Zoning Ordinance Amendment

Listening Session Notes

**May 4, 2021 7pm**

Attendees: Ed McLuskie (Southeast Neighborhood Association), Lisa Ahrens (Hidden Springs)

**What is and isn’t working well with the existing Zoning Ordinance?**

Lisa said the County’s current noticing process was working well, and that she has received good customer service from County planning staff in the past.

Regarding what isn’t working well, Lisa said the current zoning ordinance is not user-friendly and is difficult to find information in. She said she usually ends up having to call a planner when she has a questions because she is unable to find what she is looking for in the ordinance.

Ed said he liked that residents and neighborhood associations are given notice of development applications and are invited to public meetings, but that he would like the public to be more involved earlier on in the planning process prior to the hearing.

Ed said he would like to see more stakeholder participation in the zoning ordinance amendment process, and would like the County to consider giving presentations regarding the amendment to neighborhood associations. He also expressed concern with the possibility of the County consolidating zoning districts.

Ed also expressed concerns with the initial public survey done as part of the zoning ordinance amendment, and wanted to ensure developers were not being favored over the residents in the process.

Ed said that ‘granularity matters’ and wanted to make sure that the Code language didn’t become too broad in effort to be more user-friendly that it left out needed details.

**Are there any specific design standards that the County needs to tune up?**

Ed said it was important for the County to consider safety, water quality and environmental impacts for future developments in unincorporated Ada County.

Lisa wanted the County to consider potential impacts on the Ada County landfill.

**Are there any uses that are a concern, or that the Zoning Ordinance should do a better job of accommodating?**

Ed said he would like the County to protect existing agricultural lands and allow for urban farming.

Lisa said she appreciated the conservation easement the County had at Hidden Springs, and would like the County to work towards protecting more open space areas and providing more trails for public use. She also felt open space areas were important for wildlife.

**Are there any standards, topics or innovations missing from the current Zoning Ordinance?**

Ed said he would like the County to consider ways to increase home-ownership and slow the conversion of owner-occupied homes into rentals. He noted that the high demand for student housing near Boise State had greatly impacted the residential neighborhoods around it.

Lisa said she would like to see short-term rentals be better regulated as part of the zoning ordinance. She noted that it is difficult for homeowner associations to regulate them through CC&R’s.

**Are zoning application processes meeting the needs of staff and the development community?**

Lisa said that Hidden Springs recently made a planning application to the County and that the process went very smoothly. She said the County’s planning staff was easy to work with.

Ed felt that public input was not being given enough consideration in planning decisions, and referenced a recent development in Boise which was approved by the Boise City Council despite neighborhood associations opposing it. He also felt the complexities of the planning process can be difficult for many in the public to understand.

**What should the primary outcome of the Zoning Ordinance update be?**

Ed said he would like the County to visit with neighborhood associations to get feedback, as this would help residents to not feel like they were being left out of the process.