

Lots of 'Room for Improvement'

The new Teton County housing department is looking for feedback with an online survey. It's commendable, but a bit late in the game to be wondering, "Why do voters keep saying no to our funding?"

Why? Two reasons. Voters want good management, accountability, results, efficiency—the kinds of things corporations have to abide by or they go out of business. And, voters don't support middleclass subsidized housing.

Looking first at good management, voters don't want spreadsheet errors that add millions of dollars to construction costs (The Grove). We don't want our tax money used for land speculation when housing was promised (Cheney Lane parcel purchased on SPET funds and sold 10 years later at a loss). We don't want our SPET funds reallocated to a private organization (Housing Trust) when we're already paying almost \$1 million a year for a Teton County housing organization.

*The last of the Old West is dying,
suffocated by growth.*

Voters have grown skeptical of a bloated housing organization (2016 operating costs exceeded \$800,000) that has performed so poorly that officials lost all confidence in the department—yanking Phase 3 of The Grove and turning it over to Habitat for Humanity.

Politicians haven't fixed this problem; they just hired a new leader, another salary. There's still no evidence the housing department can run properly.

Then there's the ethics problem. We're a very generous community; you won't find our level of giving and non-profit support anywhere else. Folks are happy to provide a safety net

and a helping hand. But the Housing Action Plan is a big growth business subsidy, not a safety net.

Affordable housing, on the scale envisioned, is growth promotion... massive growth promotion. Grow too much and you foul your own nest. That's happening already. Overcrowding, stifling traffic, wildlife dislocation and carnage, we all see the signs.

The Last of the Old West is dying, suffocated by growth. Voters say no to middleclass affordable housing because it's wrong.

What great philosophy promoted subsidized middle class housing? Was it the Greeks? Was it Judaism, Christianity or Islam? Was it Hinduism, Jainism or Buddhism? Was it capitalism, socialism or communism? It was none of them. A few local politicians spent five years manipulating the Comp Plan 'just right' to pull this off.

More growth was their vision. Bigger and grander, bigger and grander; as we make life unlivable. They never called it by its real name: greed. More, always more.

Voters can see it and feel it. Diminished quality of life; that's why they vote no. Businesses need to pay a living wage and not depend on the taxpayer to buy housing for their employees.

For now, the new housing department needs to show they can properly manage the 900 units they have already. They shouldn't think about building more.