackie
President
York Neighborhood Association

York Neighborhood Association
c/o 1351 Humboldt St.
Bellingham, WA 98225

August 9, 2010

Planning Commission
City of Bellingham
210 Lottie St.
Bellingham, WA 98225

Re: **APPLICANT RESPONSE**

On behalf of the York Neighborhood Association (YNA) Board of Directors, which met July 20, 2010, to review the Planning Department's draft Ordinance for the York Neighborhood Plan, the following comments are submitted:

**BMC 20.08.020 Figure 1 – Central Commercial Core Fringe and Reduced Parking Overlay Districts; and
BMC 20.12.010 Figure 1 – Central Commercial Core Fringe and Reduced Parking Overlay Districts**

The YNA originally proposed the expansion of the reduced parking overlay district into Area 2 of the York Neighborhood as a mechanism to protect historic housing in Areas 4, 5, and 9, while supporting infill in appropriate areas of the neighborhood. Without support by the Planning Department for the rezone of Area 9, which is intended to preserve the historic housing stock on Ellis Street, the reduced parking overlay proposal in Area 2 is not acceptable.

At a YNA General Membership meeting March 10, 2010, the reduced parking overlay proposal for Area 2 was approved by a vote of the membership in *partnership* with the Area 9 rezone. That is, the goal is to incentivize infill in Area 2 by allowing a reduced parking requirement for new construction, while historic housing stock is protected in Area 9. The two YNA plan amendments are interrelated.

For the Planning Department to recommend the Area 2 reduced parking overlay district without supporting the Area 9 rezone for historic preservation is counter to all the discussions held with the Planning Department on this matter and is not what was presented to the York Neighborhood Association General Membership for its approval.

The Planning Commission is urged to support the YNA's Area 9 rezone; but without this approval, the Area 2 reduced parking proposal should not be approved.

Section 1. The York Neighborhood Plan

I. NEIGHBORHOOD CHARACTER

YNA supports YDO-1, YDO-2, YDO-3, YDO-4 YDO-5 as presented. (Pages 2-2 and 2-3)

II. OPEN SPACE

YNA supports the Franklin Park open space proposal as presented. (Page 2-3)

YNA supports the Area 1 open space proposal as presented. (Page 2-4)

IV. CIRCULATION

YNA supports YTI-1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, & 8 as presented. (Pages 2-5 & 2-6).

YTI-6: The YNA requests deletion of the text referencing Local Improvement Districts (LID) as the funding mechanism for sidewalks and curbs. (A separate letter dated August 3, 2010, was submitted addressing this issue.)

V. SUBAREA DESCRIPTIONS AND LAND USE DESIGNATIONS

YNA supports the language in paragraph #2 as amended. (Page 2-6)

Area 1: YNA supports the amendment. (Page 2-7)

Area 7: YNA supports the amended language; however, it should be noted that although the text states, "Abutting on-street parking is adequate to serve this park given that it is a small neighborhood park principally serving local residents," (p. 2-7) recent park use has accelerated. For example, on Saturday, July 24 approximately 200 people were using the park at different times. In the future, the lack of adequate park-designated parking will become an issue of concern.

Area 9: The YNA supports the Area 9 rezone proposal as presented in the Planning Department's document Attachment 4, Option 2. The Planning Department recommends denial of the Area 9 rezone proposal and states this recommendation is a result of a stakeholder meeting held June 29, 2010, in which there was no clear consensus or compromise reached between the various parties. Attached to the department's recommendation is a Memorandum from Nicole Oliver (Attachment 3) that reports on the stakeholder meeting. Ms. Oliver's report of that meeting is not consistent with those of us from the YNA who attended. Please see our report attached to this letter (Attachment "YNA-A").

The majority of property owners who live on Ellis Street support the Area 9 rezone. The Planning Department, by continuing to support the outdated density zoning in Area 9, is supporting a

small number of non-resident property owners who own approximately 20% of the Area 9 homes. This position ignores the neighborhood association's majority opinion developed through numerous public meetings, multiple surveys, and democratic votes throughout the neighborhood planning process.

