

Civic Minds in The Seattle Times

Date: Friday, June 12, 2015

E-Edition Date: Monday, June 8, 2015

Article Title: **Angry neighbors demand halt to ‘Eastern Bloc’-like cityscape**

Section: NW Monday, B1

Vocabulary Review:

“The proposed changes in a measure under consideration by the City Council this summer are fairly **arcane**.”

Please look up the definition of **arcane** and use in a sentence, using your own words.

Comprehension Questions

1. The proposed changes in a measure under consideration by the City Council this summer are fairly arcane. What do they involve?
2. After more than an hour of testimony from dozens of people on the changes during Tuesday’s land-use committee public hearing, even Councilmember Tom Rasmussen succumbed to hyperbole. What does “succumbed to hyperbole” mean?
3. “The goal again is to ensure that, as we grow, we don’t look like an Eastern Bloc city,” Rasmussen said, vowing to fight for what?
4. The bill, which could head to the full council as early as June 16, would adjust what? What have many residents been complaining about?
5. The bill does some important things that proponents of tighter regulations have asked for. What are they?
6. From September 2011 to September 2013, _____ percent of building-permit applications in low-rise zones involved town-house construction, according to the DPD.
7. There are some things the bill wouldn’t do. What are they?

Class Discussion Questions and Essay Prompts:

Seattle is in danger of becoming the Soviet Warsaw or East Berlin of the Pacific Northwest, said angry homeowners who showed up at City Hall last week to holler about minor changes to the rules for new homes in low-rise zones.

- What is Eastern Block architecture? Google it and describe it using a few sentences. Do you like it or not? Why?
- What do the homeowners mean when they say this about their Seattle neighborhoods?

“Of course this is emotional,” said Clark, who purchased her Craftsman-style house about 25 years ago. “This is where I live. This is my community. This is my neighborhood.”

- Why are people so passionate about where they live? Their neighborhoods?

Essay

“But more than one person who slammed the legislation, claiming it wouldn’t do enough to halt out-of character development, said the council will determine whether Seattle remains a garden city or acquires a bland, Stalinist cityscape.”

- Out of character development. What does that mean?
- Why would entire neighborhoods and home owners be against new development that doesn’t follow the same building standards and styles of their own homes?
- What does Stalinist Cityscape mean? (Stalinism): The ideology and policies adopted by Stalin, based on centralization, totalitarianism, and the pursuit of communism.
- Would you want Seattle to remain a garden city or a bland, overpopulated landscape? Why or why not?

Newspaper-related CBA activity: U.S. Policy

How the United States government interacts with the world affects people across the globe. Analyze and evaluate the causes and effects of US foreign policy on people in the United States and across the world.

- Using The Seattle Times e-edition, find an article from this week that deals with world politics or foreign policy.
- What are the main points of view from someone living in that particular country? How is that “view” similar and different than your own opinion, regarding the specific issue the article is discussing?
- Why is it important to study and learn about foreign policy? How does it help you understand the world we live in, using current issues and events?

Civic Minds in The Seattle Times is posted to the Web on Friday. Please share the NIE program with other teachers. To sign-up for the electronic edition of the newspaper please call 206/652-6290 or toll-free 1-888/775-2655.

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Answer Key

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Vocabulary Review:

Arcane: Understood by few; mysterious or secret.

Comprehension Questions

1. They involve breezeways, clerestories, partially buried floors and rounding thresholds for density calculations.

2. Succumb: Fail to resist (pressure, temptation, or some other negative force)

Hyperbole: Exaggerated statements or claims not meant to be taken literally.

3. Restrictions on development

4. The bill would adjust zoning changes enacted in 2010. Since then, many residents have complained about developers taking advantage of loopholes to construct buildings with more height, more bulk and more units than planners thought the 2010 changes would allow.

5. It would require upper-level setbacks where new buildings in low-rise zones meet the street, a change designed to make the buildings look and feel not quite so tall.

The bill also would reduce the number of town houses allowed on small lots of less than 3,000 square feet, and it would stop developers from using clerestories — oversized skylights — to build penthouses not otherwise permitted.

6. 35%

7. There are some things the bill wouldn't do. Principally, it wouldn't scrap a workaround allowing developers to build higher on projects with partially buried lower floors. It also wouldn't establish side setbacks for row houses not adjacent to other row houses.

"I regularly see affordable housing torn down ... and replaced with expensive town houses," said Carl Winter, of Capitol Hill. "This rewrite hastens that process because it gives developers more financial incentives to tear down existing houses."

Discussion Questions and Extension Prompts: Individual writing assignments; answers will vary

Newspaper-related CBA activity: U.S. Policy: Answers will vary