



Land Development Code Issue Spotlight: Places of Worship and Lot Size

Press Release for Immediate Release

Driggs, Idaho June 24, 2021

Overview

Issue Spotlight - Places of Worship and Lot Size

Many people responding to the DRAFT Land Development Code have expressed concern over minimum lot size for a “Place of Worship.” The right to worship is a deeply important part of our American Heritage. It has permeated all aspects of our history and society. It is one thing that our Nation’s founders assured protection in developing a new nation. So why put a size restriction on where a place of worship can be located?

That is a great question. It is one that is a challenge in land uses. Places of worship are desirable community amenities. They provide gathering places for people to come together in celebration of life, including the many milestones of life such as welcoming a new child, marriages, and funerals. They are places of social gathering where people can come together in a unity of shared faith. Places of worship more often than not, have beautiful landscaping and are well cared for.

As a gathering place, they have some basic functional aspects as well. When people gather, they need places to park. They need restroom facilities, which also means they need water and wastewater treatment. They need health and safety provisions, including fire protection and emergency vehicle access. Parking lots need lighting for those dark winter nights. These are all things to consider when choosing a location for a place of worship. As a neighbor, will the lights be obtrusive? Will the traffic be a challenge when a service or social event is over? Can the building hook up to city water or sewer? And if not, is there sufficient water and septic to support the types of use? It wasn’t so long ago that a new place of worship was proposed in the County, and the community as a whole expressed concerns over all of these basic functional aspects - traffic, lighting, building heights, etc.

Currently in Teton County, most of the places of worship are located within the city limits. The LDS Church in Teton is on about 2 ½ acres, including the parking lot north of the church. It is

connected to City water and sewer services. The Calvary Chapel Church in Driggs is on 3.9 acres. The Roman Catholic Church is in the unincorporated county area just south of MD Nursery, and is on 10 acres of land. Grandview Baptist Church is in the unincorporated county north of Driggs on 6.58 acres. These are only a few of the places of worship throughout the Valley. But the trend is the same - many places of worship, even those in the city limits, require a couple of acres to provide an adequate site to accommodate those that come to gather and worship.

Whatever size is necessary, the land use conditions are the same. Is the property large enough to accommodate the building, parking, and other uses? While the DRAFT Land Development Code suggests a minimum size of 5 acres, which is consistent with the places of worship in the unincorporated county, the primary concern is to have a piece of property sufficient to provide a safe and welcoming place for those that gather there. Perhaps the minimum size should be 2 acres. Maybe 3 or 4. Whatever the right threshold is, it needs to be sufficient to support the use in a positive way so it is an asset to the community and for all that use it.

Next Steps

Over 4000 pages of public comments were received regarding the first draft of the proposed Land Development Code. The Planning and Zoning Commission is using that feedback to address issues such minimum lot sizes for a place of worship on Tuesday June 29, 2021 at 4:00 pm. The meeting will be live streamed and recorded at:

<http://tetoncountyid.iqm2.com/Citizens/Default.aspx>

You may also join via zoom at: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/701658496> Meeting ID: 701 658 496

After the second draft of the Land Development Code is created, a public hearing will be held for public input and comment on the second draft (Specific date and time to be determined).

Public participation in this process is sincerely appreciated. Comments and suggestions are being used to create a Land Development Code that best represents our community.

Other Resources

Please visit the Land Development Code site for more information on the project:

<https://www.tetoncountyidaho.gov/additionalInfo.php?deptID=18&pkTopics=736>