

Do we really have un-met, pent-up demand for housing and commercial space?

I did a quick inventory in our immediate area.

- There are currently 76 homes for sale in our zip code and there are an additional 46 homes for sale within a 5-mile radius of the subject property. Property listings are cyclical. Fewer homes are listed during the holidays and in winter; many more properties are expected to come on the market in Spring.
- There are 21 vacant parcels for sale in the 37920 zip code. There are 15 vacant residential building lots within 1,000 of the proposed new housing – three of these parcels share a property line with the subject property! These are existing lots in established neighborhoods. They are half-acre to one acre in size and their individual cost estimated at \$14k - \$20k (source: Zillow.com). Services are ready to tap into at the street.
- Within three miles of the proposed new commercial area there are approximately 30 vacant retail and commercial spaces of all sizes right on Chapman Highway – over half are spaces in strip malls with other retail stores and commercial services.
- The industrial park at the end of ValGro appears to be about 50-60 percent empty, with several “For Lease” signs posted throughout the complex.
- All the land around Lowes – the streets are in, the services are in, the zoning and sector plan already support additional commercial and retail use... There’s even an empty store front in there right now – THIS is the place to add more commercial use. And THIS is the place that would be being built on IF the need for additional commercial development were real. THIS is the place where additional commercial use should take place IF our planners and county commissioners were adhering to existing ordinance in effect right now – and IF they were to follow the very basic of planning best practices.

My question is – are these current requests for rezoning and sector plan changes needed? Are they of some great benefit to our community?

What great benefit to our community will come from adding hundreds of homes and 10’s of acres of commercial space as we lose our beautiful rural community???

- How many more used car lots are needed?
- How many more oil change places are needed?
- How many more fast-food restaurants are needed?
- How many more same day loan and pawn shops are needed?
- How many more dollar stores are needed?
- How many more sprawling self-storage places are needed?

Our actual needs in this area:

- A Trader Joe’s or Publix

- Nice retail stores
- Nice restaurants (most folks go to Seymour – that’s our sales tax dollars going out of our county)
- Family-oriented recreation such as a community pool, bowling alley, roller rink – all of which were lost when the last big round of commercial development happened (when Lowes and Evalon came in). And now it looks like the driving range is on the chopping block.

TMP owns multiple large parcels in the area that total 400 acres. They have approval for 180 houses on the farmland between the industrial park and Bays Mountain Road (a.k.a. Dry Hollow; 8802 Sevierville Pike) – the Sector Plan change and rezoning have already been granted for this parcel, although it’s currently being challenged in the courts. Now TMP has asked for sector plan and zoning changes for the two parcels on each side of Chapman highway (1-K through N-24-RZ and 1-G and H-24-SP) in order to develop a total of 45 acres of commercial and 360 dwelling units. What is planned for the rest of the land they own? What is happening to Bower Field where TMP is requesting a change to Agricultural zoning to General Business and a Sector Plan change from Public Park and Low Density Residential to Mixed Use – Special District (commercial use)? If the ballpark is to remain, why would there need to be a change to the zoning and sector plan? What’s already been granted and what’s under consideration right now for TMP land will result in HUGE, discordant changes for our community – what more is planned? What’s the big picture? The current piecemeal approach is NOT working. How can we find solutions to our traffic and emergency services and schools and retail needs if we don’t know the scope of the challenge? We sat down with the developers last year to work on a compromise (Mr. Jay attended). We came with some possible compromise solutions, but the developers basically told us the project was going to happen and we just needed to embrace it – 255 new houses 64 acres on the little rural lane, 4 d.u./acre. We’re sick of the commission ignoring current zoning and sector plan designations and voting in favor of every developer who comes along and telling us to embrace it. Just embrace the clear cutting of woods; just embrace the intensive grading; just embrace the loss of wildlife habitat; just embrace the degradation of traffic/safety/emergency services/schools; just embrace the loss of recreational areas; just embrace the sprawl and the blight and the density and the loss of our rural lifestyle; just embrace it all... because the people we voted for to represent us aren’t going to do a darn thing about it.

Give us something that is NEEDED or WANTED – something of benefit to EVERYONE who lives here (now and in the future). We DON’T want more blight... We DON’T want more sprawl... We DON’T want more density... We DON’T want the quality of life to continue to be degraded. We don’t want more fields and woods in the rural area of the Sector Plan that are zoned for agriculture or low density residential going under dense housing and strip mall parking lots when there’s so much land that’s already been subdivided and/or is built on but vacant. The current requests from TMP should be tabled until they make public the plan for ALL their land for the county to review and for the area residents to give feedback on what is needed and wanted in their community.