



# Burien

*Washington, USA*

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January 11, 2011

Chestine Edgar  
1811 SW 152<sup>nd</sup> St.  
Burien, WA 98166

Robert Edgar  
12674 Shorewood Dr. SW  
Burien, WA 98146

Dear Mr. and Mrs. Edgar:

Thank you for your letter to Brian Scott, our contract consultant for the City's visioning project, which you cc'd to the Burien City Council.

We welcome you to participate directly in this process at any or all of the community forums that will be held at publicized dates, to be determined, over the next several months. You are of course free to raise any of the questions or issues you mention in your letter, or any other, at that time.

Sincerely,

Lisa Clausen  
Government Relations Specialist

cc: Burien City Council  
Burien City Manager

CFTR: 01/24/11



To: Brian Scott  
Subject: Participating in the 2011 City-Wide Visioning Process  
December 29, 2010

Dear Mr. Scott:

It is our understanding that you are to be the consultant leading Burien's city-wide visioning process in 2011. We are wondering when you will be inviting members of the community to apply to be members of your visioning committee. The process has still not been announced by the city and the city has not openly invited community involvement as of yet.

Since inception, our Comprehensive Plan emphasizes the importance of neighborhoods as stated in Chapter 1: *"The most important feature of the plan is establishing a pattern of development that reinforces Burien's small town character and sustains the character of existing neighborhoods while also protecting Burien's environmental resources."* (page 1-9). Plainly stated, neighborhoods and their voices have always been the core of the Burien Plan.

During the 1999 amendment process to the Comprehensive Plan, some neighborhoods were furious that their representatives were not included to participate. The citizens of these neighborhoods were so angry about being excluded that they turned out by the hundreds to voice their concerns. As a result, the development of Neighborhood Plans is also identified in the Comprehensive Plan under Neighborhood Quality: *"The city will encourage and support the development of neighborhood plans. These plans will carry out and refine the visions of the Comprehensive Plan at the neighborhood level...."* (POL.NQ 1.2, page 2-43). Since 1999, only one neighborhood in the city has been able to complete a Neighborhood Plan. We are hoping that in this visioning process that you will continue to respect the importance of the neighborhoods and their voices.

For over two years now, the city has struggled with the Shoreline Master Program Update. The initial citizens committee was designed such that the most impacted constituents were the least represented and the committee included "members at large" who were not even Burien residents. The inclusion of non-Burien residents caused unnecessary friction that could have been avoided had the committee been more thoughtfully designed. The few members who actually represented the various residential shoreline reaches were outnumbered and were angered that the environmental protection of shorelines were ignored or discounted by those not living in those areas. As a result the monies spent, the consultants were not best used and a draft document was produced that has required numerous months of rework at citizen cost. No one was best served by excluding the real shoreline residents from the process or the committee.

We hope you avoid making the same mistakes when designing the visioning process.

We encourage you to set up a committee where all neighborhoods are fairly represented. Otherwise, we believe that the results could be seriously flawed. Visioning and planning that is in direct conflict with the character and the quality of the neighborhoods will be opposed. The fabric of this city is woven from the neighborhoods. We originally joined together as a city to protect ourselves from being overrun by the Port Of Seattle but we had a much stronger allegiance to our neighborhoods. We have become experts on facilitators, with large newsprint panels on the walls, from our encounters with the Port of Seattle and their Part 150 studies that have done nothing to improve the quality of our lives. The working model for consensus with our current city manager and city council has been to ignore citizen and neighborhood input and to do what the city manager directs the council to do. The neighborhoods have become frustrated by this model of consensus. This is a different story of history than cities like Seattle, Bellevue, Oregon City/West Linn, Billings, Coeur d'Alene or Hillsboro had. As you pride yourself on finishing projects on budget and with high client satisfaction, we encourage you to understand and involve the neighborhoods early in this visioning process.

