

You Gotta Have a Plan

by Jerry Bates

GROWTH on South Hill is accelerating. Are we ready to deal with it? This is an old question for many of us living on the Hill. Years ago citizens of South Hill realized they must address the growing population and guard against uncontrolled suburban sprawl.

Back in the early 90s—when growth problems were climaxing on the Hill — we were heading in the wrong direction. South Hill had become a poster child for what not to do in dealing with rapid suburban development.

During those years, community activists and grass root efforts were in progress to organize and change things. Groups formed to deal with the lack of services; they took surveys of South Hill residents and addressed environmental issues, promoted parks and infrastructure improvements. Other groups formed to preserve the culture and history of the Hill and establish a sense of community among the newcomers. Some were determined to improve things with or without support from Pierce County Government. Many of our Society members were active in organiz-

ing these early efforts to deal with the declining direction things were heading on the Hill. Many of them have given presentations during our general meetings.

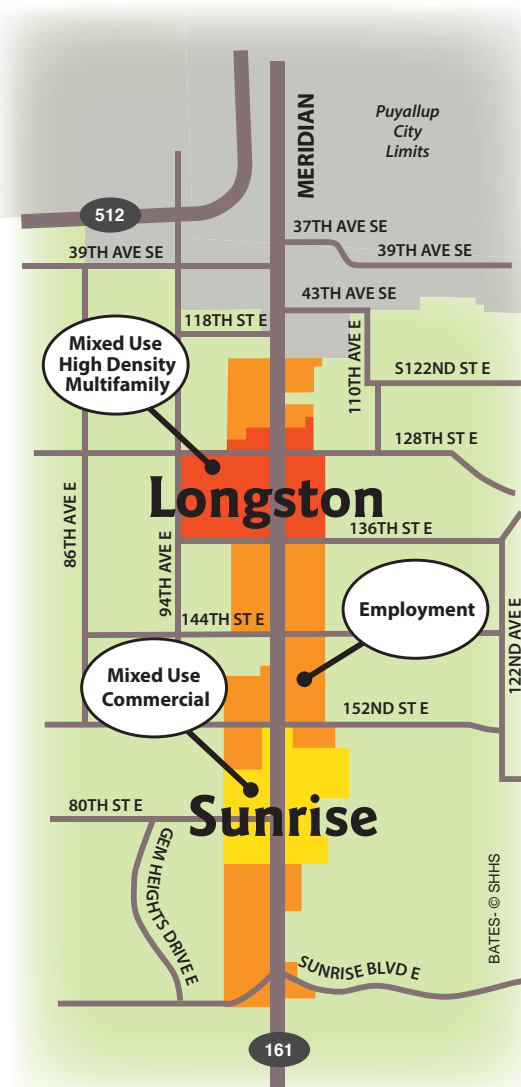
State Involvement

In the late 1980s the Washington State Legislature began to tackle growth problems statewide, aware that uncontrolled growth threatened the environment, economic development and the State's quality of life. The Growth Management Act was passed in 1990; it was a unique plan to Washington State that focused on local control by cities and counties.

Under this plan, Pierce County developed a county-wide framework for growth — out of which Community Plans were initiated for growing areas within the county.

What is the South Hill Community Plan?

The South Hill Community Plan is the child of the 1994 Pierce County Comprehensive Plan. The South Hill Community Plan is where the rubber meets the road, where those liv-



The proposed new zoning plan for the South Hill Meridian Corridor, part of the current South Hill Community Plan revision.

ing in the community work with county planners designing a plan for future growth. Residents, property owners and businesses working with the county collaborate to establish broad goals and visions that are further refined into specific areas of concern, sidewalks, parks, shopping centers, zoning changes, etc. The Community Plan was based on public involvement and feedback.

South Hill's original Community Plan was completed in 2003 refined in 2008. Currently, a major revision is underway — to be completed when approved by the County Council in the winter of 2018.

A flurry of public meetings are currently taking place to inform local residents of the progress and major concepts of this latest revision. Our society has hosted two of these.

This issue of *History On The Hill* includes recent presentations that focus on the current growth efforts—one general meeting report from a senior county planner, another from a community volunteer. Both parties are hard at work with the goal of updating/improving the South Hill Community Plan which will guide future development.

