

## **6 ENVIRONMENTAL OUTCOMES**

Recent development in McCall has typically been dispersed, large lot, single use, residential, with little focus on transportation choices. In cooperation with local officials, citizens, and land owners, the Team has created development options that are more compact, mixed use projects with an emphasis on providing opportunities to walk and bike as well as drive to destinations. The concept plans are substantially focused on more efficient use of land and infill opportunities that locate development in areas served by existing infrastructure.

Research demonstrates that low density, single use development has significant impacts on environmental quality. As destinations are further and further apart, increases in driving can lead to increases in tailpipe emissions that have negative impacts on air quality. By designing street networks to accommodate bikes and pedestrians, as well as bringing jobs and housing closer together, there are real opportunities to increase walking and biking and reduce development's impact on air quality. Development that consumes large amounts of green space in a region can also degrade watersheds and individual water resources (e.g. lakes, streams, rivers.) By accommodating new growth on smaller parcels of land, McCall may be able to reduce the growth pressures further out on the fringe and limit impacts to regional water quality.

In the Lardo Concept Plan, the Team suggests restoring a riparian area and wetland to help bring back the natural functionality of this eco-system. In the case of suggestion of re-locating the concrete batch plant and integrating the site into a residential neighborhood, the city will potentially be cleaning up a brownfield. In this area, as well as West Valley, the Team proposes improving non-motorized connections to destinations throughout McCall, helping to reduce vehicle miles traveled and ultimately the air pollution associated with this travel.

In the West Valley Concept Plan, the Team proposes that the city look at upzoning the 160-acre parcel in order to accommodate significant amounts of future growth into a more compact neighborhood. Normally, this number of units could consume 900 acres of land with significant impacts on water quality and habitat. In exchange for the higher density development on this site, the Team suggests that the city put the surrounding rangeland into a conservation easement. This option shapes growth into defined areas while preserving a large amount of habitat.

## **7 NEXT STEPS: OPTIONS FOR IMPLEMENTATION**

The concept plans were presented to the McCall City Council and well-received. If the City would like to pursue the visions developed during the charrette, then what are the next steps? This section discusses several possible City actions.

### **7.1 Possible actions by the City**

To support the land use and transportation changes envisioned by the plans, the City of McCall may want to consider the following actions:

- An amendment to the comprehensive plan and zoning map
- Entering into development agreements during permit applications and/or re-zonings.
- Creating a Tradable Development Rights program

### ***Comprehensive Plan***

The comprehensive plan, adopted in July 2000, only calls for commercial development in the Central Business District, along Highway 55 south of the CBD, and along Highway 55 near Lardo. In addition, the highest allowable residential density is 8 units per acre, which is unlikely to support additional retail activity. Under these conditions, it would not be possible to create neighborhood or village centers with mixed commercial uses with residential and office space in the same building. Nor would the existing plan or zoning support possible residential densities of 16/units per acre or higher.

In the future update of the Comprehensive Plan, the City could designate Lardo and West Valley as “special areas.” Under this designation, the city could specify the land uses, densities, and design guidelines consistent with the community’s vision.

### ***Zoning***

In Lardo, the zoning currently calls for commercial strip along Highway 55 and low-density residential zoning in surrounding areas. In the West Valley area, current zoning allows low and medium-density residential and industrial uses. The current zoning map for these areas rigidly separates uses from one another – not allowing for a walkable mix of retail, residential and office uses. In addition, the current residential zoning classifications in the areas will not allow for the range of housing types and densities that will support the city’s Community Housing Policy.

The new Commission Adoption Draft of the proposed Planning and Zoning Ordinance provides more opportunity to implement the visions for Lardo and West Valley.

The draft ordinance has a new “Community Commercial (CC) Zone.” As stated in the draft, CC Zones support “general commercial uses that serve the greater community of McCall. These retail, service, and mixed use establishments may be auto-oriented and require a larger lot area provided that they are designed to safely and comfortably accommodate those arriving by foot, bicycle, or transit. This zone allows residential uses at a maximum of forty dwelling units per acre.”

A CC Zone designation in Lardo will allow the commercial activities and higher residential densities envisioned for the area.

The draft ordinance also creates a Neighborhood Commercial (NC) Zone. This is defined as:

“the least intense commercial designation in the City, and is intended to provide retail, service, and mixed use establishments that are within easy walking distance for area residents. These small scale commercial uses should be conveniently located and integrated within neighborhoods and designed to complement the pedestrian environment of the neighborhoods in which they are located. This zone allows the residential uses at a maximum density of that allowed by the average of the adjacent residential zones.”