Burien is a city which has just annexed 14,000+ residents based on the vote of only 1,380 citizens (9.8%) in that area. That means that this city increased its population by almost 1/2 based on the vote of 1,380. Many of the citizens of the city were opposed to this annexation but not allowed a voice in this process since the original citizens of Burien had no say. It appears that the city staff has not always correctly identified who the real stakeholders are in this city. We (as citizens) have still not seen the impact of that change to our city's long range financial and economic status. As a specialist in change, you know that the real impact of change cannot be accurately assessed until a project is at least 18 months out from when it was first initiated. We have still not seen the progressive reports on the annexation budget income and expenses that we were promised by the city manager prior to annexation of the North Highline Area. The citizens have mounting concerns about the city council's and city manager ambitions to annex too much too soon. A city the size of Seattle has approached the White Center annexation issue with caution while Burien failed to do the long range visioning and cost analysis needed on the North Highline Area. And now Burien is considering the annexation of the White Center Area without adequate analysis. Last year, Burien citizens turned out in large numbers at the city council meeting to oppose annexation of the White Center Area in the near future. However, the Burien city manager continues to regularly attend the White Center meetings leading that group of citizens to believe that they are going to be annexed in the very near future. This is in direct conflict to what the neighborhoods and the economic advisory board has stated should happen. Ultimately the neighborhoods and citizens will carry the tax burdens for these decisions-wise or unwise.

We strongly encourage you to watch videos of some recent city council meetings to see how citizens and neighborhoods that come to the council with their concerns and opinions are dealt with. Of particular note, is the attitude that some council members and the city manager have toward citizen advisory committees such as the Business and Economic Development Partnership Committee. They are always highly dismissive of what this group suggests. Frequently sequestered in the background of the city government is the attempt to convolute issues so that citizens are discouraged or intimidated from providing input, or to have the city not provide requested information to citizens on the issues being discussed and voted on by the council. This will give you a working flavor of the current city government atmosphere and should help you in your facilitation processes.

We further encourage you to examine how contentious the city staff is with citizen initiated projects such as how long it took to get approval for the Environmental Science Center building for its design and the incurred inflation costs from that delay, the difficulty in getting approval for the Historical Museum Building and the incurred costs from that delay and the fact that the YMCA finally had to leave Burien because they could not get an agreement with the city on their site/project. The loss of this new facility was tragic for the youth and citizens of Burien as a whole. Both the city manager and the mayor have made it clear in public statements that citizens are in no way allowed to criticize or even note that the city staff may have made an error. This closed attitude toward citizen input makes it next to impossible to foster an open, healthy climate for change. Attitude toward citizen initiated input or change should be discussed in the visioning process.

Since you will be addressing the environment in this visioning process, a real issue that is impacting many of our neighborhoods is storm water and surface water management. The inadequacy of these systems for our critical areas, the Sound and the safety and protection of properties has repeatedly come up at council meetings. We encourage you to look at the budget projections on this topic the next five years. Rather than devoting monies to the livable neighborhoods, the city has projected five times as many dollars to develop storm water and surface water management in North East Redevelopment Area. This is a neighborhood that has been pretty much been made unlivable as a result of airplane noise. These new dollars-should they even appear-will do development that should be covered by the businesses that become established there. Plainly stated, citizens should not be paying for development that the businesses should be paying for while the city ignores the needs of the endangered neighborhoods and environments. The shoreline neighborhoods feel very strongly about these storm water and surface water management issues and the vision for the future. We are hoping that this topic will be part of the visioning process.

We encourage you to look at how animal control has been handled in this city and how citizen concerns have been dealt with regarding this program. Currently, Burien appears to be an inhumane society for animals based on their animal control program. A number of pet businesses and vets have complained that the number of animals that are now being left at their businesses has accelerated because of the lack of animal control. Recently 96 significant trees were cut down in the city. Once again, we encourage you to look at how communication with the citizens was dealt by the city and how little citizen/neighborhood input was allowed in the process of simply the selection new trees for the site. For years, the citizens have been promised a community/activity center for the city. The monies for that project have had a way of evaporating into the Capital Project budget. Citizen questions about this project are now just simply dismissed by the city manager. We encourage you to look at this community/activity center issue in the visioning process.

As citizens we have become experts on surveys that mean very little and have empty questions but pump up the city manager's or council's ego about how wonderful they believe they are. The citizens are also weary of awards the staff continues to nominate themselves for about projects that have been disastrous to the city as a whole. If you are going to do surveys, make them meaningful, mathematically correct and representative of the more permanent not transient populations, and on items that are of importance to the neighborhoods and citizens at large who are committed to living in and financing this city. It is our hope that this visioning process which you will be facilitating will focus on quality of life for those of us in the neighborhoods, citizen health and safety issues, the health of the environment/sustainability and the economic viability of the city.

Since the city (the citizens) and its Comprehensive Plan have placed a high value on neighborhoods, when will you be inviting representatives from the various Burien neighborhoods to apply to be members of the visioning committee? We look forward to your announcement for applicants.

Sincerely,

Chestine and Robert Edgar  
Members of Burien Neighborhoods

cc: City Council, Planning Commission

