

Testimony for Legislative Hearing 4/23
Sally Burrell

Thank you for the chance to share.

Three years ago I visited my sister and her husband in Seattle. One night we abruptly woke to a huge explosion, followed by an hour of sirens coming from all directions. We learned that the blast happened in the heart of the Greenwood business district three miles from us and it was a natural gas explosion. In the morning we rode bikes over to check it out and found the entire main street area cordoned off. Shattered glass everywhere. Two buildings were completely rubble and many others damaged. The fire was finally doused by mid morning. Later we learned that the fire department had sent 67 personnel to the scene. Nine firefighters had minor injuries and were released by noon. 36 businesses had been damaged.

Restaurants, bars, coffee shops, a bike shop, a small theater were some of the businesses that had created the vibrant Greenwood scene and were enjoyed by local, middle class residents and professionals. I recall a fun meal with my siblings ten years ago at Gorditos, a well loved, authentic Mexican restaurant where customers could make their own burritos.

Since the 2016 explosion the area has not been able to recover the economic and social vibrancy it enjoyed before the blast. Greenwood suffered terribly with businesses leaving and many employees losing their jobs. Stressful litigation with Puget Sound Energy dragged out for years and with too little compensation for damages. The owner of Gorditos was homeless for a year due to his losses. To this day there's still a vacant lot where the improperly abandoned gas pipeline leaked and blew up.

This story describes one way fossil fuel infrastructure is detrimental to society and our economy.

The climate impacts of natural gas are as dangerous to society and economy as explosions. Droughts, floods, and fires are increasing and wreaking havoc. Please support legislation that can move forward ASAP to stop fossil fuel infrastructure. If pipelines are present, fossil fuel is sure to flow. We need to develop our electric sources of energy, not more methane flowing and leaking, blowing up or warming up the earth.

Thank you for grappling with these incredibly difficult decisions we have to make at this time in history. It takes a lot of courage and vision.