The Planning Commission is urged to support the YNA's Area 9 rezone.

CONCLUSION

1) The YNA's Plan amendments originally were part of a *complete* Neighborhood Plan rewrite; however, as explained at the Public Hearing April 22, 2010, the YNA was instructed by the Planning Director in August 2008 to only submit key "rezones" and "visioning" statements due to lack of staffing to handle complete plan rewrites. This is mentioned, now, because the final document before you has old, out-of-date narrative from the 1980 plan. It is unfortunate that after 30 years a complete plan update is not possible.

2) We remain very concerned about remarks made during the Public Hearing May 27, 2010, by Commissioner Danne Neill in which she stated that she is aware of "bullying" that occurred in relation to the YNA plan amendment process. She stated that there had been a phone call, or more than one; and she said that one person, at least, was too intimidated to testify before the Planning Commission.

This is an accusation the YNA Board takes very seriously. We are concerned that the unsubstantiated accusation has prejudiced the Commission negatively toward the YNA and that Commissioner Neill may be unable to participate fairly in decisions related to YNA's Plan Amendment proposals. We requested by email that Chair Tom Barrett investigate the matter and provide us with information as to the basis for the accusation stated in the Public Hearing; but we have gotten no response – not even an acknowledgement of our request. We request clarification during the Commission's work session August 12 to clear the public record and would appreciate an opportunity to respond at that time. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Anne Mackie
YNA President

Attachment "YNA-A"

York Neighborhood Association
c/o 1351 Humboldt St.
Bellingham, WA 98225

TO: Bellingham Planning Commission

FROM: Kirsti Charlton, York Neighborhood, MNAC Representative
David Hopkinson, Franklin Street resident and property owner
Judy Hopkinson, Franklin Street resident and property owner
Helen Jackson, York Neighborhood Association, Board Member
Anne Mackie, York Neighborhood Association, President
Mary Newman, Ellis Street business owner and resident
Vale Bates, Ellis Street property owner and resident

DATE: August 8, 2010
RE: York Area 9 Stakeholder Meeting Summary Response

We disagree with the report presented to you by Nicole Oliver, P&CDD, about the York Area 9 stakeholder meeting held June 29, 2010, at which each of us were in attendance. Ms. Oliver describes the meeting as having a robust discussion. It was not a discussion. The meeting was dominated by one person who was rude, disrespectful, and was allowed to continually interrupt others with whom he disagreed.

As you will recall, the concept for the stakeholder meeting was initiated by the York Neighborhood Association at the Planning Commission Public Hearing May 27th. We had hoped for a series of meetings with the purpose of developing consensus and a proposal that could be brought back to the Planning Commission for consideration.

Participation was to be *by invitation only* and to be representative of the various stakeholder groups: resident property owners on Ellis Street, resident property owners on Franklin Street, non-resident property owners on Ellis Street, and representatives of the York Neighborhood Association.

Ms. Oliver coordinated the invitations; but several non-invited, non-resident property owners opposed to the Area 9 rezone attended. One of these attendees was not a York property owner, nor even a resident of Bellingham. One person who was not included in the invitation list aggressively dominated the discussion, introduced off-topic issues, repeatedly interrupted others, and showed a lack of respect for fair meeting procedures. His behavior finally caused the meeting to adjourn abruptly with no positive accomplishments when it became clear that no discussion was going to be possible. After the meeting, the YNA concluded that the meeting was deliberately (and successfully) sabotaged by those opposed to the rezone of Area 9.

From the point of view of the YNA representatives, the meeting report you received from Ms. Oliver is not a fair representation of what took place. YNA representatives made several suggestions for compromise in the Area 9 proposal that included: to allow duplexes, or use of "toolkit" forms, if there was a requirement that the old structures be differentiated from any new construction, and the historic homes would remain as they are today. Also, a reduced parking allowance for new commercial uses (if housed in historic structures) is another example of the YNA's compromise concepts.

