

## Debate is good, but so is conclusion

Speaking to Green Car Company founder and co-owner Susan Fahnestock by phone last week about her decision to move from Kirkland to Bellevue, three things she said stood out (I paraphrase):

- I wanted to stay in Kirkland, but it was really hard to find something in town; we couldn't find anything that would work for us.

- I understand there's a big commotion about Parkplace, but something needs to be done about the downtown Kirkland corridor. They need to do something for more facilities. There's just no space.

- Bellevue's got the population, the big condos and the parking for us to be successful.

Fahnestock's position outlines one side of a debate boiling at City Hall, in local coffee shops, on blog pages and even through rival advertisements in this paper. Should the city grow up and out through annexation and new, bigger developments? Or should it put on the brakes and maintain its small-town suburban feel?

At a Planning Commission meeting last week - a gathering that rarely registers as more than a blip on most people's radars - about 250 people attended a hearing to discuss Parkplace, more than 50 signed up to speak and opposing sides passed out stickers, buttons and postcards.

An opposition group, Citizens for Responsible Development (CRD), has popped up to oppose the Parkplace plan.

Two other proposed downtown developments have prompted appeals, street protests and alleged threats

### EDITOR'S NOTE



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against a council member.

Last week 58 local business owners attached their names to a three-quarter page advertisement in the Reporter urging readers to support a "much needed shot in the arm to Kirkland's downtown vitality."

A new blog, [www.kirkland-views.com](http://www.kirkland-views.com), has even sprung up to sift through all the growth topics.

As a prominent community activist and businessperson said to me a few weeks ago, "there's more going on in Kirkland at one time (in regard to growth) right now than I can ever remember."

It's an interesting time, indeed, with Kirkland currently working through an identity crisis. The question for Kirkland now, however, is how to resolve it all in a timely way. The longer the fights drag on, the deeper and longer-lasting the wounds.

For regardless of the debate, I doubt anyone's scoring the Green Car Company's departure as a victory. The stable "green" business has brought in a steady stream of tax dollars and prestige (the dealership has garnered regional and national attention for its business model - and by most opinions is living up to its community responsibilities).

That it is leaving town is a blow.