

San Juan County

Spanish Valley Area Plan

PUBLIC AND STAKEHOLDER COMMENTS CATEGORIZED BY TOPIC
SEPTEMBER 18-20, 2017

COMMUNITY AND AREA CHARACTER

- Quiet and dark – not a lot of traffic and street lights Moab has lost; Spanish Valley has and wants to keep
 - Incorporate these elements into zoning ordinances
- Plan spaces for churches, schools, and other community spaces; places that are close to where people live (to be walkable)
- Equestrian and other livestock uses - need to accommodate (ranching is part of the heritage of the area – continue to allow people to have)
- Not too city-like or suburban; like the rural-ness (having space/"elbow room")
- Visual restrictions in zoning – e.g. no junk yards as entering the area/valley
- Likes 1 acre lots; space between neighbors
- Density will bring more "lights" – compromise night sky
- Would like to see kids be able to live here
- Community feel – need to develop not just along Hwy 191; look at Spanish Valley Road – make it have a community feel
- The primary reason for living here is the relative isolation and distance from tourists and tourism impacts.
- The area is quiet and relatively affordable.
- Would like to see parks, schools, trails, fire and safety and similar public uses and services.
- Would like it to be a place with no hotels and over-night visitors (Airbnb) or similar tourist-based uses.
- The neighborhood has a wide range of lifestyles and living conditions (families with kids, retirees, etc.), although it is getting too expensive for many to live here.
- Want the area to be its own place, not an extension of Moab. Do not want the area to be a city, and it should not have a discernible downtown like Moab. However, the area should have a destination to meet and come together, possibly centered around a park.
- The area should be more aligned with creating a community for its residents and less about accommodating the needs of tourists.
- The area should have a separate vibe than Moab. It should be a nice place to live, but not a "well to do" community. The Spanish Valley/Moab relationship is comparable to Eagle to Vail Colorado, or Bellevue/Hailey to Ketchum/Sun Valley Idaho. An affordable community where most residents will work and shop in Moab.
- The area should have discernible neighborhoods, but not like Moab.

- The eclectic design and land use structure is generally OK, although future buildings should be required to fit in better with the landscape. If a Walmart or other big box uses are located here, they should fit in like those found in St. George and Cedar City.
- Both moved to the area to get away from Moab. The ability to have a larger property and the affordable price of land was a major reason both moved here, although the quiet lifestyle and dark skies are what keeps them here.
- There is no doubt that more people are coming, and it is critical to figure out a model to accommodate them. Many existing residents don't want more growth and want to preserve the area as it is now, although they have no right to expect that. Need to figure out how to accommodate a lot more growth.
- Views, viewsheds and preservation of the landscape should be considered when developing the area.
- The area isn't sure who or what they are. Would like to see the area remain primarily a bedroom community to Moab, with some industry and jobs as well.
- It is difficult to get good and dependable residents for service jobs, and in some cases foreigners from China and similar locations are brought in for those purposes.
- Not afraid of growth like many neighbors

LAND USE AND PLANNING

- Currently they have incompatible land use and very little regulation; needs to be some regulation and buffering between uses
- Commercial – prefer mom and pop shops over big box
- Some smaller lots (1/2 acre) okay – it's needed
- SITLA needs to agree to and comply with the master plan
- Look at Pack Creek and how it fits in with this plan
- Height limits because of fire resources/restrictions? *Not an issue (everything can be served)*
- Height uses would change based on land use
- Completion of La Sal loop could change the area dramatically
- Future, more detailed, studies need to occur and need to look at how much those studies will cost (how much will it cost to do this plan?)
- Small commercial away from Hwy 191 but still on well-traveled roads for visibility (maybe Spanish Valley Road?)
- RV/tiny houses are in issue in Grand County; put where it should go not where it is convenient
- Locating all "transient" (e.g. temporary housing and low-income renters) uses together might not be a good idea
- Gravel pits are important to growth; keep development away from
- SITLA – like to see mixed income/type of housing; bike trails; find a future use for gravel pits – when mined out
- Find best place for next gravel pit (SITLA – 30 year pit lifespan)

