

Friends of Park County

P.O. Box 23, Pray, Montana 59065

Promoting thoughtfully planned growth in order to protect and enhance Park County's vibrant communities, sustainable working lands, and healthy natural resources.

Online Live Testimony of Robert Liberty Before the Livingston Planning Board on the draft Growth Policy December 2, 2020

Good evening. My name is Robert Liberty. My address is 3431 SE Tibbetts Street, Portland, Oregon. I am a consultant to Friends of Park County and am testifying on their behalf.

Some of you may be wondering what my qualifications are for giving advice on planning matters here.

I have almost 40 years of planning experience from the local level to the metropolitan, state and national levels, across the US and in other countries. I have worked with citizen groups in Wasilla Alaska, the Chamber of Commerce in Waco Texas and redevelopers in Wichita Kansas. I am currently helping with downtown revitalization in a city in California that is one-tenth the size of Livingston.

I have been a land use attorney, nonprofit director, a county land use hearings officer, an elected official and am currently the Chair of the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area Commission.

I have been to Western Montana many times. I last visited Livingston in September and was impressed with the progress you have been making.

You are fortunate that you are developing a Growth Policy for a city that is already strong and successful, with many human and natural assets. Friends of Park County believes you can maintain and increase those assets as you grow if you build on your traditional growth pattern, through infill, redevelopment and compact Smart Growth rather than sprawling outward.

Last month Ken Cochrane of Friends of Park County testified that a simple analysis showed that at most, you would need about 400 acres of land to accommodate a 50% increase in housing units, and that you already had a lot more vacant land than that inside the city.

I did the residential land demand analysis and Randy Carpenter of Future West did the land supply analysis. Our back-of-the-envelope calculations were extremely conservative – they excluded hundreds of acres of vacant land inside the city and they assumed zero redevelopment. We will send that analysis to you later this week.

Friends of Park County's resolution calls on you to endorse a simple but thorough analysis of your land needs and land supply. It should be integrated with your housing needs analysis and the updating of your zoning. We are confident it will show that you have more than enough land inside your city limits for decades of growth.

The second point follows from the first.

Friends strongly supports planning for your Extraterritorial Jurisdiction. But the starting point for that analysis is not what could or should be developed but identifying the areas that must be protected from development. These include:

- areas in the historic Yellowstone River floodplain
- areas with important natural resources, such as wildlife habitat
- working ranch and farmlands
- areas with steep slopes
- existing rural residential areas whose residents wish to remain rural
- areas at risk of groundwater depletion and water pollution, and
- areas that would be too expensive to serve with city facilities and services

These are some of the reasons we hope you will pass Friends of Park County's draft resolution to help the city move quickly in the right direction for managing its future growth.

Dennis Glick, from Future West, will provide some closing testimony on behalf of Friends of Park County.

Thank you for your time and attention.