

The other side of the story...

Saving or Destroying Community?

A local business owner recently set us straight. "I'm not pro-growth," he insisted. "I don't want any more second homes. I just want workforce housing." As if that didn't count.

But population growth is mostly due to workforce housing, which is a product of job creation due to commercial expansion.

The above opinion is a popular one but a tragic misnomer too. It's often spouted by those who've sipped too much political Kool-Aide: "If we don't house 65% of workers locally, we'll lose our community".

Yikes, no community. The sky is falling!

Or is it? If the magic 65% figure were a true 'tipping point' towards a soulless Jackson Hole, then places like San Francisco or New York City would have no community at all. But they're doing just fine.

Truth is, we're growing too fast and our small town 'community' is already disappearing. We all see it and feel it. How long before we become an Aspen or Vail or worse?

We're currently building a new school campus, denser neighborhoods, and wider roads. When built, you may not recognize Jackson Hole.

As Jonathan Schechter points out, you can't build your way out of a housing crisis. So why chase this mystical 65% number, and where did it come from?

Our electeds produced the Comp Plan themselves; they invented the 65%. And they struggled as planners because they had no planning credentials. So they fell into a 'go along-to-get along' mentality.

That's dangerous, especially when a skilled manipulator leads the group.

For 5-years, our electeds struggled with the Plan. Officially, it was group effort, but they followed the leader instead of writing the words.

Topping 300 pages, most electeds probably didn't fully read the final Plan. Five years of planner-speak is tiring. You get worn out. So you just 'go-along'.

The consultant and stakeholders did the work. And the consultant became a 'yes' man, delivering for the boss.

The boss had a hand in picking the stakeholders, too, so he had huge influence and authority. It's not exactly one-man rule, but it's close. If your de-facto monarch throws tantrums when he doesn't get his way, you've got one-man rule.

The manipulation that has gone on is becoming clearer every day.

A good plan for a small community is equally small. If it's bloated, that's fishy. The whopping bulk and scale of our Comp Plan is mostly there to deflect attention. If you can't dazzle 'em with brilliance, baffle 'em with BS.

Our ten elected officials are senior executives; they're 'approvers.' Doing the Comp Plan themselves was a huge mistake. They can't both do the work and approve it. That's a serious conflict of interest. Bad policy.

But it happened, our elected's approved their own work. After 5-years of doing the Plan themselves, they were proud. And they were blind to the Plan's flaws, like the bogus 65% housing requirement.

That's how our Commissioners and Councilors got out on a limb, approving a manipulative Plan that the citizens don't support.

*You may not
recognize Jackson*
