

From: [Joseph Vela](#)
To: [Council](#)
Subject: Cherry Point
Date: Thursday, August 13, 2020 11:23:24 AM

Members of the County Council,

My name is Joe Vela and I've lived in Whatcom County now for 4 years and 052006 now reside in District 3. I was born and raised on the South Side of Chicago in the shadows of some of the largest steel mills in the area. My father was 9 when he and his family moved from Mexico and my grandfather found employment at the mills. The mills had provided stable employment and benefits to families in the area for decades. So many small shops and a local economy thrived in the area that thrived off those jobs. People didn't need to go find work, it was already there. But today we all know from the news what the South Side of Chicago is known for. We know when those mills shut down what happened to the local economy. We know what happened to the area when those jobs were lost.

It is no secret the jobs at the refineries provide a great income and benefits for those employed there. BTC offers classes to put those on a path to successful employment there. Those jobs provide the funding base for our local schools, taxes, purchase power to countless local businesses, etc. To stunt growth in the name of social media points is starting a very dangerous journey that seems too familiar to me. If there are concerns about environmental impacts then the concern is with the regulators who make those rules. Business will develop to what the current regulations are, that argument is not with them. We all know racism is a topic of discussion these days, but there are other "-isms" that cause just as much damage to our society. That is classism and elitism. For many years we have begun to devalue certain jobs and career paths. I hope we don't start down a path where skilled labor and the trades are pushed aside.

Growth and protection of our environment can happen together. We can be good stewards of the land and create and maintain well paying jobs. We can grow and be green. We can expand Cherry point and do it responsibly.

Sincerely,
Joe Vela