



Ketchum Business Advisory Coalition Public Comment — June 9, 2026
Re: Renewal And Proposed Changes To The Local Option Tax

The Ketchum Business Advisory Coalition (KBAC) recognizes the critical role that the Original Local Option Tax has played in the financial health and vitality of Ketchum since the LOT's inception in 1978. Revenue generated through this tax has helped fund emergency services, public transportation, air service, marketing of the area and capital improvements. These community investments contribute to the quality of life enjoyed by residents, businesses, and visitors alike. The Original LOT has also allowed Ketchum property taxes to remain relatively low compared to other cities in Idaho. It is with all of this in mind that KBAC members are strongly in favor of renewing the Original LOT when it comes up for a vote in November.

The other question that will come before voters in November is whether or not to increase the LOT, and again, KBAC is supportive of the increase if it is done correctly. The business community understands the need for additional funds in order to pay for repairs to roads and sidewalks, the need for upgrades to our waste-water facility and other infrastructure necessities, and we realize that in 2030 the Ketchum Urban Renewal Agency (KURA) will sunset, creating an even greater financial shortfall in the City budget.

One option being considered is to raise the LOT on lodging by a whopping 5%, which would make the total tax on lodging in Ketchum 16%. Such an increase would place Ketchum at a higher lodging-tax rate than both Hailey and Sun Valley, not to mention the majority of other western ski resorts. Lodging operators have stated that this would put our local hotels at a competitive disadvantage when working to attract visitors in general, especially large groups. And as any local small business owner can tell you, we won't make it here without tourism.

The majority of KBAC members support the idea of sharing a tax increase, meaning a smaller increase across various business sectors, rather than placing a disproportionate burden on the lodging industry. We believe a more balanced approach would help achieve the City's revenue goals while minimizing potential impacts on economic activity and maintaining Ketchum's competitiveness as a destination resort. It is with this in mind that we support an increase to the Local Option Tax of 0.5% on retail, 0.5% on building materials, and 2% on lodging.

We appreciate the Council's willingness to engage with residents and the business community on this important issue, and we look forward to continuing a constructive dialogue as the City evaluates options for addressing its fiscal needs.

Sincerely,
The KBAC Board Of Directors

Amy Weyler, Bronwyn Nickel, Cindy Forgeon, Dave Wilson, Dillon Witmer,
Duffy Witmer, Holly Mora, Jed Gray, Jim Mclaughlin, Julie Johnson, Tom Nickel

Dawn Hofheimer

From: Beth Chiodo <bajabethy@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, June 9, 2026 7:08 PM
To: Participate
Subject: LOT

Dear Mayor and City Council,

I'm against the present LOT tax, especially the part that funds Air.
Lot for housing hasn't accomplished much and I urge you to find other methods to fund that.

Lot should be a tax on tourists: lodging not services. Increase the lodging tax.

I think it's a better for LOT to be voted on every 5 years instead of 15 yrs.

Thank you
Beth Chiodo
Ketchum

Dawn Hofheimer

From: Gretchen Flint <gretchenflint@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, June 9, 2026 3:36 PM
To: Participate
Subject: LOT increase

I was not able to make it to the pop up booths hosted yesterday and today. Here's my feedback.

I WOULD like to see an **INCREASE of 5%** on Lodging (not the purposed 2%). .5% on building materials and .5% on retail.

Thanks

Dawn Hofheimer

From: James Hungelmann <jim.hungelmann@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, June 9, 2026 9:05 AM
To: Peter Prekeges; Tripp Hutchinson; Spencer Cordovano; Matthew McGraw; Randy Hall; Participate
Subject: Public Comment: Rethinking the Proposed YMCA Expansion in Ketchum

Follow Up Flag: Flag for follow up
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Dear Mayor and Council Members,

Please accept this submission as public comment for the next meeting of the Ketchum City Council (June 11, 2026).

Thank you.

