



Valley Advocates for Responsible Development

A TALE OF TWO PLATS: Case Studies in Changing Land Use

When I used to live up in Horseshoe Canyon there was a subdivision at the entrance to the canyon that had around 30 platted lots. All these lots had been sold, but only one house had been built and that is the way it remained for year after year. Now when I drive through that neck of the woods I hardly recognize it, there has been so much ground moved.

During the last two years Teton Valley has experienced unprecedented growth, and as a result the Board of County Commissioners and the Planning and Zoning Commission have been scrambling to stay abreast, if not ahead, of the major changes taking place. For me personally, the last 14 months have been dramatic. In the past, one knew that certain development was taking place, but often changes on the ground took place slowly or not at all.

My point is that until one sees ground being broken and roads built, the decisions that have been made at the Board of County Commissioners level do not come alive for us valley residents. One could be driving past open field after open field and think that nothing has changed, when in reality, all the ground that you are used to seeing on your way home from work is already platted lots. Only when we are able to see what is really happening on the ground and experience how it is affecting infrastructure and county services, are we able to tell whether the land-use decisions that have been made are working or not.

Inside this newsletter are two large Planned Unit Development plats. These plans represent two of the largest proposed developments in the valley. One consists of approximately 6500 acres, and the other is over 3500 acres. One plan is requesting 1300 lots – the greatest number in one development in valley history. The other plan is asking for 900 lots – to be sure a large

number, but not close to the maximum number that the owners would have been allowed under the current PUD ordinance. I think that these two plans bring to light many of the issues in terms of land use and development that concern the citizens of Teton Valley: density, open space, wildlife/habitat protection, commercial growth and cost of services.

By comparing these two plans our hope is that you will be better able to understand and visualize the land-use discussions that are taking place and be better informed so that you may make your feelings known on important future land-use and zoning issues.

We are at a point where policies currently under consideration will affect land-use decisions for years to come. VARD is participating on the PUD Working Group, which is working to make recommendations regarding changes needed to the PUD ordinance. In the

next couple of months, this group's recommendations will be considered in public hearing in conjunction with those of the planning firm Clarion & Associates. It will be very important to have public input and support for the necessary revision to the PUD. I hope that this newsletter better equips you to get involved with the need to revise the PUD ordinance in order to preserve and enhance quality of life in Teton Valley.

I think we've all seen examples elsewhere of beneficial growth and destructive growth. We live in a great democracy and the involvement of citizens is critical to a successful democratic process. Let's get involved and stay involved to ensure that Teton Valley's growth is beneficial growth.

—Sandy Mason, Executive Director



We've all seen examples elsewhere of beneficial growth and destructive growth.

Facts and Figures for Thought

TETON COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT #401

- Total lots/units in subdivisions in January 20077,025
- Amount District #401 must raise to meet capacity requirements if one third of the January 2007 platted lots become occupied \$27,476,978
- Total new school construction cost per additional household (not including land, equipment, materials, teachers)\$11,852.47

Source: School District #401, Teton County, Idaho

IDAHO VOTERS ON QUALITY OF LIFE

- A majority believe the rate of growth and development in their community is too fast
- More than six-in-ten are concerned about
 - » conversion of farms and forests to urban development
 - » the loss of family farms and ranches
 - » pollution of streams and lakes
 - » unplanned growth and development

Source: <http://www.idahoworkinglands.com/poll-summary.html>

Survey by Idaho Working Lands Initiative, underwritten by The Nature Conservancy

IDAHO VOTERS ON CONSERVATION INCENTIVES

- 83% of voters polled support tax incentives for landowners who agree to keep their land in farming, ranching and forestry in order to protect land and lakes and streams, conserve fish and wildlife and preserve natural resources
- Almost two-in-three voters (64%) are willing to pay \$20/year to fund these tax incentives

Source: <http://www.idahoworkinglands.com/poll-summary.html>

Survey by Idaho Working Lands Initiative, underwritten by The Nature Conservancy

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Valley Advocates for Responsible Development

MISSION: To advocate for the private, public and civic actions that will result in the responsible development and sustainable use of natural resources (water, land, wildlife and air) in Teton Valley.

OFFICE HOURS—
M-TR 9:00am-4:00pm
Friday by appointment

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VARD, PO Box 1164, Driggs, ID 83422



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What is a PUD?

Planned Unit Development:
A form of planned residential development that concentrates building on one or more parts of the site allowing the remaining land to be used for recreation, open space or preservation of environmentally sensitive areas.

Why is a PUD ordinance a great idea?

A well-conceived PUD allows developers more flexibility and creativity in design. It awards them extra density in return for helping the community safeguard commonly held values such as habitat and agricultural land.

Where does our current PUD ordinance fall short?

