

Ray George: To be, or not to be a developer?....(Sorry, Too Late!)

In Ray George's three-column, "I am *not* a developer!" editorial in the December 12, 2003 *Valley Review*, he implies that we -- or anyone -- who believes that he or his wife are developers, are "obstructionist-destroyers." He also suggests that anyone referring to him as a developer is participating in "McCarthyism."

Based on Sultan's position as the reigning Snohomish County (at least) example of extraordinary incompetence in its development practices, we find snicker-inducing that Mr. George would accuse those who advocate for a professionally- and legally-run city government as being McCarthyists. It was nonetheless an excellent editorial. And Mr. George, whatever other monikers one may place upon him, is obviously eloquent and intelligent and in no way do we mean to take away from that. Becoming a P. E. requires multi-discipline mastery of engineering principles, and grants those who achieve it great respect for their technical skills. However, a person's basic drives and motivations remain the same, regardless of their education.

Mr. George complained that we (and other unnamed Obstructionist-Destroyers -- ODs, for short) attacked his character. If Mr. George's interpretation is that his character has been maligned because the term, "developer" has been levied against him, then so be it. But that character "assault" (as Mr. George interprets it) has been made only insofar as our reporting of his building/construction/code-revision activities which prove, beyond any doubt, that he is, indeed, a developer (aside from other titles he may hold). To at least partially support that statement, I offer Webster's New World Dictionary's definition of a developer: "*A person or thing that develops; specif., a) a person who develops real estate on a speculative basis.*" Mr. George's own words and actions -- not mine -- provide proof that the definition fits snugly.

Mr. George is clearly not just a P. E. As a matter of public record, he is also Vice President of his wife's company, INOV8 Real Estate, and by virtue of the marital community, and joint legal action, he and his wife are a single entity, as inseparable and indistinguishable as are Ray Kistenmacher and Loretta Storm, at least as it relates to their city-focused activities.

As to Mr. George's version of how Sultan's (ODs) define the different levels of a developer -- Developer, Greedy Developer and Rich, Greedy Developer -- his exaggeration and sarcasm mocks him, not us, and demeans his intelligence. While we can't speak for other OD's, we will offer our own definition of those terms.

Mr. George states that a developer is someone who builds a home for themselves. the OD's definition of "developer" is someone who builds a house for themselves. That is just plain silly. Then he says a "Greedy Developer" is someone who builds "projects between two and ten structures, with a "Rich, Greedy Developer" one who is successful enough to provide jobs to the community.

We would define a Developer as anyone who builds structures for others to either purpose or use (lease). Our definition of a Greedy Developer as one for whom the rules are never lenient enough and/or for whom the fees are always too high, but *especially* when they insert themselves into the legislative-legal-bureaucratic arena to grease the development wheels (changing codes, contributing to "pliable" election candidates, etc.) for their particular pet project. They will let nothing stand in their way, no matter how many people don't want it or how negatively it may effect the neighborhood's/city's quality of life and/or infrastructure.

In our opinion, the George's defined themselves by aggressively setting up shop in Sultan's political situation and city hall through the following actions: Requesting special favor on impact/hook-up fees and a "designer code" for ADU's (see Ray and Kay George's [letter dated 11/01/2002](#); note their reference to "creating ADU's in other jurisdictions" and their [6/27/2003 follow-up letter to Cisar](#), asking why it was taking so long), and by building what some consider to be an ugly multiplex on Alder Street. But they cemented their developer definition category when they sued adjoining property owners in a quiet title action to gain a 10-foot strip of land north of High Street. Their plan is to build a 30-unit apartment-like condominium, scrunched up behind those single family homes; the George's need to possess that extra strip of land in order to build the largest number of units, achieving the greatest possible profit.

If Mr. George has truly deluded himself into thinking he is NOT a developer, now may be a good time for him to wake up and smell the greenbacks that will soon be flying into his family's community property bank accounts from "*his wife's*" development activities. Mr. George may be an excellent P. E. -- and I suspect he probably is -- but he could use a bit more schooling, it seems, on the definition of a "developer."

As to our definition of a Rich, Greedy Developer, based on historical observation and human nature, it's a virtual fact of life -- barring any shining, white-light Dickinsonian-like epiphany -- that a Greedy Developer soon grows up to be a **Rich**, Greedy Developer.

