



Appendix to Emerging Concepts Preliminary Draft Report: Summary of Stakeholder and Public Meeting Comments

June 4, 2007 Stakeholder Meeting Held in Pigeon Forge

June 5, 2007 Public Meeting

Explanation of comment summary

This document provides a summary of the public comments gathered from two Sevier County public meetings held in early June, 2007. Additional meetings are planned for July and August. Stakeholder and public comments are organized into 4 generalized categories: 1.) Public Safety, 2.) Aesthetics, 3.) Development Patterns, and 4.) Miscellaneous. Subcategories are issue specific and are where specific comments are listed.

The design of both meetings was intended to gather public comments and begin a focused and facilitated discussion on hillsides and ridges. Comments useful for this process should help the communities responsibly address the issues associated with hillside development. As such, several comments have been omitted. Two comments naming specific individuals have been omitted. General comments about public accountability and ethics have been included. Where two or more comments are virtually identical, all but one is omitted. All other comments have been included.

Approximately 40 participants attended the stakeholder meeting. Comments from participants were recorded by a facilitator in a group discussion format, using flip charts, easels, and markers. Participants sat in one of three facilitated group sessions. Since the intent of the stakeholder format was to promote discussion, oral comments were summarized 'on the fly' and not recorded verbatim.

Approximately 50 participants attended the public meeting. Attendees at the public meeting submitted both spoken comments and written comments. The design of the public meeting was to inform the public about the Hillsides and Ridges Study and to provide an open floor for public comments. Members of the public also submitted written comments by mail to Saratoga Associates' main office in Saratoga Springs, NY. Written public comments were submitted in response to five prepared questions:

1. What are your primary concerns with respect to development on hillsides and ridgelines- steep slopes, ridgelines, visual impacts, economic development, environment, habitat, recreation, hazards? Please be specific.

Appendix to Emerging Concepts Preliminary Draft Report: Public Comment Summary

2. If you believe there is a problem with the current state of hillside development, from your perspective, what do you think are the main contributing factors to this?
3. From your perspective, what land uses and activities are suitable for hillsides in your community? Do you feel current municipal rules are work or not working effectively to promote or discourage those uses and activities?
4. What would you like or not like to see happen during this process to address your concerns?
5. Please not any other concerns or issues pertaining to hillside development that you would like to tell us.

This document compiles stakeholder comments **and** public comments (Question #1 only) into a single source. The following formats indicate the comment source:

- > *Italics indicate comments from the stakeholder group. Figures in parenthesis indicate the number of groups (not times) the comment was recorded.*
- > Underlined comments indicate public oral comments.
- > “Quoted” underlined comments indicate public written comments.

Public written responses to questions 2, 3, 4 and 5 are listed at the end of the summary and are organized by question.

1. Public Safety

Slope Standards

- > *No definition in local laws for slopes (2)*
- > *Need method for measuring Slopes (1)*
- > *Define unbuildable slopes (1)*

Vegetative Cuttings Standards (Fire Hazards)

- > *Vegetation/Tree Clearing (2)*
- > *Sustainability of revegetation (1)*
- > *Trees/shrubs too close to homes (1)*
- > *Educate Homeowners (1)*
- > *Ongoing management (1)*

Fire

- > *Fire Hydrants (1)*
- > *Density is too high (1)*
- > *Road grades too steep (1)*
- > *Need breaklines/berms (2)*
- > “Lack of access for fire control.”

Access

- > *Emergency Access (road) (3)*
- > *No Parking regulations on steep slopes (1)*
- > *Need turnarounds (1)*
- > “Emergency vehicle access.”
- > “Traffic and lack of adequate roads.”
- > “Lack of access.”

Road Construction

- > *Grades (1)*
- > *Widths (1)*
- > *Switchbacks (1)*

Wastewater Treatment

- > *Too many on-site systems (1)*
- > *Educate Homeowners (1)*
- > “Sewage from hillside development.”
- > “Health Hazards, water contamination”
- >

Water/Groundwater

- > *Natural acidic soils (1)*

- > *Declining water quality (1)*
- > *Too many on-site systems (1)*
- > *Stream siltation (1)*
- > “Rain water runoff”
- > “Runoff has become a very noticeable occurrence even after short rainfalls.”
- > “Primary concern is that runoff will pollute water more than it is now and cannot be reversed.”

Stormwater/ Erosion & Sediment Controls

- > *Sustainability of revegetation (1)*
- > *Too much tree clearing (1)*
- > *SWPPP standards need to be hillside specific (1)*
- > *Staging areas are ‘shoddy’(1)*
- > “Erosion from hillside development is coming down.”

