



DAILY JOURNAL OF COMMERCE

Helping Business do Business Since 1893

October 29, 2015



Crib Notes

By Joe
Nabbefeld

Crib Notes: Techies and towers are good for Seattle's soul

By JOE NABBEFELD

Special to the Journal

Crib Notes is with **Jean Godden** on this one: No way has Seattle “lost its soul” — even with all this growth. Not even part of it.

In fact, Seattle's soul is expanding.

It seems like a ridiculous question to Crib. And if it's rooted in fears of racial diversity, or economic diversity ... or pull-up-the-drawbridge “I got mine” anti-growth quasi-nationalism, then it's not just a limousine-liberal parlor game. It's just plain ugly and seriously offensive.

It's also ugly if it's point-blank negatively characterizing tens of thousands of people based on some insipid stereotyping. As in: “Seattle is losing its soul because all these tech millennials are moving in with money spilling out of their ignorant pockets.”

Amazon.com alone has brought tens of thousands of people here. Maybe it can be cute, with the right inflection, to playfully call “those people” “Amholes.” Or it can be ugly.

Let's call them Amsouls.

God bless those innocent, high-IQ little Amsouls. May they feel welcome in their new soulful city.

May they feel welcome to spend and spend. And enroll their kids in school. And vote for levies to fund schools. And fund more mass transit. And run for City Council seats next to India-born Councilwoman **Kshama Sawant**. And run for mayor. And for King County executive. And pour funds into nonprofits. And contribute to every one of their neighborhoods. Let them sink their roots and their souls here.

But wait! If we welcome soooooo many Amsouls, Facebook souls and Google souls, then we'll have to build housing for them, and feed them, and office them. Oh no! That's where the soul evaporates. There will be big buildings! Oh no! Pull up the drawbridge, now!

Remember the 1970s lights-out billboard? Turn it around, facing out: The last person has entered Seattle, so the rest of you can just go back to where you came from.

City Councilmember Godden is a former Seattle newspaper writer. She recently published a well-worded piece in Crosscut.com titled "Seattle's soul: Alive and well, thank you." She started with a quote from some blogger saying, "Seattle is dead and Amazon killed it."

"It would take a lot more than a few Amazonians crying at their desks to kill Seattle," Godden wrote, invoking an image from a recent New York Times article. "Today we're bursting with next-gen artists, activist, foodies, writers and entrepreneurs."

"Seattle has withstood strong tides before and, short of being killed, has actually become richer — philosophically, culturally and financially."

Now, there are many serious issues that every city and region faces during a boom. Crib Notes wants affordable housing for everybody here. We want the middle class, the workforce — teachers, firefighters, baristas, writers, musicians, janitors, etc. — to all live and creatively flourish IN the city.

We've got hard and expensive work ahead on those important urban planning issues. Negatively stereotyping whole swaths of citizens in order to get them to "stay in their place" or get back out of town isn't the way to do that work.

In fact, we need those bright Amsouls to feel that their ideas and energy on these issues are as welcome as anybody's.

Seattle architect and eminent urban planner **Mark Hinshaw** recently wrote eloquently about all this on Crosscut.com:

"Over the years groups have taken their turn at being the scapegoats. Thirty years ago, it was the yuppies. Then it was the migrating Californians. Then it was the bridge-and-tunnel crowd invading music clubs in hordes. Now the currently convenient target is the Amazonians."

"Listen up, now. Cities. Change. Constantly. It's in their job description. Always has been. They are turbulent stewpots of social and economic ingredients that are continually being re-sorted, altered, morphed and mangled."

If you've gotten too stale to find that exciting, Hinshaw said, then you better move to quieter pastures.

Have ya'll been to the Food Truck Rodeo yet? Seen the eskimo and African masks at Ancient Grounds coffee shop? Tried the Taco Truck Challenge? Tamarind Tree in Little Saigon? Chuck's Hop Shop in the CD? Gone to Stitches fabric shop in Pike-Pine or Toys in Babeland? Your neighborhood tatobery?

When was your last pizza at Tutta Bella? Sunset at Olympic Sculpture Park? Stuck any gum on that horrid "gum wall" at Pike Place Market lately? Gotten down at the Triple Door? Heard the choir at Mount Zion Baptist? Visited an alley in Pioneer Square? Kayaked by the "Sleepless in Seattle" houseboat? Lifted off Lake Union in a seaplane?

When was your last bowl of Ivar's chowder?

Oh yeah, all our soul is gone. And Elvis wrecked America's youth, too.

Joe Nabbefeld is a Realtor with Windermere Capitol Hill. You can reach him at www.RealSolutions.biz. He was the DJC's commercial real estate editor back in the late 1990s and early 2000s.

Previous columns:

- [Crib Notes -- Columbia City: Big change, more to come](#), 09-10-2015
- [Crib Notes -- HALA report: Where do we go from here?](#), 08-20-2015
- [Crib Notes: Housing report is out; let the bloviating begin](#), 07-16-2015
- [Crib Notes: Insignia's eye-popping sales prove it: Seattle needs more condos, and fast](#), 06-11-2015
- [Crib Notes: Creative Class is annexing 23rd & Union](#), 05-14-2015
- [Crib Notes: Home prices move into OMG! territory](#), 04-16-2015
- [Crib Notes: People, lots of them, are going to move here so don't let old planning models hold us back](#), 03-26-2015
- [Crib Notes: Keys are so last year! Let's get ready for homes we can run with our phones](#), 02-19-2015

Copyright 2015 Seattle Daily Journal of Commerce