

Participate

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To: Participate
Cc: Andrew Guckes
Subject: PUBLIC COMMENT: Community Survey and Comp Plan Process

It is encouraging to see progress on the new Comp Plan. The Council should consider a few things as it reviews the survey data before incorporating this input into the plan.

While the survey is a very useful step, seeing it as an end step is short-sighted. The survey results raise as many questions as they answer, and additional surveys could provide the Council with more insight that would be useful in this process. The results can be interpreted differently than what the consultant is presenting. The “Conclusions and Recommendations” slide is inconsistent with the survey results and the inputs from the CAC and TAC. The Council should not rely on the consultant but apply their judgment to the data.

Take housing, for example. Not only has progress been insufficient, but the actions the Council has taken have been inconsistent with what residents want for Ketchum. That would explain the dissatisfaction with both the Council’s progress on housing and its failure to preserve the character of Ketchum. It is also more consistent with the fact that 80% of respondents want more community input into what the City is doing about housing.

The "variety of housing" concern could also be that large, income-capped housing projects lack the variety that the community seeks and would be consistent with the poor rating of the City’s actions on housing. The current policy has been to build large apartment complexes that are not compliant with community values (as elucidated by all three inputs of the survey and the CAC and the TAC) that focus on Cat 4 and below.

One of the deficiencies of this planning process is that it is focused on “what” rather than “who.” This is due to the questions that were asked and the questions that were not asked in the survey and planning process. In particular, the Council should carefully consider housing affordability. It scored highly with people under the age of 45. But that demographic includes both single people and families. Housing affordability for different demographics should lead to different kinds of housing for those demographics. For example, if we build a lot of studios that address affordability for single people and may help employers, what about families? This is another area that would benefit from more survey work. No one has ever surveyed people on what kind of housing they are looking for or employers on what types of employees they need and what they are doing to address that. These are essential missing links in this planning process.

Getting this insight right is critical to the decision path for the Council as it adjusts its approach to housing and works to reconcile housing with community character. The two highest values are *preserving Ketchum’s character* and *creating a greater variety of housing* choices. For example, locations may be better suited for large apartment complexes rather than the commercial core. In particular, the LI zone, the water treatment facility, and the sites of low-density trailer parks to the south. The City should also consider what people mean by a variety of housing choices—it is not clear

from this survey and can be open to broad interpretation. It does not necessarily imply a spread of housing income categories. For example, it could also mean housing for a variety of occupation types and seasonality, regardless of income levels and a variety of family types.

This also explains the middling rating given for “vibrancy.” While the City has defined vibrancy as housing new residents in the commercial core, another more broadly accepted interpretation of vibrancy is the intensity of economic activity in the retail core. Business owners are dissatisfied with what the City has been doing to promote vibrancy for local businesses (see “A Strong and Diverse Economy” slide).

The Council should note that Parking was the #3 concern overall and #1 for residents over 65. It was the #1 concern in “Important to you-other.” This is at odds with the Council’s actions, which have been to remove parking. The City’s justification of its parking policy based on comparable cities is not just wrong in its data but also irrelevant to the residents of Ketchum. They don’t live in Jackson or Aspen—they live in Ketchum and have values for their community, of which Parking was in the Top 3.

On the Performance of City Services slides (they are unnumbered), while dissatisfaction with Housing was #1, dissatisfaction with Planning was #2. Yet Planning is not addressed in this presentation at all. This seems like an area that warrants more insight and attention from the Council. Streets and Sidewalks were #3 for dissatisfaction. That is another area that appears to warrant attention by the Council. The slide Importance and Performance for City Surveys seem to have no basis from the survey and may reflect subjectivity rather than statistical validity.

That potential for misinterpretation is carried through on Alignment with Core Values. The highest area of misalignment is “Working as a region.” That does not mean that it is “low importance.” It does mean that people are not happy with it. Indeed, there was more dissatisfaction with this item than with “a variety of housing options.” More survey work in this area seems warranted. It would be helpful to ask more specific questions on regional issues like LOT, VSV, and FSVA.

The survey does not clarify what residents want in terms of “sustainability.” Sustainability can mean different things to different people. It can include everything from construction to recycling to transportation to energy sources, the carbon footprint of tourism, and more. An additional survey on this could reduce interpretive error and point the Council in a more concrete direction.

In summary, the survey was an important first step, but more survey work is required before the Council accepts the consultant’s recommendations. We only do this process once a decade, and we should do it the right way rather than the expedient way.

Thank you for your service to the community.

Perry Boyle
Ketchum