

## THE CHARLES STROUSS STORY

By Preston Drew

On November 29, 2004, Charles Strauss looked out his window and saw two men standing 300 feet inside his property looking at work he had done with a rented bulldozer. He asked who they were and what they wanted and was told they were King County Department of Development and Environmental Services (DDSES) employees investigating a complaint about clearing in a wetland. He told them to leave when one said, "Let me tell you how it's gonna be" referring to his demand and who was going to tell who what to do. Strauss said "No, let me tell YOU how it's gonna be, you're going to leave right now." When the men turned, Strauss stepped onto his front porch with a shotgun to encourage their departure.

Over several months there was an investigation that ultimately produced serious charges, his arrest and a court appearance. The same day he appeared in court, a federal task force composed of officers from King County Sheriff's office, Washington State Corrections and law enforcement from the Social Security Administration forced their way into his bedroom and violently arrested him in front of his wife. He was made to kneel facing away with four cops shouted and pointed their weapons at the back of his head while he was being handcuffed.

The cause brought print and broadcast media coverage with articles in The King County Journal, Snoqualmie Valley Record and The Valley View. John Carlson from KVI radio did a full hour interview. Recently, the felony charges were reduced to misdemeanor "brandishing", which the prosecutor has agreed to drop entirely once Strauss completes some community service.

vision which was being built at the time of our purchase.

A couple of years later, I learned that the political winds were shifting, that the power that be in Seattle were trying to prevent new homes from being built in our area. They were planning on rezoning our property for Single lot, which would reduce our potential future home sites to eight total. The state requested them to accommodate the predicted King County population growth with a fair share in each planning district, so they came up with a plan to let Weyerhaeuser build a big new high-density city about 2 miles north of us, while taking away our zoning. This sort of down zoning was previously unheard of - one could always assume that one's property could be used according to the zoning when it was purchased...

Re zoning usually meant LIFTING of restrictions, that is, increasing density, or allowing businesses in an area previously restricted.

Because the rezone would be financially disastrous for us, we immediately filed a "plat application", which would allow us to divide our property. Our application was filed before the rezone could take effect, which "vetoed" our zoning under the "G" zoning.

I borrowed a large sum of additional money - ultimately somewhat over \$50,000 - to do all of the required engineering and environmental studies. We dotted our I's and crossed our T's... The folks at the county who review such applications - in those days called BLDL (Building and Land Development) - had a long backlog, so the application took more than a year to review. My immediate neighbors strongly supported my efforts, and showed up at my hearings to testify in my favor, without my asking them.

CCC was a radical anti-growth group.

There is a job worth repeating here... Do you know the difference between a developer and an environmentalist? Well, an environmentalist lives in a house in the woods, and a developer wants to build a house in the woods. Or sometimes it is told this way... The environmentalist built his home LAST week. There lies the money. It is the folks in the subdivision next door who managed to prevent us from extending their neighborhood a little further. This was a huge defeat for us... We went through a series of rezonances, trying to hold onto our house and land. Luckily I ended up working for a Large Real-estate Software Firm, and did quite well for a number of years, so I was able to hang on to the land and pay down the debt.

In 1994 I left said Firm, and opened a recording studio. In the last 10 years, I've recorded about 50 full length music CDs, and worked on hundreds of demos and other music recordings. Now, after working in the music business - a great job, but not the most profitable business to be in - I find that I am again unable to keep up with soaring property taxes and house payments.

Last year I looked into going ahead and selling some lots under the Single zoning, and discovered that I would not be allowed to do so because of something called "Traffic Concurrence"... The idea is that the roads are

inadequate to handle existing traffic, so no new homes will be allowed until the funding is approved by the legislature/congress to improve the roads. I was happy to learn that this had happened, so I contacted the King County Traffic Department for my "Traffic Concurrence Letter", and was informed that this issue about the highways was really a red herring... They informed me that I should expect that my traffic concurrence monstrosity would probably never be lifted because of some thing called "20mil Averages"... What this means is that the county has classified my neighborhood as "small". Despite existing suburban densities. There is no issue with road safety, just their "small character".

Then I found out about the new CAO, which attempts to force us to keep 65% of our land in "native growth"... That is a big joke, because none of it is in true native growth. The original old-growth forests were logged generations ago. When this land is abandoned, it would take hundreds or thousands of years to return to "native growth", if ever. Without ongoing maintenance, the land turns into thickets of Himalayan Blackberry and other undesirable vegetation. Only the occasional sweeping forest fire thins the thickets and allows a real forest to grow.

What this boils down to is that "suburban sprawl" has been determined to be a negative thing. This has been happening.

Continued on page 11

**May Valley Environmental Council**  
meets every Monday at 7:00 p.m.  
in the basement of Leonard's  
at the corner of SR 900 & 164th Avenue NE