Jeff Mann

Pierce County Senior Planner

by Jerry Bates

Pierce County Senior Planner Jeff Mann gave our May 2017 General Meeting attendees a broad overview of the current Community Plan's revision process. Jeff works in the long-range planning section for the County—tasked with recognizing what's going to happen by “Look[ing] into the future,” said Jeff. It's estimated about 60,000 people will move to Pierce County in the next twenty to thirty years. Their job is to prepare for this—“How are we going to provide housing, utilities, and roads to accommodate that number of people?” Jeff asked.

Back in 2015, Pierce County updated the overall plan for land use and growth (The Comprehensive Plan.) The County realized that the Frederickson, Parkland, South Hill and Spanaway Community Plans were also due for updating. “That's the

current focus for the planners' attention. We're in the 'outreach' step now—meeting with the school districts, fire departments and community groups; we've sent out 7500 flyers and surveys... it's an extensive outreach program to determine how we might accommodate growth in central unincorporated Pierce County,” explained Jeff.

The Centers & Corridor Concept

Jeff continued describing the zoning plans for the Meridian Corridor with its planned dual urban Centers, Longston Place and Sunrise Village. Meridian is one of four such Corridors outlining the Parkland, South Hill, Spanaway and Frederickson communities. They are all connected forming a rectangle comprising Pacific Ave, 176th St. E, Meridian and 112th Street. This perimeter outlines the area that must accommodate the expected 60,000 new residents to the County. Most



Jeff Mann

of the single-family residential development within the rectangle will remain as is. The focus of future planning is on the quarter mile on each side of the Corridors that form the rectangle. The plan is to create compact communi-

ties along these Corridors. “We call them Centers—destination places to park once and walk around,” described Jeff. There are two different kinds of Centers. For the South Hill Corridor, the Longston Center is Mixed Use Residential and the Sunrise Center is Mixed Use Commercial. “This is the essence of the plan to accommodate as much commercial and residential concentration as possible,” added Jeff.

There is also an Industrial Center bisecting the rectangle north from Frederickson along Canyon Road.

Plan Benefits

Jeff listed the benefits to the community once the plan is adopted. “We will increase housing, employment choices, protect single family ar-

ease, increase transportation options, design and establish standards. To encourage development, the plan is designed to improve transit and employment opportunities with more options for the market to dictate development by simplifying some zones and regulations that would promote new projects within the Corridor itself.”

Can we look forward to a brighter future for South Hill? The County planners have designed a process to get there but we need to do our part also; they sincerely request and need community involvement and feedback. The planners are staging open house events, mailing brochures, and giving presentations, by request, for organizations such as ours. If you can't make it or have missed the meetings, the next best thing is to go to the online Open House website and take the community survey. www.piercecountywa.org/CPupdate (or) www.facebook.com/PierceCountyPlanning.

Community Volunteer Advises County

by Jerry Bates

Our general meetings tend to focus on history—some long ago recollection, era, or happening related to South Hill. We had a change of pace for our February 2017 General Meeting. It would be the first to look at South Hill today and a peek into its future. Our guest speaker was Deryl McCarty.

Deryl McCarty is chairman of the South Hill Advisory Commission that deals with planning and land use on the Hill. Deryl is also a member of the recently formed Transportation Advisory Committee; its role is to furnish community transportation priorities to the Pierce County Council.

Deryl summarized, “First, I want to bring you up to date on what is going on currently on South Hill from the building development perspective. Second, I'll talk about planning for the future both in traffic and transportation mode and the community plan mode and lastly, rumors or thoughts on whether we need to incorporate or not.”

Current Development

For the past six to seven years, most development

on South Hill stopped thanks to the recent Great Recession, but now building has resumed. One problem currently for the builders is hiring a sufficient number of craftsmen as most all of them are being consumed by the Bertha Tunnel project in Seattle. For example, said Deryl, “[the tunnel project] is consuming every electrician on planet earth and ‘they’ would go find some more if they could.”

However, new construction is happening. The Sunrise area has three sets of developments going up—all were approved years ago. But the developers have continued to come to the South Hill Advisory Commission for community feedback on some of their proposals.



Deryl McCarty

The Commission has currently approved the development at Military and Reservoir Road (the old riding stable, see Spring 2012 newsletter p. 3.) They addressed such issues as how kids could safely board school buses on the busy section of Military Road that fronts the development.

