

From Carol Black, Citizen of Whitman County

April 23, 2025

Whitman County Commissioners
Whitman County Planning Commission
Whitman County Planner

Attached is a downloaded and formatted County Code 9.05 Critical Areas. This is the county governance that I referenced in my earlier written communications and public testimony.

During a recent Planning Commission meeting, County Planner Alan Thomson stated that 9.05 Critical Areas “only affected” certain critical areas; reference the minutes for specifics.

I recognize that Section 9.05.060 addresses areas “regulated” by the code. **However**, the code addresses “aesthetic value protection” in section 9.05.030. I quote from section 9.05.030 C: “**The County finds that critical areas provide a variety of valuable and beneficial biological and physical functions that benefit the County and its residents, and/or may pose a threat to human safety or to public and private property.** The beneficial functions and values provided by critical areas **include, but are not limited to,** water quality protection and enhancement, fish and wildlife habitat, food chain support, flood storage, conveyance and attenuation of flood waters, ground water recharge and discharge, erosion control, protection from hazards, **historical, archaeological, and aesthetic value protection, and recreation.”**

The aesthetic importance of the **Palouse Rolling Hills** is well known to many citizens in Whitman County, as well as to WSU alumni and photographers who visit and spend significant dollars supporting our local businesses. Kamiak Butte is a **National Natural Landmark**. The Planning Commission and Commissioners must make sure that Chapter 19.61 includes reference to these stated 9.05.030 protections because the viewshed is “**valuable and a significant benefit to the County and its residents.**” Other areas within Whitman County do not have the same viewshed impacts as those around the cities of Colfax, Pullman, and Palouse, where the majority of county citizens live, drive, and recreate. There may be other locations in the county close to dams and power infrastructure that are more appropriate to consider for alternate energy.

The county, over the years, has maintained codes to protect the viewshed of skylines/ridgelines. The County Planner has enforced these codes over the years; thus, we do not have houses located on ridgelines in the rural, agricultural area. Rural houses have to provide viewshed protections from other houses – on a horizontal plane – not even a vertical plane. This whole vertical obstruction is not well covered in the code and must be.

Examples of codes addressing views:

- 19.40.010 **Declaration of Intent**. The purpose and intent of the RCR district is to provide a single-family residential zone for the unincorporated rural communities of the County. The intent of this district is the preservation of a rural agriculturally-oriented life style including the keeping of animals for pleasure or profit, retaining low to medium density development, and providing for a mixture of residential uses with buildings necessary to farming operations.
- 19.40.010 and 19.12.050 **Height of Buildings**
- 19.10.060 B1b – **Viewshed Site - Rural Residential Use**

Placing towering monoliths in the Palouse Hills viewshed between Colfax, Albion, Palouse, and Kamiak Butte is not protecting what the citizens consider valuable and important to their quality of life in a rural county.

Respectfully,

Carol Black