

Over the past 6 years, Valley Advocates for Responsible Development (VARD) has learned a few things and matured. For what it's worth, I'd like to share a few of those lessons with the Teton Valley Alliance (TVA): 1) heed the warning signs early, 2) own your part, and 3) you have to give a little to get a little.

The moratorium that passed last Monday was not based on three months worth of work by two freshman commissioners and one long standing commissioner, it was the result of a cumulation of events over the past 4 years. Our valley was bound to grow, but there have been warning signs that we are not managing that growth well:

- Red flag #1: the rush of 2.5 rezoning in 2003 – 2004. Many agree that this was triggered by recommendations from the county appointed Land Use Subcommittee for the Comprehensive Plan, which outlined more progressive land use policies.
- Red Flag #2: The passage of the Comprehensive Plan and Subdivision Ordinance in 2005 with dramatic increases in allowable density. Pending subdivision application numbers began to creep up and poor subdivision designs began to manifest the shortcomings of the PUD ordinance.
- Red Flag #3: the May 2006 emergency ordinances. Although the ordinances failed, the Board at the time did see enough merit in them to bring them to a hearing.
- Red Flag #4: the November 2006 elections clearly indicated that Teton County residents were ready for a change and Proposition 2, which would have undermined local land use planning, was soundly defeated. The Alliance officially supported Proposition 2.

The county has problems and these problems have accumulated through multiple administrations and have involved many different decision makers. Right or wrong, I believe the decision makers at the time did what they thought was right. Unfortunately, in a short period of time it was evident that those policies and codes were flawed and changes were necessary. The Alliance publicly stated that they recognized that changes in land use were pending. Logically at that point the Alliance should have spent the first three months of this new administration working to ensure that land use issues were addressed, in order to prevent the need for a drastic move like a moratorium, but they didn't.

In VARD's first few years we thought one of our best tactics was legal action. Although legal action does have its merits and place in decision-making, it does little to initiate relationships. We soon realized that we had to "give a little to get a little". The Alliance's most recent actions of recall and lawsuits against the county will do nothing but further the divide in the valley. As many stated during last Monday's public hearing, "let's pull up our sleeves and get to work." Instead, the Alliance taking off the gloves. Community division is a choice, we can also chose to unite.

As my friend Ken Chambers says, “Aren’t we sick and tired of being sick and tired?”  
Now is not the time to fight, it’s time to pull up our sleeves and work hard. It’s the only  
way we will succeed as a diverse community.