

Date: Jun 14, 2011; Section: Front Page; Page: A1

# Mount Burlington? Residents get a chance to sound off

A citizens committee's recommendations to help shape the Skagit Valley's future over the next 50 years are now available for all to see, including a suggestion to merge the cities of Mount Vernon and Burlington into one.

The Envision Skagit 2060 draft report reflects what its members say is the community's support of values residents say they hold dear: preserving the valley's natural and agricultural landscape. The challenge is in how to bring that about in the face of population growth.

Residents will have a chance to voice their opinions on the various recommendations at an open meeting Thursday at the Northwest Washington Pipe Trades Apprenticeship Building at 780 Chrysler Drive, Burlington. The meeting runs from 4 p.m. to 8 p.m.

Perhaps the most attention-getting idea is the city merger. Our readers have plenty to say about that, and we've published some of their comments today on Page A6.

Date: Jun 14, 2011; Section: Local and Nation; Page: A6

# Reader comments in response to the idea of merging Burlington and Mount Vernon

We asked readers for their opinions of the Envision Skagit 2060 citizens committee's recommendation that merging Burlington and Mount Vernon might help achieve the goal of preserving over time what residents value most about the Skagit Valley. (Note: That's only one of the recommendations, but the one prone to drawing the most fire.) County commissioners set up the 12-member committee, which has held several public forums on the matter before releasing its draft report last week.

Most readers so far have responded like Koree Rodriguez and Lori Hooker did to our post on Facebook: "NOOOO!!!!." Our nonscientific poll question on goskagit showed "No" leading with 68 percent of the vote at 5 p.m. Monday. But some readers said the idea warranted consideration. If nothing else, it's a conversation starter, which is what this group has been pushing the community to do: Talk about the valley's future.

Derek White: Burlington and Mount Vernon are already both too big... no way should they merge.

Bev Rudd: NO!!! Mount Vernon is a special place with its old buildings and historic appeal along the river.

Amber Moore: NO. I moved out of Mount Vernon because of the high crime and poor schools. I love Burlington.

Alycia Schmidt: Might as well add Sedro-Woolley too.

Richard Prange: Excellent suggestion. Now let's see how "conservatives with township ties" really feel about saving money! Think about it. Only paying for 1 chief of police, 1 fire chief, 1 city planner — basically cutting both local governments in half and saving thousands!!!! But it will never work because people will opt to pay double just to keep the two towns as school rivals.....can't we be crosstown rivals and saves millions? Just a thought. Can't believe this idea wouldn't apply to multiple cities across the state and country.

Kassy Harris Hodsdon: If we merge...that doesn't change the crime rate...we have more crime in MV because we are more dense ... I don't want to say I live in Mt. Burlington.

Troy Allen: That's a stupid idea.....short and simple.

Erik Hansen: Very dumb idea!

Warren Keuffel: Excellent idea. I only wonder why it has taken so long to consider it.

Craig Romano: Sure — when Washington and Oregon merge back into one territory.

Paula Mrozek Smith: Let's see, this is envision 2060? Seriously if they started tomorrow, an agreement could not be reached before then. Not practical and a waste of time.

Alistair Wressnigg: Is this even a question? They are divided by a RIVER for a reason! Two separate territories, two separate pioneers, two separate towns! Leave it that way!!!

Siva Mycropolis: No! Mount Vernon did not want to grow economically for the last 20 to 25 years so why should Burlington share any revenue with them. This would be a case of let's wait and see what they are going to do and they can take all the risks, then we'll join.

Herman Oordt: Mount Burlington sounds good to me. It shows we have some good forward thinkers in our communities.

Sharon Dosch: Me, myself and I say no, no and no! Does that count as three votes???

Joan Nagatani: I think this idea of Mount Burlington is a dreadful idea. Waste of time & money & newsprint invested in this folly. Quit.

Heather Argyle: As a 34-year resident of Mount Vernon, I can't imagine merging with Burlington. We are two separate identities, which compliment each other well this way! Side-by-side, connected by only a bridge, over our common ground, the beautiful Skagit River.

Al Dennis: I think these ideas have a lot of merit and deserve serious consideration.

Brian Hill: ...Los Angeles, California, Oakland, California and New York City, New York, are perfect examples of why Mount Vernon and Burlington should not be combined. Do you really want this area to turn into a copy of one, two or all of those cities? If not then keep Burlington and Mount Vernon separate.

Piper Waite: Are you kidding me? Merge Mt. V and Burlington? STUPID IDEA!!!! Look what happened to Sedro-Woolley! Not pretty.

Mary Hudson: Yes, I think this is a good idea. I think this information is correct: Within the GMA guidelines, Mount Vernon needs more retail tax base and Burlington needs to balance out their heavy retail base with more residential. If you merged the two cities, you would achieve balance. Also, just think about the reduction in city offices. You could have 1 mayor, a larger city council, 1 police department and fire department, even 1 school superintendent (and many other areas, too). ... However, I think there are too many people who couldn't stand the thought of sharing a city (or anything else)with a 'bulldog' or a 'tiger'. That attitude is often the downfall of forwardthinking ideas. Shouldn't we be looking at ways to help each other out instead of harboring such childish, selfish attitudes?

Emyle Rabe: What makes anyone think these two cities could work together any better than the two hospitals worked together. After all, Burlington is part of the United General Hospital District. Surely our local politicians can come up with better solutions than making these two cities into one. I for one think it is a VERY dumb idea.

Betty Moser: Sounds like utter nonsense to me! If two hospital districts couldn't manage to work things out after years of trying, what makes you think two cities can? Maybe it's time to start limiting the construction of new homes, thus fewer people moving into the area.

Josef A. Kunzler: Merge government. Merge now. It'd cut the size & scope of government. Also merge the school districts of Skagitonia to as few as possible — preferably one. Economy of scale. Furthermore: There is only one taxpayer – not a city taxpayer, not a county taxpayer, not a property taxpayer, not a sales taxpayer — just a taxpayer. Less silos of government means less overhead and less harmful competition for public service talent that just raises taxes.

Lewis Purcell: ... I do not believe it feasible in these economic times. We need to be downsizing in stead of increasing our obligations. I am opposed to such a proposal at this time.

Tom Aylesworth: That might be the dumbest idea ever thought up. The cost of changing business advertising and signage as well as postal changes etc. would be astronomical. ... There has to be a better way.

Margaret Jacobsen: My immediate reaction is "NO WAY"! Civic pride and identification would be lost. ... Sentimental though it may be, Washington is the only state in the union that was named after a President, and our beloved Mount Vernon was named for the historical residence of that President, George Washington.

Doris DeLand: I just had to share that the BEHS, MVHS and SWHS swim teams have already done this. They practice together at the YMCA for High School Swimming. They call it Mount Woolington.

Barbara Brattain: This is one of the best ideas I've heard in years. We are sister cities. Operating costs would be reduced and benefit both cities. How about inviting Sedro-Woolley to join us — we could become Mount Woolley-Burl ??? ha ha

Nikki Kimple Hawley: Only if they keep Burlington's speed limits.