

To: Planning Board and City Council

From: John Wolverton

Date: 4-14-2022

Subject: Public Comment on Grant Creek Village / 2920 Expo Parkway - Gravel Pit Rezone

Officials and Board Members,

The Missoula area is experiencing what can fairly be expressed as a housing cost/supply emergency that is showing signs of creating a generational crisis. The cost of housing, combined with relatively stagnant wages is particularly troublesome for working class households. These are the workers who do all the background tasks keeping our community fed, caffeinated, tended, clean and functioning. It is not an option to turn away from any opportunity to effectively address this issue.

We cannot municipally fund or even public / private partnership our way out of this with affordable housing initiatives. We must uncork the most basic and effective local tool, our zoning code, to allow for creation of more housing options - shared fairly - across our entire city. This would be at virtually no fiscal expense to our municipal coffers.

On this project there are voices who offer a red herring argument about wildfire evacuation concerns. The fire risk assessment report in the application packet lays those concerns to rest. I'll add that a lay-person's scan of google maps shows that, in the case of true urgency there would be various alternate evacuation routes out of Grant Creek (Dark Horse Lane to Butler Creek, Old Indian Trail to Wilke, Snowbowl Road to Dodd Ranch Road, even an old frontage road eastbound to Coal Mine Road). If our civil authorities can manage to move 25,000 people away from Griz Stadium in a matter of hours at the end of a game, the evacuation of a couple thousand residents from the upper Grant Creek drainage should not be a problem. I call this a red herring argument because it is designed to distract you (such as it did me with google maps) into more complex conversations that ought-to and rightly-so, be conducted within other forums about W.U.I. development.

The claims of excess burdens this development would impose on Grant Creek residents are exaggerated. An expansion of about 200 residential units within our community on any given year would be a significant and beneficial bump to our housing stock. However with current demographic trends of 1.5 people per household it would not even be a modest burden on infrastructure and traffic in a drainage that suffers from expensive-to-service low density housing. This development with the added units should be characterized as bringing Grant Creek closer to paying their fair share of infrastructure and municipal service costs.

There have been multiple generations of a tremendous cohort of US citizens that have had the fortune to become financially stable, even wealthy through their real estate

assets. Along the way many of them have had time and the financial wherewithal to stage effective resistance to change, becoming ever more clever, entitled and powerful along the way. There is an interesting irony in those dynamics when it comes to resistance toward letting new neighbors into their villages... While they are begging their children for grandchildren, they simultaneously work at denying their grandkids somewhere to live.

This conversation is about adding much needed housing stock for everyday people. I urge you to recommend approval / to approve this Expo Parkway Gravel Pit rezone as requested by the developer, indeed it should be amended to allow more residential (as originally requested) and mixed-use for some small banking and storefront retail opportunities.

I have no relationship or even acquaintance with the developers.  
Thank you for your time and consideration.

John Wolverton  
Missoula - Franklin neighborhood resident