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Subject: Public Comment on proposed Comprehensive Plan process
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To the Council,

I urge you to reject the "Comp Plan lite" process proposed by staff in today's Council meeting, and to engage in a full Comp Plan process. Ketchum and the world have changed in the last decade in ways that the old plan did not contemplate, and which a new plan needs to integrate. Just marking up sections of the old plan is not sufficient to reflect the current reality.

1. Demographics- over the past 10 years, according to data from license registrations, there has been a significant turnover in the full time resident population of Ketchum, well beyond just the growth in heads. Jap Vos, a Univ of Idaho land use professor, presented some of this data at the WRLT session at the Library this month. The implication is that the the Comp Plan of 2014 does not, indeed cannot, represent the will of the residents who live here today. Every legal resident of Ketchum should have the opportunity to have a voice in this process. Many new families moved into Ketchum over the past three years—they are the future of Ketchum, and should get their say.

2. Economics— While Ketchum has always been interwoven with the City of Sun Valley, due to changes in the economic model of Ketchum in the last 10 years, Ketchum is even more interdependent with both Hailey and Bellevue, where much of our workforce now resides. This shift is a major change in the nature of Ketchum, and should be reflected in the Comp Plan. The WRLT is doing important work on land use planning throughout the WRV, that the Ketchum Comp Plan process could benefit from. Economic changes have also impacted what kind of retail works in Ketchum and how other types of businesses can function. Doing a commercial demand study is sensible, by why just that? We could use insights into the demand for workforce housing, tourism housing, second homes and full time homes to help shape the new Comp Plan. 10 years ago, the 1% for Air was brand new—now we have a better sense of its impact on the community. The new Comp Plan should have a say in the role of resident resources allocated to tourism in Ketchum.

3. Technology— the world is much different than it was 10 years ago. How people learn and how people work have evolved. Ketchum is even more connected to the outside world than it was 10 years ago. This changes how residents see themselves and their community and needs to be reflected in the Comp Plan.

4. Environment— Climate change is becoming ever more evident, and its effects are felt here. How do the residents of Ketchum want to adapt to that over the next decade? Do we want to invest in a microgrid? What should we do about fire mitigation? How should we live with wild animals like bear, moose, cougars and elk? What should we do about water use planning? Would we have chosen to rebuild a 40 year old WTF, or would we have opted for a brand new one on smaller footprint if we had had a Comp Plan update?

5. Land Use—10 years ago, it was still possible that Warm Springs Ranch would be turned into a hotel complex. That did not happen. But a Gateway Plan from over a decade ago was used to justify the zoning waivers the Council gave to the Marriott, against the will of Ketchum residents. A decade ago, while we had a housing crisis, we still had long term rentals in Ketchum and did not anticipate their wholesale conversion to STRs. The ADU plan under consideration could result in even more STRs. In a new Comp Plan, the residents might have very different views on the role of hotels and short-term rentals in the community that what the Council perceives. Likewise, by the time the Comp Plan is done, people will have more information to process on the impact of Bluebird, the Washington Lot, and other housing projects planned by the Council—these could have material impacts on their views of what kind of housing should be built where.

6. First Responders— we now have a decade more of experience with outsourcing our police force. Likewise, we are in a process to examine consolidation of fire and EMT services. How does the community feel about the role of fist responders?

7. Process— As Councilman David noted in the 3/27 Council Meeting, the way the City has solicited public input historically has led to extremes or both positive selection bias and negative selection bias. It has not been statistically representative of the people who reside in Ketchum. Often focus groups include people who do not live in Ketchum, yet those focus groups are used to substantiate how Ketchum resident resources are allocated. At the other extreme, almost no one goes to any public meeting, so those who do have a magnified voice. There are better ways of being inclusive of all views of Ketchum residents. In particular, the City should consider hiring a professional survey firm to conduct statistically valid sampling of resident views to augment the likely multiple focus group process it will pursue.

8. Politics— while time is always of the essence, we will have had the same Council for five years when the Council plans to adopt a new Comp Plan. Two seats on the Council will be up for election in November. For this Council to adopt a new Comp Plan right before that election may be contentious, and make it more difficult to implement what is adopted.

Creating a Comp Plan that reflects the voice of all Ketchum residents will be an expensive, complex and time-consuming project. But it is critical that we do it right, so that it is fully inclusive and transparent. Please move quickly to get off the “lite” process, and commit the time and resources necessary to create a Comp Plan that the entire City of Ketchum may not all agree on, but will see as a fair representation of our myriad voices.

Thank you for your service to the community,

Perry Boyle
Ketchum