The Community Plan

Deryl continued, “Right now things are steady; it's not like the go-go days of the early 2000s and late 1990s where you could pour water on the ground and a house came up.” He added “In early 2000, we did the first community plan, [laying] out what is South Hill—what it looked like, and what we wanted it to look like. We tried to do it so that along Meridian you had various zones. From the north end of Meridian, you could have high rise building five to six stories high, but further down only three stories with areas for walking, dining, gas stations and auto repair—but it didn't

develop that way.”

Recasting

Another issue the South Hill Advisory Committee is currently dealing with is known as recasting. As Deryl explained, “It’s necessary to revise the Comprehensive Plan every couple of years—recasting what Meridian looks like. For example, the county asks us to reduce the number of building height zones on both sides of Meridian as you go south. In general, what it will look like is a bit taller at one end (multi-story buildings around mall area) but a bit shorter at the other end (Thun field area building height restricted to 35 feet.) Also for a quarter mile on either side, Meridian will be a transition zone from business to single family housing; this quarter mile will be split between business on the first 3400 feet outside of that transition with housing such as apartments and duplexes; e.g., The Highlands.

The Big Picture

Expanding beyond South Hill, the county’s larger overall vision creates a large commercial/business rectangle formed by Pacific Avenue to the west, 176th on the south, 112th on the north, and Meridian on the east. This big ring will contain the main bus routes. The county does not want Canyon Road clogged up with business—instead leaving it free for the transport of Boeing products to the 512 Freeway and a Frederickson route to the Port of Tacoma.

Current transportation work along the larger rectangle will include safety improvements for Pacific Avenue. As far as Meridian is concerned, Deryl stated, “What we have is what we get.” Adding another lane would require expanding into existing private property on either side of Meridian, making it unfeasible. Maintenance and safety improvements will continue. All of the above is the plan through 2040.

Traffic Congestion Continues

Deryl informed us, “The only utility we don’t have a handle on is the transportation problem. In 2013-14, the county council created the Transportation Benefits District whose members are the county council members...basically, the Transportation Benefits District/Board takes all the transportation money from real estate tax and traffic impact fees and makes sure it’s not spent on things the people don’t want.”

The Transportation Benefit District approved a Transportation Advisory Commission in January. This commission will give the Benefit District the priorities of road projects and the taxes to pay for it. Deryl chairs this commission of nine volunteers, which includes businessmen, community members, former officials of the county staff and county planning department.

Cityhood

Deryl concluded his presentation with a look back at the South Hill cityhood/incorporation movement in the late 1990s. The desire for cityhood came about due to dissatisfaction among citizens and business owners over the way South Hill was being ignored by the County Council; e.g., street-lights, school crosswalks, etc.

“Looking back,” Deryl recalled, “We bit off more than we could chew.” He explained the major obstacles that stood in their way, including the people of Frederickson who already had a self-identity and their own zip code, but were being included in the South Hill plan only for their tax base—this made them less than enthusiastic. Also, Summit View, an older community, didn’t identify with South Hill. Without including both of these communities, the scheme couldn’t pay for itself. Other interests against the cityhood move included the Pierce County Boundary Review Board, developers, and Fire District 21 that felt incorporation threatened their tax base.

“The voters were smarter than us,” says Deryl. “In November 1998, we were soundly defeated at the polls.”

The Future

What about a future cityhood effort? South Hill is a much larger, richer place than it was nineteen years ago... should our citizens make a second attempt? Unfortunately, the clock ran out before Deryl could explore that question fully. Maybe that will have to wait for another meeting when we’re ready for another change of pace—when we can look at South Hill today and discuss where we are headed.



[facebook.com/groups/
SouthHillHistoricalSociety](https://facebook.com/groups/SouthHillHistoricalSociety)



Debbie Burtnett

Debbie Burtnett is this newsletter's Editor at Large, now living in Hoover, Alabama. She's a busy member of the Hoover Historical Society and publishes their newsletter "Hoover Historical-Log." Debbie moved from South Hill to Alabama in 2012, leaving our state but

not our Society. In addition to proofing and editing our newsletter, she contributes articles that often tie the American South with the Pacific Northwest.

