

6706 Glacier Drive
Boise, ID 83716
March 31, 2016

Planning & Zoning Commission
Boise City
150 Capitol Blvd.
Boise, ID

Re: SUB16-00006 & PUD16-00005
Ben's Crow Inn Development

Commissioners:

My concerns set forth in this letter are regarding the conversion of the Ben's Crow Inn commercially zoned property to residential zoning, and the development of high density housing on this land.

As a 15 year resident of Barber Valley I have seen it explode from a rural backwater into an upscale, high end housing development. I have been involved in most of the meetings and hearings about Harris Ranch, River Heights, Barber Station, SP01, SP02, and all the other developments. We are just about out of land here in the Valley, but there is no need for high density housing with serious environmental and social effects. Such high density housing is more appropriate for the inner City.

The Housing Style of the Development

It is obvious that an almost solid wall of 3 story houses will not provide a pleasant experience to Greenbelt users. There is no similar condition along the full length of the Greenbelt. Even in the midst of the City there is open space next to the Greenbelt and any large buildings are set back from the path by many feet. In the current situation, the 3 story houses would be on top of a 10 foot high cliff, adding an even more overwhelming and threatening atmosphere. It would definitely be a very negative experience for the bikers and walkers on the Greenbelt.

This 50 foot high wall would be even taller and more depressing than Donald Trump's Mexican wall.

The lot configuration is bizarre at best. The internal private access road divides the lots into two smaller lots. What is to be done with that throw-away area to the NE? It appear to be unusable for outbuildings, parking, or children play areas. With setbacks and easements considered, a multi story house is required to get reasonable living space (2000 SQ FT) on the buildable 4000 sq ft lot. Calling this a 6000 sq. ft. lot is a serious misrepresentation. The 4000 sq. ft. buildable area is far less than the minimum 5000 and 5500 sq. ft. areas called for in R-2 and PUD Standards. There will be minimum area available for outdoor living space, such as vehicle parking, children's play area, pet run, BBQ area, etc. Such a super crowded condition is not compatible with the architectural scheme of the Barber Valley. This is more like crowded inner city apartment or condominium development. This "rabbit hutch, breeding pen" style of housing is not consistent with the values of Barber Valley. Furthermore, it is doubtful that the 3 story houses can meet the 35 foot maximum height requirement.

The Greenbelt is non-renewable and non-replaceable positive asset to the Boise area, and the Barber Valley in particular. The wildlife, scenery, and peace of the area are enjoyed by thousands of walkers, runners, and bicyclists who escape from the urban setting to this semi-wilderness place. It would be a

great disservice to the Greenbelt users to destroy their experience with a poorly designed high density housing project

My recommendation is to establish minimum 50 ft. lot widths with 10 ft. setbacks and to allow only two story houses. There should be a minimum 30 ft. setback from the western property line to avoid negative impact on the Greenbelt.

Additionally, there should be landscaping with plant and trees on the west side of the lots to screen the houses from view on the Greenbelt.

Commercial Venue

One commendable feature of the Barber Valley Plan is the inclusion of mixed use areas where business and residence are closely integrated. This concept is intended to reduce vehicle traffic and promote a sense of “neighborhood”. Such areas are already included in SP01 and SP02 development. The developer would be in keeping with this theme and greatly enhancing the neighborhood by keeping a portion of the development in Commercial zoning.

It is absolutely necessary to have some form of commercial gathering/entertainment/eating/social center to serve the interests of the Barber Valley, particularly the east end residents and Greenbelt traffic. The central valley has Lucky 13 as their focal point, and the west end heads toward Bown Crossing. The east end should not be left unserved with no facility. The Crow Inn has been a favorite stopping and eating spot for thousands of Treasure Valley residents on their way to Lucky Peak or Idaho City. Ben has been very generous in allowing neighborhood groups to have meetings there. The popularity of Ben’s through the years is proof that there has been a demand, which will only increase with the increased population in the neighborhood.

