

October 1, 2016

Dear Planning and Zoning Commission,

Thank you for the many hours of diligent work that you have put into this draft land code. It is obvious that you have tried hard to reach compromises that will satisfy a wide range of community members, which is a laudable goal.

I am conflicted about the timeline currently proposed for the adoption of the new land code. On the one hand, it is a very long and complicated document, so it is an overwhelming task to provide thorough comments with only a few weeks to study it. On the other hand, it has now been more than four years since our county adopted a new Comprehensive Plan, and during that time we have not had a code that matches that plan, even though the current code says that one of the criteria for making a decision is that the proposal must comply with the Comp Plan. This lack of coordination between our code and our comp plan creates some real dilemmas for decision makers and violates State Statute.

Development is picking up in our county, reinforcing the need for a good land use code that matches our Comprehensive Plan. In particular, the draft code does away with Planned Unit Developments, and I, along with many others in our community, would hate to see more developments being approved under the PUD provision, which has contributed greatly to increased density in rural areas far from services, as well as to zombie subdivisions.

All things considered, I think it is time to move this draft code forward to the Board of County Commissioners without further delay, along with your recommendations for changes based on public comment.

There are many things I like about this draft code, such as the 3 agricultural districts with their unique descriptions and unique requirements for priority open space; moving sensitive A-2.5 lands into one of the new Ag districts; the requirement of open space in order to maximize density in most situations; the elimination of the PUD; 2.5-acre lots no longer allowed without significant open space; simplified options for land splits; specific regulations for development within the Scenic Corridor.

However, there are aspects of the draft code that I think could be improved.

Here are my recommendations:

1. Have this draft code reviewed by a professional planning firm or consultant not affiliated with Teton County as soon as possible, so that the public can study those recommendations before the next public hearing.
2. Reduce the maximum density in the 3 rural districts to 1 lot per 15 acres, rather than 1 lot per 10 acres, keeping the same requirements for open space as now proposed, since preserving our agricultural character is a key component of the Comp Plan.

This is still lenient compared to the current 20-acre zoning but would further reduce the potential number of building lots in the county compared to this draft. The additional 17,000 new lots allowed under the draft code, in combination with the currently platted lots (including 7000 vacant ones), would destroy our county's agricultural character and would result in a more urban community than residents want.

3. Do away with the One Time Only Land Split, which is no longer needed because of the new option of Land Divisions. Furthermore, hasn't all the land in Teton Valley already been split at some point? We live on a 10-acre parcel that is not part of a subdivision, yet clearly the land in our area has been subdivided. If you retain the fuzzy option for a One Time Only Land Split, please limit that option to larger parcels, perhaps 40 or more acres, since 14.5.8 states that the purpose is to provide for division of a *large* parcel.

4. Allow Land Divisions only in the RA, LA and FH zones, and not the ARN, since the stated purpose is to more easily divide *large* parcels (whereas the ARN zone allows 3.75 acre zoning without open space). Allow no more than 2 new parcels to be created for a total of 3 parcels (rather than the 4 proposed in the draft). Those wanting to create more parcels could use the Short Plat option, which is another simplified development option.

5. Retain and strengthen the Wildlife Habitat (or Natural Resource) Overlay, with a provision to update that overlay with new data. The Comp Plan clearly and repeatedly calls for protection of our county's natural resources, yet the draft code does not provide sufficient protection for wildlife habitat and other natural resources.

6. Add a provision to the Scenic Corridor section for a scenic vista inventory to be incorporated later, so that views other than those along the highways and Ski Hill Road can be protected in the future, as envisioned in the Comp Plan.

7. Strengthen the Administrative Section so that decisions are not subjective and are not dependent on the opinion of a current planning administrator.

8. Add a section to address "zombie" subdivisions.

Thank you for considering my ideas.

Sincerely,
Alice Stevenson


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