

March 13, 2023

Dear Teton County Planning Commissioners,

**Subject: PUD2022-0003 and AMD2022-0006 Snake River Canyon Ranch Resort.**



The Jackson Hole Conservation Alliance is **OPPOSED** to the above-mentioned applications to amend the Planned Unit Development Master Plan and Development Plan for employee housing and density transfer involving Sub Areas I and II of the Snake River Canyon Ranch Resort (SRCRR).

**PUD2022-0003 and AMD2022-0006 do NOT COMPLY with the Snake River Canyon Ranch Resort Master Plan, the Teton County Land Development Regulations, or the Jackson Teton County Comprehensive Plan for the following reasons.**

**1. The upzoning of Lot 23 does not comply with the LDRs or the Comprehensive Plan.**

The title of the application, "Employee Housing and Density Transfer" is misleading. The applicant is asking for an upzone and an increase in density and intensity of the approved SRCRR Master Plan.

The proposal includes transferring the existing development right of Lot 23 (single dwelling unit with short-term rental use) of the SRCRR from its location adjacent to the Astoria Bridge and the Wild and Scenic Snake River to a bench above the river, it would involve creating 3 lots on the bench from the existing Lots 24 and 25. The applicant is not only requesting to transfer the development rights from Lot 23 to another location but also proposes to also increase the density and intensity of Lot 23 to a multiuse building comprised of commercial office space, residential apartments and 14-space parking lot.

The entire property is located within the Natural Resource (NRO) and Scenic Resource Overlays (SRO). The property serves as some of the most important wildlife habitat in Teton County including:

- elk winter range,
- moose winter range,
- ungulate migration,
- great blue heron summer habitat,
- great grey owl winter habitat,
- northern harrier summer habitat,
- trumpeter swan winter habitat,
- Snake River cutthroat trout habitat,
- boreal chorus frog year-round habitat,
- western toad year-round habitat, and,
- bald eagle year-round habitat (Focal Habitat Species Mapping Project, 2017).

Increasing the density and intensity of this approved Master Plan does not comply with the Comprehensive Plan's Canyon Corridor Subarea. The goal for the future of this area is to reduce impacts on wildlife and scenic resources while respecting property rights. The Comprehensive Plan states that, "Redevelopment should eliminate or reduce nonresidential use and implement wildlife friendly and scenic corridor design best practices, if incentives to reduce density are not successful." Approving the requested upzone and proposed development would increase impacts on wildlife and scenic resources. The lot is adjacent to the Wild and Scenic Snake River and will be viewed from Highway 89 and the Snake River.

**Protecting the wildlife, wild places, and community character of Jackson Hole.**

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This request does not comply with the Standards of the NRO, SRO, or the Comprehensive Plan's Canyon Corridor Subarea and therefore should be **DENIED**.

## **2. The proposed development does not comply with the Character Objectives of the Snake River Canyon Ranch Resort.**

The LDRs, Section 4.3.6.C describes the required character of the SRCRR and as

- “...lodging, with a residential character, located throughout the resort and **not necessarily centered on the hot springs amenity.**”
- “...development pattern that favors minimizing building footprints to protect the natural resources of the site, thereby minimizing the overall visual impact of development.”
- “...retain the rural atmosphere...”

The applicant proposes to move Lot 23 from Sub Area II to Sub Area I (Astoria Hot Springs) of the SRCRR Master Plan. As described in the Master Plan, Sub Area I has been designed to take advantage of the natural environmental features of the area and for recreational activity of visitors and locals. The proposed office commercial and multifamily housing use does not meet the purpose and intent of Sub Area I, being public hot springs. The Astoria Hot Springs is part of the resort but is meant to function with the surrounding park for family-oriented recreation.

The proposed development on Lot 23 does not comply with the Character Objectives listed above or the specific Character Objectives for Sub Area I. Character Objectives of Sub Area I (Astoria Hot Springs) state that ancillary park-oriented commercial uses shall be reflective of desired rural community character of the Canyon Corridor Subarea (protect wildlife and scenic resources), as identified in the Teton County Comprehensive Plan. Commercial office and multi-family development with a 14-space parking lot would not be described as “rural character” nor will it minimize the overall visual impact. Sub Area I was specifically created to not include a residential character. This proposal does not comply with the Master Plan, the LDRs Character Objectives for the SRCRR or the Character Objectives for Sub Area I.

The proposed development of Lot 23 does not comply with the Character Objectives of the SRCRR or the Character Objectives of Sub Area I of the SRCRR and should therefore be **DENIED**.

### **Previous Approval**

The Zoning Map Amendment (ZMA 2015-0002) and the amendment to the SRCRR PUD-PR (PUD 2015-0002) removed several residential lots along the Snake River and created Astoria Hot Springs and Park. When compared to the prior PUD approval these amendments reduced visual impacts to the scenic foreground. In addition, the Master Plan (2.1.B.7) states that the amendment reduced potential wildlife impacts compared to the prior approval. If the current proposal is approved, the reduction in visual and wildlife impacts from the 2015 approvals will be diminished.

### **Unpermitted Activity on the SRCRR**

The SRCRR has not been a good-faith partner in the past and was recently notified of 19 unpermitted activities in wetlands and in the floodplain. In addition, in 2018, the SRCRR built a levee, berm, ponds and a bridge without obtaining permits. All of this took place in the NRO and SRO.

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Not only are we opposed to the proposal before you because it does not comply with the Master Plan, the LDRs or the Comprehensive Plan but the applicant has a history of doing what he pleases where he pleases and asking for forgiveness in the form of after-the-fact permits when he gets caught.

### **Access to the Snake River Canyon Ranch Resort is unreliable and unsafe.**

The SRCRR is asking for permission to increase the existing development rights of the Master Plan when the only access to the property is via the damaged Astoria Bridge. Alternative and temporary access via a narrow forest service road (Johnny Counts Road), meant only to provide access to the Resort in emergency or for trucks too large for the bridge, has provided Sporting Club and SRCRR landowner access when the bridge was closed. Per the Master Plan, "... ensure that all landowners south of Astoria Bridge will be responsible for the safe operation and maintenance of the road and bridge infrastructure serving the Resort." This application or any application on this development should be on hold until the issue of access is remedied by the owner, not Teton County taxpayers.

### **Emergency Management Plan**

If the Planning Commission and the Board of County Commissioners (BCC) choose to entertain the requested Amendments, the Jackson Hole Conservation Alliance suggests that there be a requirement for the preparation and approval by the BCC for a comprehensive emergency management plan for the Snake River Sporting Club and the SRCRR. These properties are in a remote area that is prone to multiple natural hazards including avalanche, landslides, flooding, and wildfire. Given the recent complications with appropriate ingress and egress via the development's damaged bridge, combined with the vulnerability of the development to wildfire and other natural disasters, it would be irresponsible to continue approving developments in this location without a plan for protection of life and property.

**The Jackson Hole Conservation Alliance requests that the Planning Commission recommend that the Board of County Commissioners uphold the standards approved in the SRCRR Master Plan, the LDRs and the Jackson/Teton County Comprehensive Plan and recommend DENIAL of PUD 2022-0003 and AMD 2022-0006.**

Thank you for considering our comments and for your service to our community.  
Best,

Dave Sollitt, Executive Director  
Amy Kuszak, Community Planning Director

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