

# What about the Northern Notch?

Land-use debate involves developers, neighbors, city and county

By KRIS HILL  
The Reporter

Barry Anderson and his sons, Brandon and Barry Jr., want to put up some shops on the property their development consulting firm, BranBar LLC, owns along State Route 18.

They have a number of hurdles to clear before they can build, though, including the opposition of neighboring property owners like John Ball, who would rather the land remain rural, untouched by commercial development.

First, though, BranBar needs to get the zoning changed for what is known as Covington's Northern Notch or Jenkins Creek Notch (the creek runs through it) from rural residential to urban.

"When they zoned it (in the 1960s), they said people will eventually get there because it's next to a state highway," Barry Anderson said. "If it's in the county or the city, it doesn't change one iota. Their residential property stays the same."

This chunk of land — of which the Andersons own about 52 acres — covers 272 acres in unincorporated King County, according to the county's Department of Design and Environmental Services (DDES).

The property is nearly surrounded by the city of Covington, said the city's planning manager, Richard Hart. It is bounded by SR-18 and Southeast Wax Road to the

## COMMENT?

King County will accept the public's comments involving the proposed Northern Notch development through Dec. 28. The County Council will begin reviewing the recommended changes in March 2008, and the final updates are scheduled by the end of next year.

Information about the King County Comprehensive Plan is available from Paul Reitenbach, the plan's project manager, at paul.reitenbach@kingcounty.gov, (206) 296-6705 and Department of Development and Environmental Services, 900 Oakesdale Ave. SW, Renton, WA 98057-5212.

south and north, with 180th Avenue Southeast along the western side.

If the zoning is changed as part of the county's comprehensive plan update — the plan is the county's blueprint for development and is updated with zoning changes every four years — then Covington will have the opportunity to annex it.

"It is identified in our 20-year comprehensive plan adopted in 2004 as a PAA (Planned Annexation Area)," Hart said. "This means within the next 16 years, the Northern Notch should be annexed to the city for future growth. But first the

county must agree it is the correct time to reclassify the land from rural to urban and added to the (urban growth area) before that can happen."

If and when the county does change the zoning that would allow for more intense development to occur, the city would prepare a sub-area plan and proposed zoning designations and uses, Hart said.

Next, the city would propose the land be annexed. "That process usually takes 12 to 24 months, depending upon the opposition or concurrence with the proposed annexation from residents," Hart said.

In order to get the zoning changed by the county, Barry Anderson put in a request through County Councilman Reagan Dunn for the change to be considered during the 2008 county comprehensive plan update.

Neil Strege, Dunn's chief of staff, said that his staff put in a number of requests to be considered for the comprehensive plan update.

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# LAND-USE: Plenty of hurdles to get over

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"We tried to get (everybody with a request) into the scoping motion so the executive could review it," Strege said. "It just means that they have their day in court. We think everyone should get a chance."

Ball, a resident of the "Notch," said he's none too pleased with Dunn's office or the help offered to Anderson's effort to change the zoning.

"I was overwhelmed with this guy even putting it on the docket," Ball said. "It was an affront to the people who live in the notch. He wasn't giving Mr. Anderson a fair chance. He was denying everyone else the fair chance because this land isn't needed, as it said in the report, at least for 20 years."

Barry Anderson looked out at the property before he bought it – flat, covered with trees, facing SR-18 and near an interchange where people could easily get on and off the highway – and saw the potential for commercial development.

It is likely the city will annex the land, Barry Anderson Jr., said and it's better for the city to over-

see the development of the property.

"The notch needs to be moved from rural to urban so the city has a voice," he said. "As a company that develops land, we'd like to see flat, freeway frontage developed commercially in a smart, sensitive way that (has) more benefit to the community."

The Andersons argue that not only does it make sense for them and their business, but for residents who live near it, because it will save them a trip to downtown Covington or further away. It could also add another 800 or more jobs, providing another place for folks to shop that could help alleviate some of the traffic congestion going on in Covington, Barry Anderson said.

"Access to and from this site will be predominantly from Highway 18," Anderson said. "You can get there from Maple Valley or Covington. It's a win for the public, for transportation and the city."

For Ball, who owns 10 acres within a stone's throw of the Anderson's property, development into a retail center is not a win for himself or his neighbors.

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BARRY ANDERSON JR.

"This area was set aside for a reason," Ball said. "There's a salmon-bearing stream on this property. This is a very sensitive area."

Ball said he has spoken to his neighbors in recent months as the county has sought more input from residents.

"We don't want big-box stores. We don't want to be part of Covington. We don't want to pay their taxes," he said. "A lot of the people who live here have acreage and enjoy living near the creek. They can't preserve any of these green belts and build big box stores."

Changing the zoning and allowing the city to annex the notch is "a terrible idea," Ball said. He suggested it would be unwise for

the County Council to do it despite the protestations of residents of the notch.

Besides, Ball said, even the staff report put together by DDES doesn't recommend the change.

"Make no adjustments to the King County Comprehensive Land Use Map designation for the Jenkins Creek Notch," the report stated. "Maintain the current zoning designation for the properties within the Jenkins Creek Notch study area at RA-5, one home per five acres."

The report goes on to say that a study conducted by the state Department of Trade determined that Jenkins Creek is a salmon spawning stream, and that keeping the rural designation was the best way to support that stream and surrounding wetland. It also states that allowing commercial uses

continues to support that stream and that surrounding wetland. It also states that allowing commercial uses

"We've got to lay the foundation," Brandon Anderso said.

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