Administration/ Accountability

- > *Enforcement, lack of (3)*
- > *Want consistent enforcement (1)*
- > *Performance Bonds are not effective (2)*
- > *Accountability (2)*
- > *Penalties are too low (1)*
- > *Need Inspections (1)*

2. Aesthetics

Design Standards- Materials/

- > *Lighting (1)*
- > *Roof colors too bright (1)*

Landscaping (1)

- > *No tree protections (1)*
- > *Vegetation/Tree Removal (1)*
- > *Sustainability of Revegetation (2)*
- > *Seasonal views- leaf on/off (1)*
- > *Bare Soils/Slopes (2)*
- > “Vegetative stripping- trees”

Building Heights

- > *Buildings too tall (1)*
- > *Cell Towers (1)*
- > *Wind Turbines (1)*
- > “Buildings so tall, blocking other’s views.”

Signs

- > *Signs too visible on hillside (1)*

3. Development Patterns

Clustering/PUD

- > *Density too high (3)*
- > *Use conservation easements (1)*
- > *Not quality growth (1)*
- > *Not neighborhood oriented (1)*
- > “Loss of the Goose that laid the Golden Egg- Why come to GSMNP to look at cabins and de-nuded hilltops?”
- > “Looks like strip missing from hillside- too dense building of chalets per acre.”
- > “We do not need any more PUD development like Legacy Mountain, The tourists are already saying how much damage we have let happen.”
- >

Viewsheds

- > *Views to and from the GSMNP (2)*
- > *Private Views (1)*
- > *Quality Growth (1)*
- > *Clustering/PUDs are ruining the landscape (1)*
- > “Ruining scenic beauty of the hills and ridges.”
- > “Loss of Breathtaking Vistas”
- > “Hillside development looks awful!”
- > “Absolutely no clear cutting and no ridge top development”
- > “Clutter created by construction, traffic, more people.”
- > “Visual impacts are becoming quite noticeable both from the valley vantages and when viewing the valley from the mountain tops.”

4. Miscellaneous

Economic Implications of rules

- > *Encourage Responsible Tourism (1)*
- > *Costs to land owners (1)*
- > “It’s possible to have progressive, responsible development”

Natural Environment/Habitat (1)

- > *Wildlife (1)*
- > *Invasive plant species (1)*
- > “Loss of Appalachia nature.”
- > “We’re eliminating wildlife (some are on endangered list).”

Education/Outreach

- > *Educate Developers (3)*
- > *Educate Contractors (1)*
- > *Homeowners about fire (1)*
- > *Homeowners about septic (1)*
- > *Ethics (1)*

Residence/Overnight Rentals

- > *Unregulated? Improperly Regulated (1)*
- > *Inspections (1)*
- > *No Buyer protections (1)*
- > *Homes are not livable for daily residences (1)*
- > *Construction is 'cheap' (2)*
- > "Inferior Construction."
- > "Concerned that cabins are being built speculatively and there are no plan to use the areas more for those who want to be out in nature."

Site Plans & Review

- > *Fair review process (1)*
- > *Mistrust the review (1)*
- > *Phasing/Long term projects- Need more review (1)*

Rule Making

- > *Fair Rules (3)*
- > *Reach Consensus with all stakeholders (2)*
- > *Allow for creativity/flexibility (2)*
- > *Consistent rules across communities (1)*
- > *Objective (1)*
- > *Level Playing field (1)*
- > *Timeline for implementation (1)*
- > *Standards, not Guidelines (1)*
- > *Incentives (1)*
- > *'Boiler plate' codes are worsening situation (1)*
- > "Be an example and set standards for development of mountains- Preserve mountain streams and wells. Make county commissioners accountable for voting policies. Stop destroying our mountains."

Community wide comments

- > "Feel we're becoming another Orlando."
- > "Too much sprawl."
- > "Lack of hillside infrastructure to support development."
- > "Lack of community services on hillsides- cable/internet/telephone/water."

Appendix to Emerging Concepts Preliminary Draft Report: Public Comment Summary

- > “The mountains and hills are what brings people to us. So let’s stop the greed and save the beauty and tourism.”
- > “This area is in economic boom- development is inevitable so designing and regulating future development are my primary concern.”
- > “The hidden costs (of hillside development) to the citizens of Sevier County.”
- > “The impact (of hillside development) on taxation, public utilities, emergency services, educational facilities, traffice, water supply wastewater runoff, erosion, visual impacts, environmental and cultural heritage

Public Written Comments

Question #2. If you believe there is a problem with the current state of hillside development, from your perspective, what do you think are the main contributing factors to this?

