

Making a wise investment

Sandy Mason

Valley Advocates for Responsible Development

Imagine someone telling you that they were going to build their dream home but cut costs by not having the house plans engineered. You'd say that they were being penny wise and pound foolish. But until recently that has been the approach taken by Teton County in planning for our future. Over the last year a lot of effort has been expended on laying a framework for dealing with growth more effectively. This is wise. It's wise from a financial and economic perspective as well as an environmental and social perspective.

The story of the landfill alone should have taught us the importance of planning. Anticipating the problem for over 10 years, but waiting for the emergency when the Department of Environmental Quality ordered it closed, was not only a dangerous approach but also proved costly to taxpayers. Deteriorating roads, schools strapped for resources, increasingly fragmented wildlife habitat, and frivolous water use are just a few compelling reasons for us to get our development house in order now. Simply put, the proactive planning taking place now is not only smart, but it will save us and our children money in the long run.

Just as with any family, for the county to plan for a more fiscally sound future takes upfront investment. Hiring Hofman Associates to draw up a Capital Improvements Plan (CIP) means the county will have a better handle on what areas of county infrastructure that need upgrading when, and what that will cost. The CIP also takes us a step closer to implementing impact fees to help development pay its fair share.

Hiring Clarion Associates to work with the county on land use policy, and specifically to improve our Planned Unit Development (PUD) ordinance, is likewise an investment in the future. No ordinance is perfect but the proposed revisions are good and will put us light years ahead of where we are now. It will allow our decision makers to use many proven tools to make more thorough, comprehensively informed decisions to preserve quality of life in Teton Valley. Equally important, the revisions will ensure a more fair and predictable process for developers and the public.

Whether your concerns for Teton Valley lie in habitat protection, fiscal responsibility, school funding or economic growth, the new PUD provides the tools for our decision makers to address our community's most pressing concerns. We all know Teton Valley is special and as a community we've asked for a better plan to manage growth. Now is the time to implement that plan.

Do your part! Email the P&Z Commission by 5pm on Tuesday, June 3rd at pzadmin@co.teton.id.us to thank them for their hard work and tell them you support the adoption of the revised PUD ordinance. The P&Z's public hearing on the revised PUD will be held Wednesday, June 11th at 6pm at the Middle School in Driggs.