

Public Comment – Ketchum Land Development Code Updates (Phase 3)

Date: April 30, 2026

Dear Mayor, City Council Members, Planning & Zoning Commission, and Staff,

This is addressed to you as not only our City Officials, but also as our friends and neighbors. We don't have to do the classic "either/or" dance here. We can be creative Idahoans and actually solve more than one problem at a time.

Most of us agree we need more housing for local workers. What we don't need is turning West Ketchum and Warm Springs into the next crowded mountain suburb. Seniors on fixed incomes are already getting squeezed by rising taxes caused by all the fancy second homes and tourist money. Pile on more density and we might as well hand them moving boxes with a bow on top. And Warm Springs with only one bridge out in a fire? That's not a plan — that's a prayer.

On the bright side, Idaho lawmakers actually had a good idea for once with House Bill 886. It gives big tax breaks to people who live in their own home full-time and to landlords who rent long-term (at least 7 months) to local workers. Short-term rentals and vacation homes don't get the break.

The City's new 4-year housing strategy (recently covered in the Mountain Express) aiming for 100–125 community units is a solid step forward. We should also look at all the new housing being built in Hailey, including their workforce projects and vacancies, and coordinate regionally so Ketchum isn't carrying the whole load alone. A recent resident survey in the Mountain Express also shows many of us are proud of the valley but worried about declining quality of life. That's exactly why smarter, lower-impact solutions matter right now.

Here's a practical, step-by-step way we can make this work in Ketchum without turning into Aspen 2.0:

Better Tax Breaks for Actual Locals

Right now, Idaho's homeowner exemption only reduces the taxable value by 50% up to a maximum of \$125,000. On a typical \$2 million Ketchum home, that saves only about \$300–\$400 a year; basically a rounding error when taxes and living costs keep climbing.

Many of our longtime seniors bought their homes decades ago for \$150,000–\$400,000. Now they're staring at assessments of \$1.8 million to \$3 million+. That's not fair. We need real relief.

I recommend we push for a much stronger exemption: 50% of the home's value up to \$500,000 or \$750,000 for primary residences and for qualifying long-term rentals.

Here's what that actually means:

Exemption Cap	Exemption Amount	Taxable Value on \$2M home	Approx. Annual Savings
Current (\$125k)	\$125,000	\$1.875M	\$300-\$400
Proposed \$500k	\$500,000	\$1.5M	\$1,200-\$1,600
Proposed \$750k	\$750,000	\$1.25M	\$1,800-\$2,400

I vote for the \$750k exemption — and if you own a home in Ketchum, you probably would too. This would give real, meaningful tax relief to seniors and primary residents; and we should give the exact same break to landlords who commit to verified long-term rentals for local workers. To prevent big institutional investors like BlackRock from buying up large numbers of long-term rentals and claiming most of the tax benefits, we could put a reasonable cap on how many properties a single landlord or company can own and still qualify (maybe up to 5 units for example). That way the incentive mainly helps local owners and small landlords rather than large corporations.

Keep Rules Easy

Landlords show their leases to the County Assessor once a year. Use deed restrictions for multi-year commitments, anti-sublease clauses, and income thresholds.

Tie It Into The Code

Link these tax breaks to the city's building rules and zoning for projects that help local housing. Focus growth in already-developed areas instead of pushing sprawl outward. I've had conversations with longtime residents who at first are against concentrating increased density in the city core until I point out the negative effect sprawl is already having on local traffic, wilderness and riparian zones, parking issues, etc.

Make New Tourist Projects Pay Their Own Way

We already have impact fees. Let's update them so new hotels, mega vacation homes, and short-term rental projects help cover fire safety, roads, water, and wildlife protection. New growth should pay for the extra load it creates, not hand the bill to the rest of us. This isn't "either/or." It's a balanced "both/and" approach that keeps Ketchum wonderful for both residents and visitors.

Protect the Wildlife Before They All Move to Montana

Deer, elk, moose and our other wildlife neighbors use creeks and rivers like nature's freeway. Right now we're letting people rip out vegetation for better "views" and replace it with lawn and pesticides. Increased density in Warm Springs and West Ketchum is turning those migration corridors into obstacle courses full of fences, lights, noise, and pets. We need mapped corridors, real riparian setbacks, and wildlife-friendly rules. Let's not be the town that loved wildlife... until it blocked their view of the river.