It is unfortunate that our attempt to find compromise among stakeholders was unsuccessful. Our intentions were for this meeting to be consistent with the open, democratic, and fair processes we have adhered to for the past three years of work on our York Plan Amendments. A fruitful discussion was prevented, the meeting was hijacked, and an important opportunity was lost.



Elaine Mueller
<elaine.em.mueller@gmail.com>

08/09/2010 12:19 PM

To planningcommission@cob.org

cc

bcc

Subject: York Neighborhood Association's proposal for a rezone of Area 9

Dear Planning Commission Members:

As a resident of Bellingham, I am in support of the York Neighborhood Association's proposal for a rezone of Area 9 (Ellis Street) to the density of 3,000 sq. ft. per unit. This reduction in density, from the current 1,000 sq. ft. per unit, is intended to help preserve the historic housing stock on Ellis Street and prevent future bulldozing of this section of the neighborhood to be replaced with four-story apartment or office complexes.

I urge the Planning Commission to support the YNA's Area 9 rezone proposal because it: (a) is consistent with Washington State's support of historic preservation and creation of historic districts; (b) is consistent with the State's Growth Management Act, which encourages the preservation of existing housing stock; and (c) is consistent with the City of Bellingham's Comprehensive Plan, which encourages revitalization of historically and architecturally significant homes in deteriorated condition.

I greatly value Bellingham's historical legacy. Area 9, Ellis Street, is part of this historic legacy and is part of the historic York District[PC1]. The YNA has identified other areas within the neighborhood for multi-family infill potential where historic housing will not be removed: Area 1 along Meador Avenue, Area 2 adjacent to the Central Business District, and Area 8, the Samish Way Urban Village. These sections of the neighborhood are appropriate for infill housing development. Infill should be achieved without bulldozing already existing historic homes.

I also do not consider Area 9 a good location for four-story apartment or office complexes. The only vehicle access would be through the alley that runs between Ellis and Franklin Streets; an alley that is busy, presently, and has numerous parking problems. Four-story buildings would overshadow our homes, block views, increase noise in an already noisy and densely populated section of the neighborhood and would decrease historic integrity and property values.

The YNA's Area 9 rezone proposal also includes a change to allow selected commercial uses (as specified by the YNA's list of allowed commercial uses) if an historic structure is used for a new commercial purpose, along with design standards to ensure compatibility with our historic character. This kind of adaptive reuse and rehabilitation of historic buildings is a concept that I hope the Planning Commission will support. The rezone proposal does not change the current multi-family or office use.

The YNA's efforts over the past two and half years have been inclusive and public, providing many opportunities for everyone to have a voice and vote in planning for our future. I believe the proposals represent the majority of property owners on Ellis Street, Franklin Street and within the

York neighborhood as a whole. I urge you to support it, as well.

Sincerely,

Elaine Mueller



Luke
<luke.anthropy@gmail.com>
08/09/2010 08:00 PM

To planningcommission@cob.org
cc
bcc
Subject Please stop action!

Aug. 9, 2010

Planning Commission

City of Bellingham

210 Lottie St.

Bellingham, WA 98225

Dear Planning Commission Members:

As a resident of Bellingham, I am in support of the York Neighborhood Association's proposal for a rezone of Area 9 (Ellis Street) to the density of 3,000 sq. ft. per unit. This reduction in density, from the current 1,000 sq. ft. per unit, is intended to help preserve the historic housing stock on Ellis Street and prevent future bulldozing of this section of the neighborhood to be replaced with four-story apartment or office complexes.

I urge the Planning Commission to support the YNA's Area 9 rezone proposal because it: (a) is consistent with Washington State's support of historic preservation and creation of historic districts; (b) is consistent with the State's Growth Management Act, which encourages the preservation of existing housing stock; and (c) is consistent with the City of Bellingham's Comprehensive Plan, which encourages revitalization of historically and architecturally significant homes in deteriorated condition.