Meriwether Lewis's Death?

by Debbie Burtnett

Seventy miles south of Nashville, just off the Natchez Trace Parkway, stands a broken shaft marker—symbolizing a life cut short—memorializing one of greatest explorers of the American West at the site of his death on October 11, 1809. The marker reads:

An officer of the Regular Army; Private Secretary to President Jefferson; Commander of the Expedition to the Oregon in 1805-1806; Governor of the Territory of Louisiana. His melancholy death occurred where this monument now stands and under which rest his mortal remains.

Meriwether Lewis's death has been the subject of much historical debate for almost 200 years. His demise occurred on the Natchez Trace in a crude cabin known as the Grinder Stand in the dark woods of Tennessee. His violent death was ruled a suicide and was accepted fact for more than 40 years—time enough for rumors to erupt and stories of witnesses to change or undergo embellishment.

Historiography is the writing of history based on critical analysis, (especially primary sources) to form a narrative that focuses on not just the study of event(s) directly but the changing inter-

pretations of an event in the works of individual historians. *By His Own Hand?* Is such a study concerning the death of Meriwether Lewis.

This 2006 work published by the University of Oklahoma, edited by John D. W. Guice, presents the case for and against suicide. The two debating essays are by James J. Holmberg in "I Fear the Waight of His Mind Has Over Come Him" (the argument for suicide using Clark's words) versus John D. W. Guice's "It Seems to Be More Probably..." that the manner of death was murder. A third essay discusses the merits of each analysis, but the reader is the jury as to what verdict may be reached.

President Thomas Jefferson did many great things, but historian Stephen Ambrose argues that the "best thing Jefferson ever did as president was the Louisiana Purchase." Next, Jefferson asked childhood friend, Meriwether Lewis—also his personal secretary—to journey across the territory and make detailed notes and

drawings regarding flora and fauna; establish good relationships with native people; and find a water route to the Pacific as well as mapping the region. In addition, the group established the American claim to the Northwest Empire—Oregon, Washington, Idaho.

Suicide?

Lewis arrived at Grinder's Inn without his servant, John Pernier, and James Neely, an Indian agent to the Chickasaw nation. They remained behind to locate two missing horses.

According to the account of Priscilla Grinder, he appeared "deranged" so she slept in a separate structure. The servant and the agent arrived later, keeping an eye

on Lewis as he had tried to kill himself twice prior to that evening. About 3 AM, she heard two shots. The Missouri Gazette reported that "... he appeared in a state of extreme mental debility, and before he could be prevented, discharged the contents of a brace of pistols in his head and breast...he lived about two hours and died with-



This memorial is located near Hohenwald, TN, just off The Natchez Trace. Photo by Debbie Burtnett.

out much apparent pain.”

Lewis faced challenges in his life. Personally, he was prone to melancholy and hypochondria, as well as a drinking problem. He self-medicated daily with the pharmacopeia of the day—Peruvian bark for the recurring malaria; opiates used in the eye water*, and Dr. Benjamin Rush’s pills, composed of calomel (6 parts mercury to one part chlorine and jalap.) Romantically, Lewis had failed to find a wife and helpmate as did Clark.

Politically, Frederick Bates, with whom he had political differences including Bates’ treatment of the Indians, filled his position as Governor of Upper Louisiana in his absence. Lewis’s unauthorized expenditures as governor dogged him financially, as he would have to repay those debts personally if he could not explain them. Professionally, though he talked of the book, he never wrote one page nor did he hire an editor to help him with the process; Lewis, a procrastinator, spent too much time in the East on his way to Upper Louisiana. Several psychologists believe that his re-entry to society after the expedition was difficult, perhaps not unlike a soldier returning from war.

Thus, the last months of his life were marred by his personal health issues including use of several drugs; the rejection of invoices for his work; alcoholism; the failure to establish a romantic relationship; the loss of some expedition artifacts; his procrastination in the East; and the emotional anguish suffered over his relationship with Frederick Bates in the territory, and his inability to write the history of the expedition as his beloved president had asked.

All of these failures made suicide the most immediate explanation for his death.