- > Lack of specific zoning ordinances and sign ordinances.
- > Haphazard growth.
- > Poor planning measures.
- > Desire to bring in the tourists without pre-thought about appearance of the area.
- > Sevier County Commission members with vested interests in exponential growth/development (\$\$) without regard for heritage, culture and environment.
- > The “ole boy” mentality in the local government.
- > Yankees and Floridians.
- > No real blueprint or timetable for future growth.
- > Real Estate Companies.
- > Contractors.
- > Elected Officials
- > Sewage Runoff.
- > Buildings looks cheap and inside cheap.
- > There are looking to build another high-rise on hill beside the two new buildings – this high-rise will block views of others.
- > Should be submitted for public approval.
- > Developers from out of state. Planning Commission members engaged in or affiliated with development, contracting and/or the real estate industry.
- > Need guidelines for buildings to fit in. No more red roofs – not fit into environment.
- > We need to stop building until rules and guidelines set.
- > Please publicize in Knoxville, New Sentinel and Tri-Co News Seymour.
- > No regulations to protect the beauty and quality of the land.
- > Overdeveloping hills and mountains and ridges – lack of law’s to protect the above problems.
- > Environmental damage.
- > Uncontrolled clear cutting – too many units on too little acreage – visual pollution – erosion.
- > Lack of political will to establish guidelines and requirements for responsible development.
- > The main problem is lack of regulations/codes for development.
- > Additionally, many outside speculative companies have invested/developed areas in this region. These companies seem less interested in maintaining environmental and cultural assets of the region.
- > Lack of accountability for elected officials, ethics
- > No master plan for future.

- > No regulations and the ones in place are routinely ignored. The planned roads did NOT meet regulation and run off was not addressed.

Question #3- From your perspective, what land uses and activities are suitable for hillsides in your community? Do you feel current municipal rules are working or not working effectively to promote or discourage those uses and activities?

- > My area (Pittman Center) is very dedicated to preserving its natural beauty. Zoning and planning are very effective.
- > Leave it alone!
- > No, current rules are not working.
- > Wilderness preserve in Wears Valley.
- > Larger lot (area) restrictions.
- > Tougher regulations on roads and grades.
- > Limited development near ridgelines.
- > Avoid adverse affects to neighboring property.
- > Public use and recreational uses are the best use of hillsides and ridges. Limited residential could be appropriate.
- > Show development and landscaping apply with Knoxville regulations in construction since Sevier does not have any.
- > Our current county laws and zoning laws are entirely too lax – they do not work.
- > Carefully planned development with consideration of preserving view sheds is possible and should be legislated by ordinance and enforced.
- > Strong mountain ethic of “you can’t tell me what to do with my land” and there is a lack of political will to address the issue.
- > Our elected officials are reactive rather than proactive.
- > Current rules are essentially non-existent.
- > There is going to be development here, but let’s do it smart –have a plan – stop ridge top development. The rules in place now are not working because they are ignored or worked around.
- > Municipal rules are a joke. What few laws are in effect are not enforced.

Question #4: What would you like or not like to see happen during this process to address you concerns?

- > I would like to see Sevier County (Sevierville, Pegeon Forge and Gattenburg) seriously discuss and change laws to prevent the current situation. So far it has just been “talk.”
- > Honest, realistic dialogue.
- > Notice of all meetings.
- > Prompt response, follow-up.

- > I would not like to see the information obtained, compiled and reported not be available to the public.
- > Stop building over 2 or 3 stories – blocks the view from others. This is why tourists come here – to see the mountains – not buildings unless one is building Biltmore House and Gardens.
- > Change out-dated laws.
- > Adoption of stricter regulations.
- > Keep the public informed and involved.
- > See if you can come up with practical recommendations that can be embraced by our elected/appointed officials.
- > I would like to see the community adopt a sound set of guidelines and propose a moratorium on development until a set of guidelines is in place.
- > A building moratorium on new development (any development over 5 houses) until smart rules and regulations are in place.
- > Our local government to implement the rules/regulations.
- > Have a master plan.

Question #5: Please note any other concerns or issues pertaining to hillside development that you would like to tell us:

- > Visitors need to see clear hillsides and not roped off area filled with cabins on stilts. We need to look like “the gateway to the Smokies”!
- > Take down the Christmas lights – at least limit them.
- > How can a firm from NY begin to comprehend the desires and needs of a foreign area (us) with the benefit of 1-2 “public meetings”?
- > Why was a firm from NY hired?
- > “Beautiful” to a boy in NY State is alien to the “beauty” a TN girl visualizes.
- > Only a cabin per 5 acres with trees left – and plants and vegetation to protect the hill.
- > No condos or rental units in Wears Valley.
- > County-wide zoning was voted in 2000-2001 – took until August 31, 2006 to implement it – lack of leadership and will to get it done.
- > To expand on the environmental concern – I fish, kayak, and enjoy the rivers. There is a tremendous runoff problem. Just outside the GSMNP park one can see the water quality diminish almost exponentially.
- > It’s not just the hillsides – all development in the county is out of control.
- > I am not just an angry resident! I have a business here and need tourism as well.