1. The densities allowed under the PUD are too high – especially in rural parts of the county. The PUD ordinance allows up to an 1100% increase in the underlying zoning. A 1000-acre parcel in Ag 20 zoning is permitted to have 50 residential units, each on a 20-acre parcel. Under the PUD, 600 units are allowed. That's a radical change to the neighborhood!
2. The definition of open space is vague and unclear. Some developers proposed developments with open space that does not meet the goals clearly laid out in the comprehensive plan, the community's vision for growth and development.
3. The PUD also lacks clear language concerning agricultural uses, wildlife habitat, riparian areas, the costs of community services (roads, schools, water/sewer if applicable etc). All of these areas have been prioritized in the comprehensive plan.

Why do developers want a better PUD ordinance?

Many developers recognize that the current PUD does not create an incentive for good design and appropriate density. By allowing an over 1000% increase in density, combined with a vague definition of open space, those who would spend the extra time and money to be good stewards of the land and community are effectively penalized because they are being surrounded by poorly designed developments. Without clear language pertaining to the community's values, it is difficult or impossible for developers to understand what is expected – which undermines the goal of a predictable, efficient and fair decision-making process.

Quantity of Open Space

By the developer's calculation, open space accounts for 80% of Mahogany Ridge. However, this figure includes all ground, within 1231 lots, which lies outside the building envelopes. VARD believes this is an example of where the ordinance needs clarity so only meaningful open space will qualify.

Density

1321 units (twice the number of housing units currently in Driggs) is not appropriate at this location. The fact that under the current PUD ordinance this development could have far more units shows how the existing allowable densities are simply too high.

Where are the Clusters?

Clusters of housing cannot be identified; housing is spread throughout the entire development.

Clustered design is supposed to be a defining feature of a PUD, but under the language of the existing PUD ordinance many developments, including this one, have been proposed without a clustered design.

Golf Courses

To what extent should highly manicured, chemical- and water-intensive golf courses be allowed to count toward open-space requirements? In this case, the water is recycled, and if the developer chooses to be Audubon certified, chemical use will not be as intensive.

However, VARD's position is that golf courses should only count for a small percentage of the open space requirement to ensure habitat and other sensitive areas are adequately provided for.

MAHOGANY RIDGE

Acreage	3507.64
Units	1381
Percentage Open Space	80% ±
Density	40 units / 100 acres ±
Commercial	44.2 acres
Location	west side, along Cedron Rd



Water

Cutting-edge community wastewater treatment system will process wastewater in constructed wetlands and recycle water for irrigation.

Private 20-40 Acre Inholdings

Landowners had expectations of rural character with large acreages based on the county's Ag-20 zoning in this area. Now these lots will instead be surrounded by dense development.

Hotel

A 150-room hotel is not an appropriate commercial venture for such a rural location.

Open Space Design

Narrow strips of land between lots has been counted as open space. This land does not serve any community purpose; it merely gives the lot owners an illusion of larger lots.

Realigned 500 West

There needs to be an overwhelming, compelling community benefit to moving such a major North-South county road, other than to simply facilitate development.

Crane Habitat

This development is located in an area documented as the most critical crane habitat in the valley. VARD is concerned that the land set aside for cranes is fragmented by roads and houses. It does not provide an adequate buffer from the surrounding development.

OPEN SPACE IN PERSPECTIVE

The fact that Mahogany Ridge and J Lazy H Ranch have calculated a nearly identical amount of open space (MR = 80%, JLH = 79%) when J Lazy H clearly has more meaningful open space points to the shortcomings of the open-space requirements in the current PUD ordinance and why we need to revise it.

A TALE OF TWO PLATS— Case studies in how the current PUD ordinance is shaping development in Teton Valley

Reproduced here are copies of two plans for development that were brought before the county P&Z in January for discussion. These plans have not officially entered the approval process. They are subject to change before being formally submitted. However, we reproduce them here because they show what kinds of developments can be conceived under the current PUD ordinance. These plans are very different from each other in ways which highlight the problems with the PUD ordinance: because it does not provide clear guidelines and parameters, it doesn't consistently result in developments that implement the vision of the comprehensive plan.

The good news is that the county is in the process of revising the PUD ordinance. Although the term "PUD ordinance" may sound foreign and removed from your daily existence, we hope that this newsletter helps you understand how it relates to your quality of life and the things you value in Teton Valley. We hope these pages will help you contribute to the dialogue when the time comes for the public to provide feedback on the new PUD ordinance.

Stewardship

The scale of J Lazy H is so enormous that it requires stewardship of thousands of acres of undeveloped land. This raises the question of county capacity to enforce open-space management plans, especially as there are more and more sites around the county. The developer must demonstrate an adequate long-term open-space management plan and funding mechanisms.

Open Space

Open space is broken down as:
3135 acres conservation
1101 acres agricultural
822.6 acres recreational

Proportions reflect comprehensive plan values and reasons for encouraging open space. Large contiguous tracts have been restored to native vegetation, viable for wildlife habitat.

