

Dec. 20th, 2024

Attn: City of Cle Elum Planning Department
Re: Wildwood Ranch Development Application

I am writing to express my concerns and comments about the proposed Wildwood Ranch Development, as outlined in the application documents (File Numbers: SUB-2023-003, DA-2024-001, SEPA-2024-004).

I am aware that many of my neighbors have submitted similar letters and in general I support their concerns. Since many specifics have already been vocalized, I will keep my comments focused on items that would be most impactful to the safety and health of this community and the City of Cle Elum.

Traffic:

The Traffic Impact Analysis appropriately identifies several problematic intersections, most importantly WA 903 / Spanski / Airport Road junction. This is already a chaotic and potentially dangerous intersection because traffic from Airport Road enters almost parallel to WA 903. As shown below, vehicles coming from Airport Road, headed to town, do not align perpendicular to WA 903. One vehicle can impede traffic and two can totally block the intersection creating a hazard as vehicles turn off WA 903. The additional trips from the new development (~600 / day) will have dramatic affect on this intersection and unless remedied, the outcome will surely be collisions and injuries.



Please consider WA 903 / Spanski / Airport Rd intersection improvements a priority for the approval of this development since the current interchange is unsafe.

Waterways Assessment:

The Critical Areas Report appears to understate the importance of the pond as a wetland and part of the Yakima River Basin. The author of the report spent only one day at the site and makes the assessment based on soil types with no mention of the diverse aquatic populations present in the pond. Aquatic animals such as fish, frogs, newts and snakes are common and the pond hosts a variety of other animals such as eagles, owls, ducks, otters, deer and elk. More importantly, the pond level is directly connected to the river level of the Yakima meaning the two are fluidly joined. Any impact to this pond has a direct impact to the Upper Yakima River Basin.

Please consider a more in-depth environmental review of the pond connected to this development since the initial assessment appears to undervalue the ponds environmental importance.

Deer Meadow Drive Infrastructure:

The project proposal does not appear to specify improvements to Deer Meadow Drive. This roadway obviously needs to be improved, at least to the same standard as the roads within the development, to support traffic in and out of the community. It would go a long way to ease the surrounding communities' apprehension about traffic & parking to know that this road will be paved to accommodate the new and existing usage.

Please consider adding specifics to the development plan about improvements to Deer Meadow Drive including surface type, width, parking provisions and signage.

Light Pollution:

The SEPA document states, "There are no measures to reduce or control light and glare impacts". The Cle Elum Municipal Code (17.56.80) requires specific standards for lighting. Light spilling from new homes can have the largest impact on the surrounding community but it's one of the easiest impacts to mitigate.

Please consider amending the plan with provisions for light mitigation (per Cle Elum Code) prior to the approval of this development.



Zoning Variances:

The development agreement and supporting planning documents call out several variances to zoning and the Cle Elum Municipal Code (CEMC). For example, parcel 62134 is zoned "Residential - Single Family", which requires a minimum lot size of 5,000 sq.ft. (per CEMC 17.16.070). The Development Agreement (DA) states that only 2,500 sq.ft. per lot is required. Additionally, the maximum impervious surface area, per the DA, is up to 80%. The municipal code states not more than 45% of lot area can be covered with structures (CEMC 17.20.080). It is apparent from the documentation that the city has reviewed these variances and approved the plan. What is not clear is why the deviations from approved zoning and codes is allowed.

Please consider reverting to approved zoning and code or providing clear justification for why the variances are being permitted.

We appreciate the opportunity to provide input. Thank you for attention to these items.



Best Regards,

LBarchet

Chris & Laurel Barchet

Home Owner, 391 Deer Meadow Dr