

September 11, 2023

RE: 6907 County Road 105

To: Members of the Salida Planning Commission and City Council:

I am writing to express my opposition to the Gartzman proposal at 6907 CR 105.

I neighbor this project immediately to the North. My land has been developed around on all sides, and while these changes are personally unappealing to me, I have offered my support to each of these developments to the degree that they make sense and meet the needs of our community. I do not approach this process from a "Not in my backyard" mentality, I hope that council can recognize my interest in creating a community that works for everyone. For a town to have character, characters must have a place to live.

My objection to the Gartzman project has several aspects.

First, I am concerned about the process the city is following as they mingle a future land use map, with their examination of this project in particular. Choosing to have these two processes proceed in parallel, and indeed even at the same meeting, creates an appearance that this project is not being held to the standards that have been agreed upon and are in place at the time of the proposal, but rather to a more favorable future land use designation that was not in place when this proposal was made.

Furthermore, placing requirements for future development density into a Future Land Use Map misses the public involvement that would have been required for a revision to land use code. This approach sidesteps the process that should be a part of shaping our community in the near and distant future.

Second, while I recognize that the August 14 joint City Council and Planning Commission work session was not required to be notified to adjacent landowners, having that meeting without involving neighbors does not create an atmosphere of trust among those who will be so heavily impacted by the outcome, nor does it allow the City to get the feedback of people who are already living in this area.

Regarding the details of the proposed development specifically, while I understand that the Gartzmans are seeking a Planned Development Overlay, residents of the City and County have a right to expect development to happen within the boundaries of existing land use code. Doing "spot zoning" where new rules are made for every development is unfair to neighbors who have a right to know what they might have to live next to, unfair to other developers who may be treated differently, and unfair to the citizens and staff who worked on developing a land use code in the first place.

As proposed, this project asks for a variance on essentially every important aspect of code: density, height, lot size, lot frontage, height, setback, coverage, and green space to name a few. What are the rules for, if not this situation? Creativity to allow development to fit a particular site is one thing, this is another. These requests are unreasonable and I do not support any variance in any of these areas. R-3 high density zoning is what was requested at the time of annexation and the development should proceed within the confines of that code. 41 units on 2 acres is very high density compared to almost everywhere else in our city, a request for 69 should not even get a reading.

Furthermore, as proposed, this project puts a three-story high density apartment complex within 20 feet of my historic ranch homestead. At a personal level, it means I would lose my ability to see the mountains to the South of my home and upper story residents could see into my home, but at a communal level, this ruins the pastoral flavor that most residents and visitors love. Nearly every day, I watch people taking pictures of the historic structures on my property with mountains in the background, now they would be taking a picture of someone's deck. On one hand, we all recognize the importance of attainable housing as our community grows, but on the other, are we willing to sacrifice the historic and natural qualities we love to accomplish that? I would argue for a middle path, this proposal is an extreme one.

If developed as proposed, Vandaveer Road would have three of the highest density projects in the County immediately adjacent to each other. This will create a myriad of issues, from practical ones like parking (already a problem due to the variances allowed at the Magpie) and traffic on CR 105, to the communal, like overuse of parks and open space.

In addition, this proposal would further an issue where different economic classes in our community are effectively geographically segregated. We should be thinking about how people will live, work, and play together over decades to come, and I suspect a standalone district of high density will not age well. There should be more to city planning and creating community than placing development where the sewer is convenient to access.

Finally, the extent to which this proposal does not conform to code must not be used as a new standard of comparison. There is no midpoint between this unreasonable request, and the R-3 zoning the developer sought in annexation. What is proposed here is essentially creating a new zoning category on an ad-hoc basis without any public process, which is wrong on every level. The number and magnitude of variances sought are an attempt to end run around the zoning and codes we have in place, and even a revised proposal that lessens the degree of variance does not address that concern. I'm sure this process will continue with updated versions of the plan, the question that must be asked at each step is how this version relates to R-3 zoning, not how it relates to the previous version.

I would welcome a meeting where those of us who neighbor this proposed development could meet directly with the developer and the City, to learn the facts about this project and have a chance to make direct comments and look for common ground.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ned Suesse', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Ned Suesse
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