To address Mr. George's second major point, implying that the ODs are McCarthy-like and that they prefer to destroy than to create, we offer the following:

We would ask Mr. George to instruct us on what, precisely, he thinks the ODs have **destroyed?** The Wagley LID 97-1 wetlands and stream buffers? The wetlands on the Basin upon which Pleasant View and Eagle Ridge were constructed? The decimation of the wetlands, Winter Creek's and its stream buffers so that the infamous and illegal Willow Run could be built to enhance The Broughton and Boucher families wallets? The non-existent Date Street Condo community park that was sacrificed so a developer could squeeze out more profit? What, precisely, have the ODs **destroyed?** That Sultan has been brought to the brink of financial ruin due to incompetence, a self-interested agenda and widespread favoritism is not the OD's doing. G.R.I.T. has only reported it and raised the yellow caution flags in the hope that it won't happen again.

As to the other unnamed ODs to which Mr. George refers -- some of whom are on the planning commission, some on the council -- it may have escaped his notice, but those individuals have been giving everything they've got -- which isn't *money* -- to fight for a *better, brighter future for Sultan*. (Rather than calling them obstructionist McCarthy clones bent on destruction, I call them "heroes.") It takes a bit more time and effort to do it right the *first* time, and that has angered and frustrated the Georges. But those ODs have selflessly given their time, knowledge and passion to ensure that Sultan's future will be planned and built professionally and legally, rather than using Sultan's traditional Build-it-now-for-the-greedy-developer,,,Fix-it-later-with-taxpayer-funding planning principles. That task has been an uphill battle during a time when Rowe has been directing city hall staff, Cisar has been the virtual PC Chair, and a S.I.R.E.-slanted majority has existed in both council and PC chambers. Yet they keep fighting for the little guy homeowner, taxpayer and rate-payer who must live with the consequences of poor city and developer actions.

It seems clear, judging from his first actions as a Sultan Planning Commissioner -- supported by his wife's comments at the end of the meeting -- that Mr. George's preference is to continue "creating" using the old, worn-out planning principles Sultan's always used. That alone should disqualify him from serving on the Planning Commission, as that type of "planning" is counterproductive to the issues facing us in the 21st Century. His conflict of interests on the Commission is further compounded by the code recommendations he will make that will undoubtedly be prejudiced by he and his wife's future personal profits, the same as have been decisions/votes made by Janie Botting, Tom Green and Bart Dalmasso.

Creation does not always mean better. When the S.I.R.E.s bullheadedly created and approved the LID 97-1, they couldn't have picked a poorer location -- the most ecologically sensitive area in Sultan and *THE* worse place imaginable (except as it relates to specific S.I.R.E.-owned properties). But the construction disaster and lack of city oversight *destroyed* wetlands and Wagley's stream buffer, *destroyed* the already-behind-schedule timeline, *destroyed* (or at least crippled) Sultan's finances, and *destroyed* comfortable profit margins for landowners within the LID 97-1 area, which forces them to over-develop and place more strains on the city infrastructure. To view a different act of creation, the new Taj Mahal City Hall was built over significant objections by many of the Sultan S.I.R.E.s, and placed at least a temporary drain on the city's finances. Has that been proven an act of creation or destruction?

As to the George's "creations," I will be the last one to dispute that they are, indeed, creating "something." But only they and their wallets will benefit from what they have created, besides those who will move in. Have the George's stopped to think that, along with their *creations*, they are also *creating* more sewage, garbage, traffic and additional drains on the police, the library, the fire district, and other city -- and Valley -- services? Perhaps the real question is: Do they *care* how it affects Sultan?

Not a developer? The fact that Mr. George tries to deny the title so passionately is laughable. The fact that he apparently doesn't realize he's one, is *scary*.

(Sources: Sky Valley Weekly News: Volume 1, Issue 33, August 16, 2002, Page 13, INOV8 "is owned and operated by Ray and Kay George," and states he's a VP of the company. Website: <http://inov8.net/index.html>; attendance at various planning commission and council meetings, as well as recordings of public meetings; 11/1/02 and 6/27/03 letters obtained through PIRs.)