The village center proposed for West Valley is smaller-scaled and more neighborhood-oriented than Lardo and the NC zone reflects that level of retail and service activity. However the vision for West Valley also calls for housing densities ranging between single-family homes on ¼ acre lots up to three story apartment buildings at 30 units/acre. Given the low densities that currently exist in the area, the NC Zone requirement that “allows the residential uses at a maximum density of that allowed by the average of the adjacent residential zones” would limit the ability to build at

the proposed densities. The city will need to address this issue in order to encourage the residential densities that it deems appropriate and that will make the retail viable.

### ***Development Agreements***

Participants in the workshop expressed a desire to keep the things that make McCall special – and in many instances this is the beauty of the natural environment. The Comprehensive Plan calls for using “corridors, gateways, entrances, districts, and natural areas” to shape the physical element of the community. This notion is particularly important in the West Valley area—where former ranchlands and the forested ridgeline act as the Western edge of the city.

With the prospect of development in this area, the city may want to enter into a development agreement that conditions the use of certain areas of the property. In particular, the 540-acre portion of the Bezates Ranch property that has not been annexed into the city provides a clear transition between the built environment of the city and the prairie, hills, and forest of the wilderness. If an owner seeks to annex the land into the city, McCall may want to enter into an agreement focused on preserving some portion of the acreage, while shifting development to more appropriate areas of the property. This undeveloped ranchland could serve as a natural edge for the city that could also be used to land-apply waste water from the treatment plant.

The city may also want to use development agreements to encourage street connectivity. Throughout the workshops, participants discussed the need to make McCall more pedestrian-friendly. The visions developed propose creating more connected street networks with smaller pedestrian-scaled blocks and sidewalks. The “Design Guidelines – Commission Adopted Draft” also call for “Creat[ing] an atmosphere in McCall that is open and friendly, that caters to pedestrians by providing safe walkways and open space amenities (outdoor seating areas, activity areas, site features, etc.). During the course of a re-zoning or other action requiring approval, the city can use the development agreement to specify street connections, widths, and sidewalks. In certain areas—particularly along the Loop Road—where a developer may want to apply for a driveway permit, the city may want to consider creating intersections, with new streets, rather than funneling vehicles onto one road with a driveway. In addition to creating a more walkable environment, adding more intersections can also help to keep primary collectors and arterials from becoming overly congested.

### ***Creating a Tradable Development Rights program***

The city may want to consider creating a program that allows for the trading of development rights within the city and between the city and county. Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) programs are an opportunity to concentrate development in certain areas, protect other critical areas from development, and compensate property owners where development is not encouraged. Rather than denying development rights in areas slated for protection, a TDR program transfers those rights to other property allowing this “receiving property” to develop at greater densities than would otherwise be allowed.

TDRs may not be allowable in the State of Idaho and thus would require enabling legislation. Also, an institutional “allowance holder” is often needed to account for the trades and/or bank available rights. The TDR approach has been successfully used in New Jersey where approximately 40,000 acres of the New Jersey Pinelands have been protected since the Pinelands Commission sanctioned the use of TDRs in 1981. New Jersey adopted a statewide TDR law in 2004; see <http://www.nj.gov/dca/osg/resources/tdr/index.shtml>

## 7.2 Concluding considerations for evaluating options

### *Economics*

McCall has historically been a modest community where local workers, including forest service employees, school teachers, and ski instructors could afford to live here and raise their families. With the changing real estate market, this essential character could be lost and very quickly. Workers already are having to commute in from south Valley County and from Adams County because they can no longer afford to live in McCall.

Proactive planning that allows for some increases in density (i.e., smaller lots) will allow property owners to continue to achieve an acceptable return on their investment, without having to sell their individual lots and/or units at the top of the market. For example, if a property owner can sell lots as one-acre parcels for \$500,000 a lot, he can essentially make the same amount of money if by subdividing the same one-acre lot in to five parcels, each of which sells for \$100,000. A simple rule of thumb is that land accounts for about one-quarter of the cost of a finished house. If the land costs \$500,000, then the final house will cost \$2 million, but if the land costs \$100,000, the house will cost \$400,000. While \$400,000 is not cheap, it is far more affordable than \$2 million. Zoning alone can help to create (more) affordable housing with no other type of subsidy or developer incentive.

Growth can bring many positive changes to McCall, providing a more diverse range of retail opportunities and more housing choices.

While growth does mean change, McCall can continue to maintain its historic character, but only if the community plans proactively.

### *Design*

Design matters in McCall. This wonderful courtyard behind the Hotel McCall (pictured below) is a great example of how great places make a difference for retail. Before this was built, the businesses in the area weren't doing that well and there was a lot of turnover. Since the courtyard has been built, people really like to linger in this wonderful spot. The businesses have stabilized and now seem to be thriving.



With similar attention to design across all scales, McCall too will thrive.