

*The other side of the story...*

## Half-a-Loaf Better Than Nothing

Housing Mitigation, making developers house their new employees, is a good idea. It requires the developers that cause the housing crisis to 'mitigate' it, to pay for it. But 22 years ago, when the old requirement was set, it was way too low. And it hasn't increased — until now.

Kudos to the councilors and commissioners who last year voted to pursue a full 100% mitigation for all employees. But by the time the new ordinance was approved last week, that figure was reduced by two-thirds. And even that was contentious.

The Big-Growth coalition fought hard to stymie any change. It was a tough fight. But electeds Pete Muldoon, Jim Stanford, Hailey Morton Levinson, and Natalia Macker stuck to their guns in the face of fierce opposition from big-growth advocates.

The old rules applied to seasonal workers only. New rules apply to year-round employees only. Go figure, it should have been all employees.

But on balance, it's a step towards the 'Livable Jackson Hole' we all want.

Old mitigation rules were just 25%. The new rules are 33% in the county and 36% in town according to the planning department.

How strong was the opposition, the Big-Growth coalition that favors massive growth? Considering the original proposal was 100% mitigation and we ended up with just 36%, the opposition was tremendously successful in getting their way.

Deep pocket commercial developers have been reaping huge profits while dumping their growth impacts on our community.

Here's an example: The Center Street Project, recently approved for downtown Jackson, will involve a 96-room hotel, a restaurant, a bar, a

bank, and extensive commercial retail expansion spanning 75,887 square feet.

It will take hundreds of employees to run everything. The developer said they could do it with just 51. Workforce housing for the entire project is only 4,532-sf, that's perhaps eight small 566-sf units. That's it.

The project also removes six valuable parking spaces on the town square for which the developer will pay a mere \$70,800.

It's not the developer's fault. He's playing exactly by the rules. Rules that have favored massive commercial developments for over two decades.

Here's what some elected officials said.

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doing is not working"*

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The time to make incremental changes was more than 20 years ago, Morton Levinson commented. "This is not swinging the pendulum too far. It is getting us closer to balance."

"I hear one of the biggest problems for local businesses is they cannot find employees. Also, this community does not want to be taxed for housing," Macker said. "While this feels like a big change, what we've been doing is not working."

Mayor Muldoon, who said he was almost late for the meeting due to traffic, commented, "This community spoke loud and clear about commercial developers mitigating their impacts."

Stanford added, "We tried low and easy 22 years ago."

Developers and big business will do all they can to bring back massive growth. They may sue. But for now, most of our electeds get it.

Taxpayers should't have to house new employees; that's up to employers and developers.