The YNA has identified other areas within the neighborhood for multi-family infill potential where historic housing will not be removed: Area 1 along Meador Avenue, Area 2 adjacent to the Central Business District, and Area 8, the Samish Way Urban Village. These sections of the neighborhood are appropriate for infill housing development. Infill should be achieved without bulldozing already existing historic homes.

I also do not consider Area 9 a good location for four-story apartment or office complexes. The only vehicle access would be through the alley that runs between Ellis and Franklin Streets; an alley that is busy, presently, and has numerous parking problems. Four-story buildings would overshadow our homes, block views, increase noise in an already noisy and densely populated section of the neighborhood and would decrease historic integrity and property values.

The YNA's Area 9 rezone proposal also includes a change to allow selected commercial uses (as specified by the YNA's list of allowed commercial uses) if an historic structure is used for a new commercial purpose, along with design standards to ensure compatibility with our historic character. This kind of adaptive reuse and rehabilitation of historic buildings is a concept that I hope the Planning Commission will support. The rezone proposal does not change the current multi-family or office use.

The YNA's efforts over the past two and half years have been inclusive and public, providing many opportunities for everyone to have a voice and vote in planning for our future. I believe the proposals represent the majority of property owners on Ellis Street, Franklin Street and within the York neighborhood as a whole. I urge you to support it, as well.

Sincerely,

Luke Chmura



Gina Biondolillo
<signlanguagefan@yahoo.com>

08/09/2010 08:08 PM

To planningcommission@cob.org

cc

bcc

Subject Voting to get Ellis Street Rezone

Planning Commission
City of Bellingham 210 Lottie St.
Bellingham, WA 98225
To Whom It May Concern:

I would like to vote for Ellis Street to get rezoned. I am against the idea of putting an apartment building in the Ellis Street neighborhood. Putting in this apartment building would ruin the garden at a place on Ellis Street, make it harder than it already is for people to park, and take away the privileges to have outdoor BBQs and parties would decrease.

Please do not build an apartment on Ellis Street. Residents need areas to park, plant gardens, have outdoor BBQs and chances to have parties.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Gina Biondolillo

105 Cedar Place
Everson, WA 98247



Gabriel Mast
<gabrielmast@gmail.com>
08/10/2010 11:56 AM

To planningcommission@cob.org
cc Anne Mackie <mackieaf@gmail.com>, Hana Schutz
<hanaschutz@gmail.com>
bcc
Subject York Neighborhood Rezone Area 9, Ellis Street

To Members of the Planning Commission:

I am frustrated by the lack of support the planning commission has shown for our neighborhood association's rezone proposal for Area 9, Ellis Street. I am amazed at how a small number of landlords continue to have so much influence in this city. Our neighborhood continues to be held hostage by a very small number of rental owners who see the York as their own personal fiefdom for exploiting students and other low income individuals.

Although my wife and I are natives of western Washington, and have deep family roots in Bellingham, we have lived in many parts of the United States. We are constantly amazed at the poor planning seen in Bellingham, especially in regard to old/historic house preservation. So many of this city's original neighborhoods have been lost to thoughtless development. And much of the original housing stock is lost or exist only as as rundown rental properties. Although it should not come as a surprise to a planning commission, I would like to point out that people do not often move to small cities like Bellingham to live in soulless 70s-90s suburban developments. Dense, revitalized, walkable neighborhoods with older housing stock do, however, exert a large pull, especially on the west coast where such neighborhoods are few. The destruction of Ellis Street homes will further add to the denigration of one of the last remaining intact historic neighborhoods in this city and I urge you to reconsider the YNA's rezone proposal.

Gabriel Mast and Hana Schutz (owners)
1336 Grant St.
Bellingham, 98225
360.296.6579