

Re: Auto-Urban Residential zoning amendment workshop

*Below are the comments Becky Tillson, Community Planning Associate, verbally presented at the **March 25, 2010**, Town Council workshop.*

Becky Tillson, Jackson Hole Conservation Alliance. Thanks for the opportunity to comment today.

We are here primarily to raise questions about this proposal for your discussion. While I recognize the desire for a high level discussion today, and as I'm sure you are aware, the real implications of this change are hinged on how the details get hammered out.

First of all, the timing of this proposal – during the Comp Plan rewrite process – is concerning. The planning commissioners are in the midst of a long range planning exercise that will determine the character and land use pattern of different districts throughout town. The AR zone covers a large area containing a lot of parcels, and we question the desire to make such sweeping changes to such a large area of town right before you all, as elected officials, have the chance to review the Comp Plan. Making surgical, neighborhood-by-neighborhood changes prior to your review of the Future Land Use Plan Maps may result, at best, in a duplication of efforts, and at worst, in a waste of time or an undue influence on the Comp Plan and the FLUPs.

Second, as the staff report outlines, the AR zone currently is a source of affordable rentals for the workforce. The goal of the proposed change SHOULD BE an increase in density IN EXCHANGE FOR real community benefit – workforce housing. The question then becomes, will this proposal actually achieve that? Can we afford to lose existing affordable rentals? Will there be a deed restriction placed on the ownership products to encourage owner occupancy? Is it fair to assume that non-homeowners are not invested in the community? It's important to realize that without a real conscious effort, redevelopment rarely results in affordable housing options for members of this community.

Third, it is well documented that, particularly in resort communities, smaller units are not necessarily more affordable. We cannot make assumptions about affordability based purely on square footage.

And lastly, we'd like to reiterate what many have said already over the course of this debate – if you increase the practical development potential on a parcel of land, the value of that parcel will increase as well, which naturally – barring a deed restriction – stands to threaten the affordability of these smaller homes. Is this actually what we need to serve the community and the workforce?

Thanks for your attention.