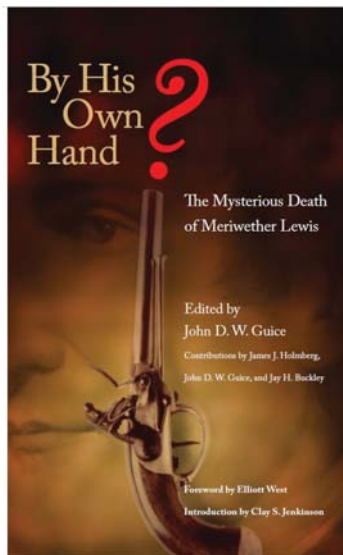
Homicide?

Historians looked at these same things—seeing something entirely different. For example, his procrastination in Philadelphia was because he was unwinding—or a time of “fun and frolic?” Perhaps he was courting. Questions have been raised about alcoholism—historians cannot find “hard evidence.” Several

suggest that he was overwhelmed as Governor of Upper Louisiana—that maybe he should have focused on the one thing Jefferson wanted him to do: write the history. His troubles with Frederick Bates, acting governor in Lewis’s absence, “botched Indian affairs” and that plagued him.

There have been calls for exhumation of Lewis’s remains to determine if the wounds were self-inflicted. Each time, the National Park Service has declined, stating that they must take a neutral position on the issue.

While visiting the site of Lewis’s memorial, I asked the National Park Service Ranger Derek Peck what he thought happened to Meriwether Lewis. He emphatically stated, “He took his own life.” He methodically listed the overwhelming reasons why Lewis would have done this, including two previous suicide attempts before his arrival at the inn, one nearly successful. “And,” he added to debunk the theory of murder, “nobody knew he was here. If he was the victim of a robbery, why did they not take the most valuable thing he had with him—his papers from the expedition?” He also cited the medications used by Lewis, perhaps poisoning him with mercury and lead.



By His Own Hand
by John D.W. Guice, Editor

However, “A Postmortem Trial concerning Meriwether Lewis’s Controversial Death,” by Jay Buckley, closes out *By His Own Hand?*

“As a juror you have heard both sides of the case. Deliberate carefully. The solution to one of American history’s most interesting mystery hangs on your verdict.”

*See article in *History on the Hill*, Vol. 13 No. 2, “Lewis & Clark—first ophthalmologists west of the MS River,” by Debbie Burtnett, Spring 2015, p. 6.

Have something you would like to contribute to our newsletter? Any ideas of subjects we should include?

Contact Jerry Bates
mail@southhillhistory.com

From the Treasurer

by Ben Peters

Please call, e-mail or write any change of address to me, Ben Peters, 253-845-7028, poppa-ben2002@yahoo.com, South Hill Historical Society, Box 73582, South Hill, WA 98374.

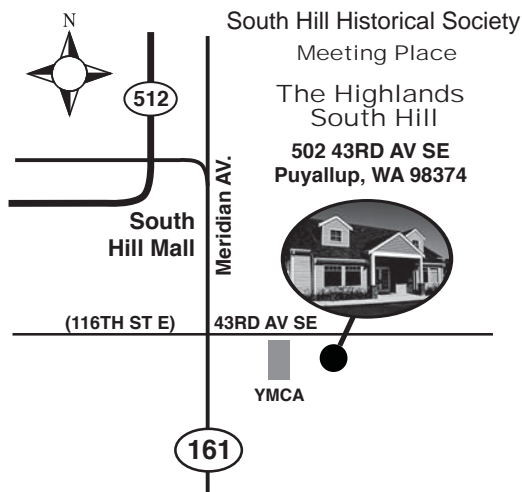
Also, don't forget that we are a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization. Dues, donations, etc., are fully deductible from your income taxes if you are able to do so. If you need a receipt for tax purposes, contact Ben.

Dues Reminder

I will attach a sticky note to the Society newsletter mailed closest to your renewal date. **No need to fill out the membership form unless there is a change of some kind.**

The South Hill Historical Society meets regularly on the **THIRD TUESDAY** of the month, 10:45 AM, (no meetings July and August) at The Highlands in the Community Center. This complex is located at 502 43rd Ave. SE, adjacent to and east of the Mel Korum YMCA.

We welcome you to our monthly meetings. For more information, contact Wes Perkinson at (253) 241-5397.



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Signature _____ Date _____ Renewal, *check here*

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