Public Comment: Rethinking the Proposed YMCA Expansion in Ketchum

The Wood River Community YMCA undoubtedly provides valued services to many residents of the valley. The issue before the City, however, is not whether the YMCA is a worthwhile institution. The issue is whether the scale and nature of the proposed expansion represent an appropriate and proportionate planning priority for Ketchum at this moment in the community's history.

Ketchum and the broader Wood River Valley are already confronting extraordinary pressures involving workforce housing, infrastructure strain, affordability, transportation, and long-term community sustainability. Employers across numerous sectors continue struggling to fill positions, while local governments and taxpayers are already deeply engaged in costly workforce-housing efforts and subsidy discussions. Against this backdrop, any major institutional expansion deserves careful scrutiny regarding its long-term impacts and overall community justification.

The proposed YMCA expansion reportedly includes a large indoor fieldhouse, expanded indoor recreation space, basketball and pickleball programming, enlarged multipurpose areas, an elevated indoor running track, and significantly expanded entrance and lobby facilities. While such amenities may appeal to many users, the City should reasonably ask whether substantial expansion of indoor recreational programming represents the most prudent use of limited land, infrastructure, labor, and community resources under present conditions.

This question is particularly relevant given that Ketchum and the Wood River Valley are internationally recognized precisely because of their extraordinary outdoor recreational environment. The region already contains extensive parks, trails, open space, ski terrain, Nordic systems, hiking opportunities, golf and tennis facilities, athletic fields, and recreational resources that remain underutilized during much of the year.

The issue is therefore not opposition to recreation itself, but rather proportionality. Before approving substantial additional expansion, it is reasonable to determine whether the existing facility is already operating near practical capacity or whether significant unused capacity remains available within the current structure.

The broader financial structure surrounding the YMCA also warrants thoughtful consideration. The existing facility was constructed on land provided by the City of Ketchum for recreational and community purposes. In addition, the YMCA benefits from nonprofit tax-exempt status and receives millions of dollars annually in charitable contributions. Publicly available financial filings indicate that a substantial majority of the organization's annual revenue derives from charitable and philanthropic support rather than earned membership and program-service revenue alone.

None of these facts diminish the YMCA's contributions to the community. However, they do reinforce the importance of carefully evaluating whether continual large-scale amenity expansion upon a heavily subsidized institutional platform represents the most efficient and sustainable long-term approach to delivering recreational services within a small resort community already confronting serious affordability and infrastructure pressures.

The YMCA property itself reportedly carries an assessed valuation of approximately \$12 million while paying no property taxes pursuant to nonprofit exemption status. Over time, such exemptions may represent substantial indirect public support intended to advance genuine charitable and community-serving functions. Accordingly, the public may reasonably expect a heightened degree of transparency, proportionality, fiscal prudence, and demonstrated public benefit when substantial institutional expansion is proposed.

Another important consideration involves equitable valley-wide accessibility. Although named the "Wood River Community YMCA", the facility is located in Ketchum, while much of the valley's workforce increasingly resides farther south in Hailey, Bellevue, and beyond due to housing affordability realities. Many working families already face substantial commuting burdens, demanding schedules, transportation constraints, and childcare limitations that may make regular use of an expanded Ketchum-based facility impractical.

Accordingly, the City should reasonably evaluate whether continued concentration of major recreational investment in Ketchum creates unequal practical access to publicly supported, tax-exempt community facilities. This is not a claim of intentional discrimination, but rather recognition that geographic and economic realities may produce disparate practical impacts across different segments of the broader valley population.

The City should also consider the impacts of continued tax-exempt institutional expansion on existing local businesses. The Wood River Valley already contains privately operated gyms, wellness providers, and recreational businesses that contribute directly to the tax base while bearing the full costs of taxation, workforce recruitment, rent, insurance, and regulatory compliance. Expansion of a large tax-exempt recreational institution may create additional competitive and staffing pressures within an already constrained local economy.

