

From: [Kim Birck](#)
To: [Dave DeGrandpre](#)
Subject: Rezone request at 2920 Expo Parkway - Public comment for Planning Board Packet
Date: Friday, July 10, 2020 10:07:26 AM

Kim Erway Birck
9280 Keegan Trail
Missoula, MT 59808
July 10, 2020

Dave DeGrandpre
Development Services

To Development Staff, Planning Board members and City Councilors,

I am writing in response to the request by Ken Ault to rezone 2 parcels at 2920 Expo Parkway.

I participated in the process when the current zoning was put in place, and feel that that process created zoning designations which were an excellent compromise between allowing for density and preserving a transitional zone of single-family housing adjacent to and similar to the homes in the Prospect Subdivision.

That zoning, which is still in place, created a trust between the government and the homeowners on Old Quarry Road, many of whom bought with the assurance that similar housing would be allowed on the adjacent parcel. To change from single family homes to 4-story apartment buildings in a sea of asphalt would be a serious violation of that trust.

There are many reasons to vote AGAINST this requested re-zone, including many of the criteria in Missoula's Growth Plan. But I will let others speak to the questions of whether the proposal is consistent with neighborhood character, lacks access to essential services and amenities, provides affordable housing and opportunities for homeownership, and whether the

anticipated 300 additional school-age children will cause problems for Hellgate Elementary Schools and for District 4 taxpayers.

For me, the overriding and irreconcilable concern is the increase in number of vehicles expected to use the already overburdened I-90 underpass, which even after this summer's long-awaited improvements will be barely adequate for the current population of Grant Creek plus the commercial properties at the valley's mouth. The traffic study commissioned by the developer is woefully inadequate, as it doesn't consider ski season traffic loads generated by Snowbowl. It also seems to ignore what happens to the vehicles in their 2500 parking spaces once they get onto lower Grant Creek Road and North Reserve St.

In my mind, this doubling or tripling of commuter traffic would be akin to dropping a large boulder at the upper end of a culvert. The flow of water – or traffic – would trickle to a near stop, backing up past Stonebridge Road to the Prospect entrance during commuting hours. The difference, though, is that with a blocked culvert, water can flow over the road surface to continue its way downstream. The cars however, cannot get around the blocked underpass. They cannot go up over I-90 to get beyond the obstruction.

Grant Creek Road is the only way in and out of a valley containing over 600 residences in a Wildland Urban Interface zone that has seen a number of wildfires in the past couple decades. Emergency vehicles have to be able get INTO the valley to fight fires or attend to medical emergencies. A perennial traffic blockage at the interchange would impair the ability of emergency personnel to meet our needs. Response times are already too slow for our insurance companies' preferences.

If this rezoning does not include a "fix" for the one way in/one way out problem, it should NOT be approved. Several possible fixes include:

- creating a new I-90 underpass to provide a 2nd way out of Grant Creek to serve the Cottonwood and proposed Grant Creek Village developments
- extending Expo Parkway along the foothills as a new frontage road to connect to Airway Boulevard, which would also allow commercial traffic a new way to get onto I-90W/Hwy 93W
- Providing a site for a new MFD Fire and EMT station north of I-90.

Any or all of these fixes would keep the main Grant Creek Road usable in a fire emergency, by evacuating residents as well as by incoming emergency responders.

Some have suggested a traffic circle north of the interchange, but that would not fix the problem, in my opinion. It would actually make it WORSE, since there isn't room for a circle of sufficient radius to allow vehicles exiting Grant Creek large enough breaks in traffic to jump into the circle. One hesitant driver at the front of the line could back everyone up for long minutes, since they would have to yield to Hwy 93 northbound traffic as well as traffic turning southbound onto North Reserve Street from I-90 west, vehicles that would already be in the circle.

In closing, I would like to say that the existing zoning - which allows 502 more residences, both single family and multi-dwelling units - DOES meet many of the Missoula Growth Plan criteria, and can be supported by Grant Creek residents as doing our share to accommodate Missoula's growing population.

Don't drop the boulder in the I-90 underpass! Please deny the request to rezone.

Thank you,

Kim E. Birck

406-543-4452