

SPOKESMAN Opinion

GUEST COMMENT

Developers and utilities, spare that farmland!

BY LLEWELLYN KING

In nearly every city in the United States, and many around the world, bulldozers are busy making dreams come true: Leveling land for a single-family home on a lot.

Who doesn't want a lovely home with a nice bit of land on some tree-lined street? It is the American Dream manifested in bricks and mortar.



King

Trouble is dreams can morph into nightmares. A growing nightmare across the nation is the incursion of homes onto farmland — land that will be out of production essentially forever.

All around Washington, I watched year after year for decades lovely farms in adjacent Maryland and Virginia being turned into suburbs — sometimes 70 and more miles from the city center.

It has been a simple tradeoff: There has been a relentless demand for single-family homes and builders see farms, usually family-owned, as ripe fruit ready for picking. When age is an issue, they almost always sell. Farming is a tough, 365-days-a-year undertaking, and a fat check at the end of a farming career is irresistible.

No villains here, but there are consequences. Mark Twain said, "Buy land, they aren't making it anymore." Sadly, Twain didn't take his own advice and instead invested in the tech world of the day: He lost a fortune in a company that was trying to perfect the typewriter.

Farmers are special to me. They are the real renaissance men and women. They know a lot about a lot, from being able to gauge the pH levels of soil on their tongues to how to birth a calf, repair a tractor, or raise a barn.

They also know a thing or two about how the government works and filling out forms. They are regulated but have no guaranteed rate of return. They are as subject to the weather over their own land as floods around the world.

Businesses talk about being rewarded for taking a risk. Farmers take a risk with every seed they plant — and the returns aren't guaranteed.

But, as Gail Chaddock, host, and producer of "No Farms, No Future," a podcast of the American Farmland Trust, said, "You can't blame the farmers, and you can't blame the developers. But the land we'll need for food production in the future is being taken."

What is happening is the irreversible destruction of millions of acres of prime farmland every year. A reverence for farmland needs to enter the culture, she said.

No longer, however, is it just developers buying up farms. Farmland is now being sought by another kind of developer: renewable energy companies. They are buying it for large solar arrays. They also contract with farmers to install windmills which, while not taking so much land out of agricultural use, cumulatively take a lot.

But it is solar farms that are the real problem. Britain is thinking of legislating to prohibit the use of agricultural land for energy production. Other countries are waking to the realization that a field of shining solar collectors is not the same as a field of waving wheat or even lowly cabbages.

As over time we exported our manufacturing, we also have exported our food production. What was once raised on truck farms around the cities is now raised in neighboring Canada and Mexico, or as far away as Chile and South Africa.

There is no compelling reason to cover huge acreages with solar panels. Roofs, rights of way, and urban parking lots could be pressed into service. Railroad tracks cry out for a solar canopy.

Just because energy or housing is a higher economic use for land today doesn't mean that it won't have a higher future value, feeding future generations.

■ Llewellyn King is executive producer and host of "White House Chronicle" on PBS. He wrote this for InsideSources.com.



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WAR CRIMINAL

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YOUR VIEWS

Pipe Columbia River water to fight drought in Oregon and Southwest

Now that we again have a drought in south-central Oregon and southwest United States, it seems like it is time to seriously think of long-term solutions.

One of these could be pumping water out of the Columbia River to that area. The ocean does not need that water. Bonneville Power could be compensated for the loss of the electricity that would be generated by that water at the Bonneville Dam and The Dalles Dam.

A good place to take the water out of the Columbia River would be somewhere between The Dalles and Biggs using two large pipes along Highway 97, dropping off the necessary amount at Klamath Falls and pumping the rest to Lake Shasta near Redding, Calif. Two pipes would be better than one, in case something happens to one, the other one would still be working. California has the canals to take it from Lake Shasta.

This would not help immediately, but could be part of a long term solution. This drought problem is not going to go away. The sooner we start working toward a long term solution, the sooner it can be done.