A balanced approach like this would:

- Make long-term rentals more profitable than short-term party pads.
- Help seniors stay in their homes (so they can keep giving us all good advice).
- Reduce pressure for risky high-density zoning in fire-prone and wildlife-sensitive areas.
- Let new development pay its fair share.
- Keep Ketchum feeling like Ketchum instead of a theme park.

We already have a solid Rental Preservation Program. Let's supercharge it with smart tax incentives, honest impact fees, and real wildlife protection. We can learn from other resort towns' mistakes — and have more fun getting it right.

Thank you for your time and for actually listening to residents.

Sincerely,

Maya JB Burrell
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May 4, 2026

Re: City of Ketchum Comprehensive Plan

Dear Members of the Ketchum City Council and the Planning and Zoning Commission,

Thank you for the tremendous amount of thoughtful work it has taken to create Cohesive Ketchum, the Comprehensive Plan, to articulate the vision for Ketchum's continued growth and successful future. Sun Valley, LLC, (herein, "Sun Valley," or "the Company,") shares your vision of a vibrant and resilient community. We are committed to partnering with the City to support the exceptional quality of life and recreational opportunities that are synonymous with living in or visiting our community.

Sun Valley would like to request the correction of one section of the Comprehensive Plan; notably the Future Land Use Map on pages 90 and 94. This map shows the southeast portion of Sun Valley's River Run Parcel designated as "Open Space," which is in direct conflict with the Development Agreement between the City and the Company where that land is designated as mixed-use including commercial, retail, lodging, food service, and community housing. The Development Agreement memorializes a plan for the River Run property and outlines that any changes to land use designations will only be undertaken with the mutual agreement of both the City and the Company.

Sun Valley recognizes that land use classifications in the Comprehensive Plan are aspirational and not intended as a substitute for zoning classifications. However, mis-labeling zoning from "mixed used commercial" to "open space" could unintentionally give Ketchum residents the perception that the River Run property will remain undeveloped in perpetuity. Sun Valley has no plans to develop that land at this time but retains the right to pursue development when the time is right.

Thank you for your attention to correcting this item.

Respectfully,

Kate Klossner
Vice President of Government Relations and Public Communications
Sun Valley, LLC



Ketchum Business Advisory Coalition Public Comment — City Council Meeting, May 4th, 2026

Re: Phase 3 Code Updates

The local business community appreciates the opportunity to provide input regarding the City of Ketchum's ongoing planning efforts. We would like to express our general support for the goals outlined on page 38 of the referenced slide deck. These goals reflect a thoughtful direction for balanced growth, economic vitality, and long-term sustainability for our community.

At the same time, we want to be clear about several key priorities that are essential to maintaining a healthy business environment.

- First, the business community does not support the inclusion or continuation of parking exemptions as part of future planning policies. Adequate parking is critical to the success of local businesses, as well as to the accessibility and functionality of our commercial areas. We strongly recommend that the current required parking exemption for 'units' under 750 square feet be rescinded. While well-intentioned, this exemption has had the cumulative effect of reducing available parking over time, placing increasing strain on existing businesses, their employees, and customers.
- Additionally, we believe that all new developments—regardless of size—must be required to contribute to parking solutions. Growth should not come at the expense of existing parking capacity. New projects must be required to provide additional parking as part of the project, or to participate in creating and funding adequate parking infrastructure nearby, so that they do not shift the parking burden onto surrounding businesses and residents.
- On page 13 of the slide deck, the commercial core continues to show as ending in the alley between Main Street and Washington Street. KBAC members believe the retail core should be extended two blocks west to 2nd Ave. Commercial buildings beyond the current commercial core already exist, and the area between Main Street and 2nd Ave. essentially functions as the commercial core already. This should be formalized into the new zoning codes.

Related to the conversation on Historic Structures beginning on page 33 of the slide deck:

- We request greater clarity regarding how the city defines a "historic structure." Specifically, we would like detailed information on the specific criteria used for this designation, who exactly determines the designation, as well as the special considerations, exemptions, protections and possible restrictions that may result. Understanding how historic status is determined and applied is important for ensuring transparency, consistency, and fairness in how regulations impact both existing properties and future development.

Thank you for considering the perspective of the business community. We look forward to continued collaboration as the City refines its policies and implementation strategies.

Sincerely,

The Ketchum Business Advisory Coalition Board of Directors