



North Ada County Foothills Association

One voice. One goal. One plan.

August 17, 2007

Hi All,

This is a reporting on how City Staff portrayed the Foothills Plan at the Chamber of Commerce lunch this past Tuesday. *The experience was surreal...*

How Staff presented the Plan to the Chamber:

1. Staff presented the draft plan as it stood before any P&Z Commission recommendations. Thus, the Plan for the “Foothills Planning Area” is community-derived, cohesive, and addresses in all the issues about which we have been concerned. It has a development ceiling of 12,000 units, a major central open space complex and open space requirements; it concentrates development near the highways and keeps Eagle road and Beacon Light at 2-3 lanes;
2. The draft Plan DOES NOT include either M3 or Suncor's proposal, which are separate applications/proposals;
3. The Plan is only a concept, a guideline, not containing any detail on any specific areas and not granting any entitlements;
4. The P&Z Commission has recommended approval.

What's wrong with this picture?

If you've been following this closely, you're probably perplexed; I was. I suppose it's possible that the presentation was simplified and generalized, given an audience (local businesses) which is only interested in broad brush and has not been involved in the details of the process by this sort of presentation.

Nonetheless, I found it misleading in the extreme. Let's be clear: the current state of the Plan is the latest draft, the “...P&Z Commission Recommendations” version, posted on the City's website and about which I have recently written (see my last update). Thus:

1. The “Foothills Planning Area” no longer has any reference to density/intensity...no projected number of units. The P&Z Commission recommended that all such references be deleted due to unanswered questions on traffic, cost/benefit, etc. (a recommendation we supported as prudent...meaning that more study was needed before decisions could be made...); BUT
2. M3'S PROJECT, with test and maps as M3 prepared them, IS INCLUDED as the “M3 Eagle Planning Area”—separated out and distinct from the Foothills Planning Area, specifying development levels up to 8,100 units, M3's high intensity Village Center near Willow Creek

...citizens helping to create a sustainable vision for the future of Ada County's Northern Foothills...

Road, and setting foothills-wide precedents in conflict with the rest of the prior draft Foothills plan...etc. etc., as I reported previously;

3. Yes, much of the Plan is conceptual, a guideline—EXCEPT the M3 part (covering 6000 acres), which takes up 31 pages, complete with lots of maps and sub-area-specific descriptions. In contrast, the (residual) overall Foothills Planning Area, covering over 30,000 acres (now minus M3's 6000 I guess), gets presented in 20 pages
4. The P&Z Commission DID NOT recommend approval of the draft plan as it was presented by Staff... What the Commission actually has recommended is vastly different from what was presented

Overall, the Chamber was left with an impression that all was in order, sailing along well. There was no discussion of the P&Z's conflicting recommendations regarding M3 (i.e. in April thinking it sounded pretty good and recommending approval of the M3 text amendment—now embedded in the Plan itself; then, in June, saying essentially “uh-oh; not such a good idea”, evidenced by the recommendation to deny the M3 map amendment and expressing discomfort with ~12,000-20,000 new foothills units). There was no acknowledgment that key issues have yet to be fully explored and hard questions and issues still need resolution.

Hearing this presentation, I wondered if I'd been in a different reality during the June hearings. If what was presented to the Chamber this past week had been fully accurate (i.e., without the M3 problem), we'd be on a pretty good course...we would still be pressing for firmer stands/definitions/supporting analyses on the key concepts of the prior draft Plan, but encouraging them nonetheless. We **were** heading in a good direction conceptually, until the “M3 Planning Area” got rolled into the plan. Now, we have a nightmare...

Simply stated, the full, accurate picture was not presented and P & Z Chair Pierce, in attendance, had no comment. Suffice to say, my tolerance for ambiguity was stretched almost to its breaking point.

JP