Bob Mattila
Brush Prairie, Washington

Fitch outlines platform for mayor

Next year we will have a new city council with limited experience in elective office. Since September, the campaigns for mayor and council in Redmond have been pursued by each candidate with respect for others in the race and provide both hope and promise

that the new city council will work together for the benefit of the entire community, instead of using their council positions to advance their own personal agenda.

There will be many issues the council will need to address in 2023, including housing, homelessness, child care, public safety and the need to plan for and fund needed public infrastructure. I believe that with 40 years of experience in both city government and private business I can provide the best leadership for the new council to ensure that the council, with input from the community, will address these and other issues in a fair, open and transparent manner.

While I respect my opponents, I do believe that I am the best candidate to lead the new council. I am the only candidate with a proven record of putting together regional partnerships and in successfully obtaining state and federal to help pay for our needed public improvements. I hope you will vote for me for the position of mayor.

Finally, I want to thank the many volunteers who helped on my campaign and to the citizens who patiently listened to the debates, became informed about the candidates and measures and welcomed us when we went door-to-door.

Ed Fitch
Redmond
City councilor, mayoral candidate

Fitch right choice for mayor

I am supporting the election of Ed Fitch for the Mayor of Redmond. My husband Jon and I moved to Redmond eight years ago when the population

was about 15,000 people. Redmond's population has doubled in that time. Exorbitant growth for any city. Jon and I saw this firsthand in Tigard. Many of the same issues and concerns are in Redmond today.

Planning has been done on many issues. Council, mayor and staff need to implement solutions. We are not a city of 15,000 anymore. I have seen Fitch connect with the council to open up their meetings for actual citizen input and he has pledged he will be more transparent on this issue.

With his experience as mayor, I am confident that Fitch can and will bring this transparency to the city and the council to navigate current and future issues of growth, quality of life, and all of the things we citizens talk about every day.

Fitch knows and has been at the table with decision makers in the past. He was there for the first bypass of Redmond. Now he is working with the council to plan and secure right-of-way and funding for a re-route not only Redmond, but to move the high volume of regional traffic that passes through our city. This won't happen tomorrow or the next day, but securing the future right-of-way is huge as it will lock in a route.

We need Ed Fitch for the way he has navigated those issues and many other issues both noted and unforeseen. But I am confident that he can lead, listen and empower the council, as well as all citizens of Redmond. We need a leader to deal with the complexities of our city for 2022 and beyond.

Judy Fessler
Past chair of the Redmond Landmarks Commission, past president of Greater Redmond Historical Society

GUEST COLUMN

Counting down to election day

Have you been counting the minutes until election day when your neighbors can remove all those campaign signs from their lawns for another two years?

Yes, these are midterm elections, just as serious as the presidential election yet to come two years from now, but not as interesting.

Why not? Because the great candidate Vermin Love Supreme only runs for president and doesn't mess about trying to be someone's governor.

V.L., who appears to be a bearded cross between Archimedes and Alexander Graham Bell, tends to stand out in a crowd.



with Slim Randles

That is largely because he's usually wearing a boot on his head and is carrying a giant toothbrush.

Unlike most politicians, who basically ask us to vote for them because they have their names on several yard signs and can prove it, O' Verm isn't afraid to

face his country head-on and tell us what we really need.

Last time around, while trying to wedge his goals into the New Hampshire primaries, Vermin made no bones of his platform: 1. Passing a national law that everyone must brush their teeth, 2. Dedicating millions of tax dollars

to delve into time travel, 3. Investigate the possibilities of a Zombi invasion, and 4. Give a pony to everyone in the country.

Lest you be scratching your head over the time-travel expenditures, Vermin Love Supreme is quick to point out that once science has whipped time travel, he can then go back in time and kill Adolf Hitler.

How can you beat a campaign slogan like that? Not only is it fun, but just picture 250 million people riding ponies around and showing off their shiny teeth. Just two more years ... we can do it. Two more years.

■ Slim Randles is a nationally syndicated columnist.

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Oregon Legislature: Legislative documents and information are available online at www.leg.state.or.us.

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