Finally, the broader issue raised by this proposal is one of civic stewardship and long-term planning priorities. Residents and taxpayers should reasonably be regarded as stakeholders in the long-term use and expansion of a publicly supported, tax-exempt institutional facility occupying valuable land within Ketchum. Meaningful scrutiny, transparency, and public accountability are therefore not obstacles to the process, but essential components of responsible local governance.

The YMCA may very well deserve continued community support. But that does not eliminate the City's obligation to critically evaluate whether this particular scale of expansion remains proportionate, justified, and aligned with the broader long-term needs of the Wood River Valley community.

Respectfully submitted,

James Hungelmann
Ketchum

Dawn Hofheimer

From: James Hungelmann <jim.hungelmann@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, June 9, 2026 8:48 AM
To: Peter Prekeges; Tripp Hutchinson; Matthew McGraw; Randy Hall; Spencer Cordovano; Participate
Subject: Public Submission - Sealed So Tight
Attachments: Sealed_So_Tight_June_2026.pdf

Follow Up Flag: Flag for follow up
Flag Status: Completed

Dear Mayor and Members of the City Council,

Please accept the attached as Public Comment for the next meeting of the Ketchum City Council (June 11).

It is submitted as supplemental commentary and continuation of prior submissions on a matter of utmost spectacle.

Respectfully,

James Hungelmann
The White Room LLC

Sealed So Tight

We are informed, with solemn faces and patriotic thunder, that the great Strait has been blockaded and sealed tighter than the gates of Heaven itself. Not a drop passes, not a barrel escapes, not a skiff dares flutter its sail upon those forbidden waters.

Yet every common fellow with a ship-tracking contraption upon his kitchen table may sit in his slippers and watch the grand parade of the world's commerce steaming cheerfully to and fro like Sunday excursion boats on the Mississippi.

There go the tankers to China. There go the gas ships to India. There go the cargo vessels waddling into Dubai and Bandar Abbas fat as Christmas geese. One may count them by the dozens — red arrows, green arrows, blinking lights and floating fortunes — all peacefully engaged in the supposedly impossible act of sailing through the “closed” Strait.

It is an extraordinary blockade indeed: one visible nowhere except in speeches, headlines, and the agitated imaginations of men who do not expect the public to own maps.

And then comes the final insult to arithmetic.

We are asked to believe that twenty percent of the world's oil has vanished from commerce, yet the price of crude loafs along in the nineties — not only well below the recent panic highs of a few short weeks ago, but hovering well within ranges the world has seen many times while the Strait stood entirely open and commerce flowed without interruption.

If truly one-fifth of mankind's oil had been choked off, the price would not be politely lingering in the double digits while commentators sip coffee and speculate between advertisements for luxury watches.

No sir.

The world economy would howl like a scalded cat.

Factories would stagger. Nations would panic. Prices would leap skyward like frightened deer. Japan and Korea might release reserve barrels to calm a frightened market, as governments often do when panic outruns arithmetic; but if one-fifth of mankind's oil had truly disappeared, those reserve barrels would amount to little more than throwing teacups at a prairie fire.

Instead, the ships sail on.

The ports bustle.

The tankers glide in and out of Bandar Abbas, Dubai, Fujairah, Sohar, and every harbor the television prophets assured us had vanished into silence.

The Strait, it seems, remains quite open — and its ports wider still.

It is only the mashed mind of America that has been successfully blockaded, gently swaddled beneath the fond assurances that nothing is getting through.

For the modern miracle is not the sealing of a waterway visible from space and tracked in real time by millions of ordinary citizens. No — the greater feat is persuading a population to distrust its own eyes while the commerce of continents steams merrily along upon glowing public charts.

The ports are open.

The tankers are open.

The sea lanes are open.

Only the mind is sealed shut.

As the learned gentlemen of government and television continue faithfully to explain:

"Nothing is getting through."