- 1,000 ft. commercial highway – liked to see pushed forward; too large, would like to see more area for residential development
- Incompatible uses – the 1,000 ft. commercial rule really needs to change so commercial uses aren't next or in the middle of residential areas (We are about 10 years behind)
- Grow from a community commercial center around Spanish Valley Rd. out
- Put gas stations, Walmart on Hwy; locate smaller commercial internally
- Learn from mistakes that Moab has made
- Would like better buffers between residential and commercial/industrial uses. The lack of control in San Juan County has resulted in some incompatible land uses being located together. However, most moved here specifically because the area is in San Juan County, which has limited input and control.
- Don't see a need for stores or services that one can walk to; don't mind driving to Moab and beyond for basic needs.
- Most believe that Moab will still be the commercial and social core of the area. However, this will be less true as areas further to the south develop as they are so much further away.
- There is an opportunity to be smarter and better-planned than Moab, particularly through the design and location of utilities and infrastructure (water, sewer and roads are key).
- The area should be dominated by single-family residential, although there is room for a wider range of types and densities, including cluster. Some residents indicated they would like higher density residential located near commercial and industrial uses, while others believe it is important to integrate such uses within the overall layout.
- Building heights should be relatively low, no higher than 3-stories.
- Colorado Outward Bound is generating a lot of traffic and light pollution. This is an example of "dumb" planning within the 1,000-foot commercial strip along the highway.
- Existing zoning which requires one-acre minimum lot size and 1,000-foot commercial development strip along the highway both poor control models (unwise), particularly now that water and sewer are available.
- The area should have some smaller retail and grocery uses, and the Spanish Valley Road should become the Main Street of the area.
- Many people want to build small homes on their properties that they can rent out or subdivide and sell – they don't think this is a good idea for permanent residents, and don't like the idea of too many "overnighters" in the area.
- San Juan County has discussed converting the old airport into residences, although nothing has happened.
- They have been personally impacted by poor land use decisions. An unfavorable use was allowed to be constructed immediately adjacent, which has impacted their ability to sell the property.
- Would be comfortable with the area becoming a residential enclave. High prices have impacted many in the community, and many have become "priced out".
- Retail in Moab has always struggled, requiring residents to drive to Grand Junction for reasonably-priced items and better selection. The development of a Wal-Mart could improve access to goods, although it would likely result in the loss of 3-4 local stores and businesses.

- Envisions the area to be primarily a residential community, with limited commercial to serve local needs.
- Provided a copy of the Draft San Juan County Spanish Valley I-O Infill Overlay Zone – thinks it makes some sense, certainly a step toward providing better control of development. Keeps commercial separate from residential uses, which is a big problem, particularly within the 1,000-foot highway zone.
- Would like to see some smaller corner stores and similar uses, but no gas stations as they tend to be a major impact on residences.
- The area needs some commercial, particularly along the highway.

TRANSPORTATION

- Currently no connectivity to Moab. Need better transportation plan; in particular, need bike routes
- Don't want service employees far from city, but probably will occur here – consider transportation system
- Need some good cross valley access – Spanish Valley is over used and speed limit keeps getting lowered
- Need to require commercial development to improve roads (otherwise won't happen until county does it/too late)
- Transportation needs to look at and incorporate good signage
- Road standards – pavement requirements to get good quality
- New roads to limit traffic volumes to current residential neighborhoods to keep current developed areas quiet and provide opportunity for other uses on properties to be developed.
- Grocery store, Walmart – All of this will come eventually, want it in the right places
- Hwy 191 to Spanish Valley Rd. (2nd key road) doesn't have a good connection now
- We have space and flexibility now – so now is the time to plan (get the bike paths in now)
- Lack of acceleration/deceleration lanes at highway is a big problem. Left turns off the highway into the area can be a death trap, particularly with fast-moving trucks and semis trying to keep us speed as they climb up roadway.
- UDOT - It will be a long time before a 4-lane highway is installed south from the county line. Focus is completing 4-lanes from county line to Moab.
- UDOT - A copy of the existing corridor agreement was provided, which was approved by both counties and Moab in 2015. Any changes would require approval by all parties. Addresses segment from Millcreek Road to city. Addresses existing access to private properties by inclusion of frontage road system. Was completed prior to the existing water/sewer agreement and corresponding growth implications. San Juan County hasn't really followed the plan, with roads implemented contrary to the agreement.
- UDOT – key standards to consider include:
 - No driveways closer than 1,000 ft. apart

- Minimum one-mile between controlled intersections (acceleration/deceleration lanes for now)
- If traffic increases, the distance between intersections can increase as part of decreasing speed, like Moab situation. However, the fact that there will be limited development on the west side of the highway indicates that the highway will be different here than when it passes through the middle of the city in Moab.
- Lighting – all intersections require lights, according to standards. Improvements to address preservation of night skies would be a betterment.