If such a center is located in the subject property, it will be within walkable distance from residents in River Heights, Riverland Terrace, East Valley, and Highland Valley Road. It will thus increase trip capture and serve to reduce driving and air pollution. The center would be an attractive selling point for all houses in the east end of Barber Valley.

I ask that a portion of the subject property be kept as Commercial zoned in order to allow a business enterprise to serve the east end of Barber Valley and the Greenbelt.

Greenbelt Access

Currently, there is access from Warm Springs Avenue to the Greenbelt through the Crow Inn parking lot and down a path over the Penitentiary Canal.

This is the only public access point to the Greenbelt for a great distance in either direction. It is essential that this access remain open. The Developer has indicated an access path through the housing and connecting to the existing access path. This steep descending path is very rough because of tree roots, and is not handicapped accessible. Ada County Parks and Waterways is currently developing a plan for reconstructing the Greenbelt to Diversion Dam, and such a plan could include a handicapped accessible path down from the BCI property to the Greenbelt. The Developer should coordinate with Ada County Parks and Waterways to incorporate an access path that would serve the needs of the entire community.

This Greenbelt access will serve the east end community by allowing an easy access point for students on their way to East Jr. High, and for commuters using bicycles to ride to work.

Now there is Greenbelt access and parking on the private property of Ben's Crow Inn. For the most part the hours of Greenbelt usage and bar patronage are different and there is rarely parking conflict. Greenbelt users do not often exceed 10 cars in the lot, whereas there may be up to 20 cars and motorcycles for the bar.

If the Greenbelt access and commercial venture are to remain viable, there must be adequate vehicle parking for the patrons. I would suggest a car lot immediately adjacent to the Greenbelt access and commercial venue. City Building Code may call for the number of parking spaces. What is parking requirement at Ridge to Rivers trailheads?

When bus service is extended to the east end of the Valley there should be a bus stop at the Greenbelt access point.

I ask that the Developer coordinate with Ada County Parks and Waterways to incorporate a Greenbelt access path that would serve the needs of the entire community.

Amenities

There is no designated community facility (clubhouse, meeting room, swimming pool, recreation facility, or children's play area). Failure to have these facilities on site means that the residents must drive out of the area, thus negating any trip capture credit. Although East Valley does have a children's play lot, it is not easily walkable from this development. Facilities for children's development and walkable access to school should be made a primary concern.

Amenities for adults and children will make this development more desirable and salable.

I ask that the Developer provide the amenities discussed above on the site, or that they provide a safe and walkable path to those in the East Valley subdivision.

Warm Springs Avenue Crossing

There will be children and adults on both sides of Warm Springs Avenue wishing to cross the street for various reasons. Many will cross to get access to and from the Greenbelt and Boise River. Others will need to go to and from work or school. All need a safe passage across Warm Springs Avenue. Now that ACHD has designated this street as a 2 or 3 lane road, such a crossing is more feasible.

Establishment of a street crossing is a responsibility of ACHD, not the Developer. However, because the Developer is the same on both sides of the street, he can make the crossing entrance and exit on both sides of the street line up.

I ask that the Developer work closely with ACHD to install a safe crosswalk, complete with signs and/or signals, to connect the east and west sides of Warm Springs Avenue.

Warm Springs Avenue Sidewalk

The Developer has suggested installing a 1326 foot long paved sidewalk along the western side of Warm Springs Avenue. There is no connecting sidewalk on either ends of this sidewalk, and property at both ends is in Ada County. It is a "Sidewalk to Nowhere", connecting no residences or Greenbelt

portions. ACHD is now planning to upgrade WSA to 2 or 3 lanes and the configuration has not been established yet. The money spent on this sidewalk project would be better applied to constructing a connecting sidewalk on the east side of WSA from the East Valley development to the River Heights development north of Riverland Terrace. Such a sidewalk would then complete the sidewalk system and offer safe pedestrian and bicycle access from the Crow Inn and East Valley developments to East Jr. High, Shakespeare Festival, Lucky 13, and other school and commercial venues.

I ask that the Developer coordinate with ACHD to construct this alternative sidewalk.

Thank you very much for your consideration of my concerns.

Pete White