Dawn Hofheimer

From: Trey Lanier <trey.lanier@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, June 8, 2026 1:42 PM
To: Participate
Subject: LOT should be against tourists, NOT locals

Follow Up Flag: Flag for follow up
Flag Status: Flagged

Hello,

LOTs should be modified immediately:

- Rescind LOT for 'Air' (airlines). There are plenty of airlines flying into SUN these days, and I don't see fares reduced at all by this tax. Further, it seems that MOST of these funds are going to a for-profit promotion group (Visit Sun Valley) which does NOT directly benefit local residents. Let the Sun Valley Company and other businesses fund Visit Sun Valley directly, NOT via taxes.
- Modify LOT for housing. I'm not clear where this tax is applied (I'll try to find out at the speaking sessions this week), but the money to date has been poorly spent / wasted. Ketchum funded housing should be for Ketchum workers, NOT for general county employees nor retirees. This whole program needs revamping and, maybe, the LOT for Housing should be suspended until that revamp is done.
- Modify the general LOTs: locals should NOT have to pay taxes for having a drink at their local restaurants, nor for buying anything at local retail stores, nor for getting materials to improve their local first/primary residences. So the LOT on retail, alcohol and building materials should be rescinded. LOT on hotels and short term rentals should be increased to cover the change. LOT on 'services' MUST BE EXPRESSLY LIMITED to ski lessons and potentially other guides (such as fishing/hunting); there should NEVER be a LOT on 'general services' such as haircuts, shaves, local financial advice, local tax services, etc.

Trey Lanier

Dawn Hofheimer

From: Chris Spain <john.chris.spain@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, June 8, 2026 12:54 PM
To: Participate
Cc: Perry Boyle
Subject: LOT

Follow Up Flag: Flag for follow up
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On this subject, why would this tax money be used to promote tourism? It should be used strictly to offset the infrastructure and service costs to Ketchum residents for the tourism industry.
How insulting to be taxed by our local government, to encourage profit and growth for private industry.
I think we have plenty of people pouring into the valley. Anybody who owns a retail establishment should weigh the risks and benefits of tourism on their own nickel, And then decide do I want to be in business.
But to have the citizens subsidize air travel into the valley, so that the merchants can all make more money, isnt right.
Take our money and give it to private industry. Seriously?
Our town is already growing like crazy and actually we should be looking at ways to slow things down. Have you guys been down to Boise and seen the Micron Plant that's under construction? Have you been down to the airport at prime time and looked at all the planes on the runway and the mess that we have at the terminal.
LOT should be an offset, maybe even a watchdog for what's happening here in the valley. We do not need more growth, what we need is a sustainable plan.

Sent from my iPhone

Dawn Hofheimer

From: HP Boyle <boylehp@yahoo.com>
Sent: Monday, June 8, 2026 9:31 AM
To: Participate
Cc: mel@sunvalleyeconomy.org; Andrew Theophilus; Sarah Lurie
Subject: PUBLIC COMMENT for Council on SVED Letter of June 2

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
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To the Council

I was surprised at the letter sent to you by SVED on June 2, for several reasons.

First, we pay SVED with Ketchum tax dollars to conduct economic analysis and promote economic activity in Ketchum. We do not pay them to lobby the Council to benefit certain businesses at the expense of local taxpayers. This letter, sent by SVED on behalf of the local lodging industry, is an inappropriate use of taxpayer funds.

Second, and more importantly, the analysis is incomplete and highly biased. As noted in my previous public comment submission, there are no studies substantiating a significant decline in demand for resort city lodging due to lodging taxes. SVED is making things up in this letter about the lodging tax's impact. They do not provide any empirical data to support their assertions. This is pure scare tactics.

Third, they perpetuate the ethical problem of taxing locals to support an industry that has grown to the point of degrading the quality of life for Ketchum residents. They want you to raise the tax on retail and restaurants, which is a tax on locals. Without LOT legislation to impose a tax on tourists, it would be illegal for the Council to impose a sales tax on locals.

