



Alliance for a Livable and Sustainable Community

1000 Columbia Park Trail Richland, WA 99352 www.ourlivablecommunity.org

August 13, 2013

Rick Simon, Planning Manager
City of Richland
840 Northgate
Richland, WA 99352

Dear Rick:

On behalf of the Alliance for a Livable and Sustainable Community (ALSC) I am writing regarding the planned development of Richland's Amon Basin.

The ALSC is a non-profit organization comprised of local citizens, many of whom are professionals in the fields of land use development, transportation, energy and technology, and human health. The ALSC promotes and advocates for livable and sustainable principles and practices in the Tri-Cities with the goal of improving the quality of life of residents in our region.

The ALSC has recently reviewed the Beer Falls preliminary plat and wishes to highlight several suggestions that would improve the plat. The overall design and location of the proposed development stands in sharp contrast to the guidelines and priorities established by the City of Richland, as defined in the **Strategic Leadership Plan 5-year Goals for 2013–2017** and the City's **Comprehensive Plan**. The Strategic Leadership Plan identifies seven keys to preserving and enhancing the exceptional quality of life enjoyed by the citizens of Richland. Keys five, six and seven specifically address natural resource management, community amenities, and neighborhoods and community safety. Included in those keys, and their related goals, are references to the:

- *Preservation of identified natural and environmentally sensitive areas*
- *Promotion of sustainable environmental stewardship*
- *Promotion of enhanced levels of public safety, livability, and attractiveness of neighborhoods*
- *Generation of a greater sense of community care and pride through prevention of neighborhood deterioration*

Good subdivision design, as described in the Strategic Leadership Plan and Comprehensive Plan, respects natural topography, creates safe, livable neighborhoods that provide a sense of place and community, and sustains property values. The current design of the preliminary Beer Falls plat, with its long streets and dense housing fronting open space and parkland, will not promote a sense of place, neighborhood, or community, and may compromise future property values in Beer Falls and adjoining established neighborhoods. In addition, the long, densely populated streets may have implications for the safety of future residents.



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The development as currently defined may also have a substantial negative impact on adjacent natural open space, including the Amon Creek Natural Preserve. As you are no doubt aware, a significant investment of city, state, and private funds, as well as tens of thousands of hours of volunteer effort, has been committed to the development of the Preserve. This natural and sensitive area will be threatened by the impact of the proposed large-scale build out. Storm water collection and drainage design must be a top priority. In addition, the design of the Beer Falls preliminary plat markedly limits public view of, and pedestrian access to, the existing natural areas and parks, reducing the potential livability of the development and quality of life of its residents.

Employing the City's Strategic Leadership and Comprehensive Plan design guidelines could mitigate the development impacts to surrounding neighborhoods and preserve or enhance property values in accordance with Richland policy and planning requirements. The ability to utilize and derive value from private property ownership and use is a paramount tenet of American life and liberty. Any new development of land, whether publicly or privately owned, must be done in such a way that allows maximum utility for the developer without compromising the utility and value of neighboring land owners who have already invested in their adjacent property. The current Beer Falls plat does not adequately protect the interests and investments of adjacent landowners, nor of the general public who have previously invested in land ownership and development in accordance with public policy.

The City of Richland Comprehensive Plan is a guidance document developed by and for the citizens in collaboration with City staff. It represents a ratified vision of what our community is to look like and is meant to serve as a "promise" by City leadership to adhere to those principles and guidelines to the maximum extent possible. The implementation of good neighborhood design principles consistent with policies in the Comprehensive Plan should be enforced to preserve and protect the interests of investors counting on those very provisions. There are several elements within the Comprehensive Plan and the municipal code that should guide the design of this subdivision, specifically sections on urban design, residential development, and critical areas.

The planning commission/city council should establish performance/design standards for the Beer Falls development based on the Strategic Leadership Plan, the Comprehensive Plan and the municipal codes. These standards should:

- Protect Amon Creek Natural Preserve
- Address storm water runoff: The proposed development will markedly increase the impervious surface area in the Amon Basin negatively impacting the preserve.
- Provide for controlled pedestrian access to Amon Creek Natural Preserve and Claybell Park.



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- Require a grading plat that is topographically and environmentally sensitive; the design of the subdivision should reflect the natural topography of the area.
- Address maximum straight street runs to slow traffic through the development.
- Encourage the implementation of good subdivision design principals to foster a sense of place, neighborhood, and community, and to sustain property values.
- Address the proposed name of the subdivision. “Beer Falls” is the “party-place” label that teen-age kids have used for years, but does not adequately represent the the current Richland community or the future residents of the development.

The Richland municipal code provides a tool that allows the planning commission and city council to impose requirements and conditions on the approval of the preliminary plat or zoning reclassification, as appropriate. Implementing performance/design standards based on the Strategic Leadership Plan, the Comprehensive Plan and the municipal codes can create a sustainable, safe, and livable neighborhood in Amon Basin, while protecting the adjacent preserve. Given the existing topography of the area, this development could be a positive asset, sustain property values and provide future residents with an exceptional quality of life; with thoughtful design it could exemplify the ideals promoted in the Strategic Leadership Plan.

We respect the need and right for this development initiative and encourage you to work with the adjoining neighborhoods, citizen groups, city staff, city commissions and the developer to produce a product that protects the natural preserve, respects the lay of the land and enhances the project vicinity. The Land Use and Economic Development Committee of the ALSC would be happy to provide specific examples of plat improvements that would better align the new development with the city’s Strategic Leadership Plan and its Comprehensive Plan.

Sincerely,

Tim Fredrickson, President

CC: Cindy Johnson, City Manager
Bill King, Deputy City Manager
Joe Schiessl, Director, Parks and Recreation
Richland City Council