Commercial

4 acres of commercial use. The small quantity may be appropriate to the location. Just as important as *how much* commercial is *what type* of commercial and whether it will be serving internal needs or targeting outside customers and detracting from established town centers.

Density

Development contains 14 units/100 acres whereas the PUD ordinance allows up to 60 units/100 acres. However the J Lazy H still introduces 957 homes – a big change for the location. This raises questions of service provision, costs of servicing remote locations and who bears the additional costs.

Wildlife Habitat

The Teton River corridor has been identified by Idaho Fish & Game as the most valuable mule deer wintering habitat in South East Idaho. Housing units have been held back from the river rim to protect and buffer this valuable corridor.

Clustered Design

Development groups homes into three distinct clusters, preserving open space.

J LAZY H RANCH

Acreage	6421
Units	957
Percentage Open Space	79% ±
Density	14 units / 100 acres ±
Commercial	4 acres
Location	northwest corner along Hwy 33 (adjoining River Rim Ranch)

VARD Welcomes New Staff Members

This fall VARD welcomed two new staff members to our team. Anna and Lucy both bring great skills, life experiences and enthusiasm to their work. Kathy Rinaldi is also back from maternity leave, now working as Development & Finance Director.

ANNA TRENTADUE

An Idaho native, Anna has worked as a river guide since she was 18 years old. Her experience guiding on rivers throughout Utah, West Virginia, California, Oregon and Idaho is the cornerstone of her interest in resource management. After studying ecology in Nunavut and Nepal, she earned her BA in biology with a minor in French from Colorado College in 2000. After college, she worked in plant genetics and diabetes research for the UC Berkeley Plant Gene Expression Center and UC San Francisco Department of Medicine. Anna then retired her Petri dishes and went to law school, earning her Juris Doctor from the University of San Francisco in 2006. She specialized in land-use and water law, interned with the Attorney General's Energy Task Force and worked at a private water-law practice. Upon graduation, Anna returned to Idaho to work for another private water-law practice in Boise. Anna is working in the position of Program Associate, covering county land-use. She is thrilled by the opportunity to work for VARD and call the Teton mountains her "backyard."



LUCY FLOOD

Lucy graduated with an MA in English and creative writing from the University of Texas at Austin in May of 2007. She also has a degree in human biology with an emphasis in environmental policy from Stanford University. Her fiction and non-fiction has appeared in magazines, journals and newspapers across the country, and she has worked extensively on fisheries, forestry and land-use issues in British Columbia and Kentucky. Some of her latest writing projects have centered around mountaintop-removal mining, a particularly destructive form of mining that is pervasive in the south east. Lucy's passion for VARD's mission is fueled in part by her experiences growing up in rural Kentucky and her family's battle to save their farm from encroaching development. Lucy worked as an intern for three months before being hired as Communications & Education Associate. She is also covering land use in Victor. **VARD**



PLEASE JOIN local elected and appointed officials, a community planner, media and Valley Advocates for Responsible Development for an **ADVOCACY WORKSHOP** focusing on citizen involvement in the local decision-making process. Our guest panelists include:

Victor Mayor Don Thompson, Driggs Planning Administrator Doug Self, Teton City Council member Tiera Ball, County Commissioner Larry Young, County P & Z Commissioner Sabra Steele, Teton Valley News Publisher Stacy Simonet

We invite all members of the community to attend this event. It is a unique opportunity for Teton Valley citizens to develop a relationship with local government officials and learn how to effectively voice their opinions during public hearings. This is a non-issue-specific, non-partisan evening dedicated to learning and dialoguing about citizens' rights and responsibilities in local government.

ADVOCACY WORKSHOP
Citizen Involvement in Local Decision-Making
Cost: FREE!
February 21 • Thursday, 6:30-8:30^{pm}
Driggs Community Center, Senior Center Room
Space is limited to 40 attendees; no reservation needed.

Please contact VARD for more information:
 208-354-1707 • info@tetonvalleyadvocates.org

GIVE NOW and your Donation will be Matched Dollar for Dollar!

If you have appreciated VARD's voice for a better plan to manage growth in Teton Valley – whether it be our policy research and recommendations, presence at local meetings, hosting of educational events or informative publications like this one – then we hope you'll consider a donation towards our work.

A very generous donor has offered to match new membership donations dollar for dollar up to a total of \$10,000. This is a great opportunity for you and VARD since your donation will essentially be doubled. For those of you who are already members, any amount you give over and above your last annual donation will also be matched. We hope that you will take advantage of this special opportunity to make your donation go even further. We are a membership-based organization and the more members we have the stronger our voice. Thanks in advance for your support! **VARD**

Get Involved • Become a Member **TETON VALLEY NEEDS YOU!**

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Members will receive meeting invitations, regular newsletters and e-mail updates.

PLEASE RETURN THIS FORM AND YOUR CHECK TO: **VARD** P.O. Box 1164, Driggs, ID 83422

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