

November 12, 2008

Teton County P&Z  
89 North Main Street  
Driggs, Idaho 83422

RE: Ridgeline Ranch's choice of a remand back to P&Z.

Dear Commissioners,

We at Valley Advocates for Responsible Development (VARD) appreciate the reduction of eleven (11) units from the project, and the inclusion of an improved open space management plan. The tough part about what happens next, is the fact that the new design of Ridgeline still does not address the minimum recommendations of the developer's own biologist and the overall design is still not harmonious with the surrounding environment.

**I. The minimum recommendations by the developer's own biologist remain unaddressed.**

The developer hired Intermountain Aquatics (IMA) to conduct an ecological assessment of the wildlife resources on the project site. After site visits and follow-up analysis, IMA recommended as an *absolute minimum* wildlife buffer of 400 feet, but IMA determined that using this minimum distance will still only guarantee "limited" wildlife benefit. (Page 4.) The report identified a raptor nest in the middle of the property, and imposed a 650 to 1,300 ft buffer around nest to protect raptors. (Page 8.) The report listed IMA's recommended habitat and wildlife conservation measures:

1. Protect and enhance priority habitat areas. (Page 6.)
2. Create buffers around key habitats. (Page 8.)
3. Coordinate open space planning and management with neighbors. (Page 8.)

IMA's summary review of Ridgeline Ranch's designs was as follows:

Although the plan is headed in a positive direction we think current proposed densities are too high to provide meaningful ecological function and wildlife preservation of target species. (Page 10.)

The report then finishes with 5 recommendations on the current design of Ridgeline Ranch "to help guide revisions that enhance conservation." (Page 10.)

1. Pull development out of the aspen / mountain shrub habitat on the west edge of the main draw. (Page 10.)

2. Remove the lots, or at least the building envelopes that are located in the eastern buffer of the main draw. (Page 10.)
3. Remove the lots, or at least the building envelopes that are located in the eastern buffer of the main draw.
4. Development should be removed from the big game movement routes in the west side of the project. If one area has to be “sacrificed” the other should be protected and restored. (Page 10.)
5. Alternative access points for the east side should be explored to avoid the sage-steppe habitat. (Page 10.)

When we look at the current design of the Ridgeline Ranch, the developer has simply not addressed the concerns of their own biologist. Moreover, the lodge was not designed into the project until after IMA’s assessment was done. The increased traffic and uses of the lodge, coupled with its location in the wildlife buffer would certainly be another concern addressed in the assessment.

## **II. Ridgeline Ranch is still not harmonious with the surrounding environment.**

Even with the new design, Ridgeline Ranch still has an overall average density of 28/100 with 65.7% open space. The lot sizes range from 0.76 acres up to 1.58 acres. The lodge size takes up 2.00 acres. Here are the statistics from the surrounding developments, which illustrate just how inharmonious Ridgeline really is:

1. River Rim Ranch PUD surrounds Ridgeline Ranch to the north, south, and east. It has an overall average density of 12/100 with over 60% open space. The lots sizes range from cabins to 10+ acres. There are 132 lots that are over 5 acres in size. There are 70 lots over 7.5 acres in size. River Rim does not use these large lots in calculating its percentage of open space; thus all of these large lots are providing additional open space above and beyond the 60% designated open space.
2. Nearby to the north is Jay Lazy H Ranch PUD with an overall average density of 14.9/100 and over 79% open space. The lot sizes range from 0.23 acres to 160 acres. There are 5 lots totaling 797 acres, and an additional 5,058 acres have been set aside as open space. The large lots have not been used in calculating the percentage of open space; thus all of the large lots are providing additional open space above and beyond the 79% designated open space.
3. Nearby to the south is Big Game View Ranch, a traditional subdivision with 13 lots ranging from 20 to 39.8 acres. It should also be noted that this subdivision was engineered back in October of 1981.
4. Nearby to the northwest is Bridlecrest PUD, with an overall average density of 18/100 and 78% open space. The lot sizes range from 0/25 to 20 acres. There are 68 lots that are over 5 acres in size. There are 30 lots that are over 15 acres in size.

5. Not quite as nearby to the west is Canyon Creek Ranch PUD, with an overall average density of 15/100 and 67% open space. The lot sizes range from 0.1 to 17.8 acres. There are 80 lots over 4.2 acres in size. The large lots have not been used in calculating the percentage of open space; thus all of the large lots are providing additional open space above and beyond the 67% designated open space.

### **III. The cost estimate needs to be updated.**

The cost estimate is now exactly one (1) year old, dating back to November 13, 2007. The letter of intent from Superior Lending Associates LLC is also one (1) year old, dated November 14, 2007. Both the cost estimate and the letter of intent are based on an earlier version of this project, and do not include construction of the lodge and its parking lot, flood irrigation as referenced in the Open Space Management Plan, and other landscaping/vegetation restoration that is mentioned in the Open Space Management Plan and IMA Environmental Analysis. Teton County has historically struggled to ensure that the cost estimate accurately reflects all the infrastructure, land management, and promised amenities.

### **III. Conclusion.**

We at VARD believe that this project is large enough, and located in such a rural area, that it must be held to the same standards and rigorous scrutiny as other north end developments. It is the fair and consistent approach to ensuring developments that benefits the entire community.

Sincerely,

Anna Trentadue