I hope our Council will not perpetuate the previous administration's tax-everything-and-everyone approach. Tax the right things in the right ways. Do it transparently and honestly. Do not compound the ethical errors of the past by taxing locals to benefit the tourism industry. Do not be swayed by lobbyists.

Thank you,

Perry Boyle
Ketchum

Dawn Hofheimer

From: Geoff Isles <islesglass@aol.com>
Sent: Wednesday, June 10, 2026 1:19 PM
To: Participate
Subject: LOT(s)

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
Flag Status: Flagged

To the Mayor and City Council:

What does Idaho law say about LOTs and how does Ketchum use them? Specifically, the law directs these funds to infrastructure and other things associated to the burdens of tourism within a resort city. And though the constitutionality of the law has been questioned, one thing is for certain: the tax must be directed at the tourists, not residents. Yet for some reason Ketchum doesn't seem to get this on either the income portion or the spending portion of the law.

First, who pays? Here in Ketchum the burden is definitely on the full-time residents and second home owners. This in itself is illegal under the law. We can argue whether a secondary home owner is a tourist (I say they are not as they pay property taxes and do not rent out their homes), but full time residents should not pay one cent of the LOT as per the law. So what is Ketchum's position on this? It's duck and cover. Ketchum needs the revenues so they come up with very questionable surveys about who pays it. The Mayor came up with a number that is ludicrous: 25% by residents based on what month it is. But let's say that number is correct, then residents are being forced to pay 25% illegally. Again, residents cannot pay the LOT under Idaho law. But let's be real, Ketchum residents pay the brunt of the tax.

So where does the money go? Under the law it directs it to go to infrastructure that tourism affects. That means support for roads, police, fire, waste, etc... it doesn't mention workforce housing. It doesn't mention making 'slush funds' such as Air, or VSV. It doesn't say you can divert it to groups like KURA. But Ketchum has done this for years now. Mayor Bradshaw completely abused the system, ignoring the fundamental purpose of the law that allowed the LOT in order to build Bluebird and attempts to build other Bluebirds.

And what are the results? Ketchum gave away its Fire Dept in order to direct more funding towards housing, something that isn't included in the legislation that created the LOT. They spent nothing on infrastructure and capital expenditures. Our roads are failing and will cost a fortune to catch up. We barely fill potholes and don't have modern equipment to fill them properly in the winter. We are in a winter landscape, yet little is done about getting new equipment to remove snow.

Now the Mayor is pushing for a 15 year extension with a \$1M increase in taxes. He mentions the need to fix our roads. My view is simple, redirect funds to the purposes of the legislation that enacted the LOT and there will be no need to increase it.

Sincerely

Geoff Isles

Geoff Isles
islesglass@aol.com
917-626-1134
235 Spur Lane
Ketchum, ID 83340

Dawn Hofheimer

From: Karl Hutter <knhhutter@gmail.com>
Sent: Thursday, June 11, 2026 7:53 AM
To: Participate
Subject: Opposed: LOT Tax increase Over 13%

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
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I'm a resident at 332 Shady Lane in Ketchum. Raising the LOT Tax in Ketchum (again) to 13%, while onerous, is within reason to the similar Sun Valley tax of 12%.

The suggestion of raising the tax to 16%, a full 4% above Sun Valley, is not acceptable. I do not support the increase above 13%.

Karl Hutter

Karl Hutter
m. 650-302-7595

Dawn Hofheimer

From: Pat Higgins <pathiggins4085@gmail.com>
Sent: Thursday, June 11, 2026 11:17 AM
To: Participate
Subject: Fire Plan

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
Flag Status: Completed

Dear Mayor and Council,

A poor winter snowpack and another year of torn up roads into downtown Ketchum . I realize the local businesses are suffering . I wonder if there is a Fire Plan ,if and or when we have one ? Living in Warm Springs the only way out for us is on Warm Springs Road. Then what ... where do we go? There needs to be a plan and it would be be nice information to know in advance.

Thank you,

Pat Higgins

Sent from my iPhone