PARKS, OPEN SPACE, TRAILS, AND RECREATION

- Work with BLM on anything regarding Kens Lake; had a recreation plan at one time.
- Kens Lake – likes to see the growth; need to improve access and traffic so the impact to neighborhood/area isn't as great
- Parks – Places of respite in the summer; can the county keep them up/afford it? (need to ask)
- Kens Lake – BLM is looking at planning for bigger recreation facilities
 - Some years Ken's Lake is dry; can it be a sustainable draw?
 - Most of the recreation happens outside of the valley; probably won't be a huge draw within
- Drainages and water ways should be maintained as trail systems and used to delineate neighborhoods and land use areas.
- Community gathering locations are important, but should have a rural focus that builds upon the opportunities found here. Kens Lake, parks and greenways should be the place where people come together.

ENVIRONMENTAL

- Flood plains are a concern; County needs stricter regulations (people are building where they shouldn't)
- Retention ponds are really important particularly as you develop new roads/put new pavement in
- Kens Lake – development around should be carefully considered (has leaked in past)
- Floodwaters – a big concern
- Has FEMA been involved? People have lost properties in Grand County because in flood plain. We should plan around the flood plains
- Preservation of night skies is a critical concept. Moab has lost the ability to see stars, and is unlikely to be able to regain it even if they can reverse existing light spillover.
- Flood waters flow down west cliffs during heavy rains, which impact the west side of the highway and Pack Creek. Need check dams, avoid development on the west side of the highway.

- Need to take a careful look at storm water, the role of drainages and ravines, etc. as development plans are made.
- Preservation of night sky is a critical issue and concern.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

- Affordable housing - where should it go?
- School districts will have to be thought about; currently the area is being served by Grand County
- Look at financing and having enough to provide services (schools)
- Affordable housing – keeping this area residential and then have a good transportation system to Moab (plenty of jobs there now – but are seasonal and part-time)
- Employee housing is a huge issue. Some accommodations are being made by employees now but more is needed
- Affordable housing – should be looked at carefully; regulation is important for balancing
- Affordable housing should be part of each development; not pushed just into one area
- Low-income and affordable housing is a critical issue that will be a big part of the future. Many believe that residents are hung up on maintaining and increasing their property value rather than maintaining the area as a good place to live.

GOVERNMENT SERVICES AND REGULATORY

- Jones and DeMille plans are assumed – easements need to be acquired, etc.
- School districts will have to be thought about; currently the area is being served by Grand County
- Look at financing and having enough to provide services (schools)
- Could have a big problem with grandfathering – where smaller lots have already been approved
- Fire District – need to consider so insurance rates don't go up (insurance rates go up if population increases in a service area)
- Business sneaks in (e.g. RV/tiny houses) on a former residential lot; unsafe conditions and unregulated
- Schools – are we planning for them? (Reach out to school district to establish needs)
- Look at guidelines for development to preserve what we like – e.g. night sky
- The area has no continuity or real structure, no standards. Would like to have more, but not too much like in Moab. Striking a balance between free choice and too much control is a primary issue.
- Moab has a real problem with Airbnb uses proliferating, and this is emerging to be an issue in the Spanish Valley as well. Should look at what Moab is doing and apply similar solutions when codes are developed.

- Both appreciate the flexibility San Juan County provides for development, although they are worried about increasing traffic, the proliferation of overnight-rentals and similar uses and the impact of development on the quiet life/dark skies.
- They are concerned that services are nearly non-existent (they won't even grade the roads), even though they pay taxes in San Juan County. Since the Spanish Valley is far from Monticello, they believe that the county doesn't care what goes on here; the Spanish Valley is low on the list of priority for the county.
- San Juan County and Grand County do not get along, and don't want anything to do with the other. They are surprised that San Juan County is backing this planning effort, particularly since they are so disengaged, don't maintain the roads and don't have any ordinances that work at present.
- They believe that San Juan County doesn't care about the Spanish Valley, and that the area is on the bottom of the list when it comes to maintenance, etc. They are out of sight/out of mind. Can't believe things will change and get better in the future.
- Despite access to water and sewer, don't see things improving in the future. They feel stuck with the poor conditions that exist.
- Pessimistic that San Juan County has any interest doing something so far from Monticello.
- Motel tax has been used to promote tourism up to this point. However, there are some who think that since tourism is thriving, the tax should be used for improving police and other services, which are stretched thin by the tourists. This is a contentious issue.
- Despite all of the issues, bringing water and sewer to the area is a good idea.
- San Juan County doesn't care about the Spanish Valley – out of sight, out of mind.
- The use of CC&R's and other development control would help.
- The Spanish Valley is the stepchild of San Juan County. Roads here are the last to get maintained and fixed.
- Building inspection used to be easy, but has gotten more difficult since the county hired the same inspector used by Grand County.
- One-acre lots are too large for most people to handle. Some residents are worried that the water will be fluoridated and/or chlorinated.
- Concerned about the water source and quality. Will it be adequately tested and controlled?