

Greater Arkansas River Nature Association
Nature Centered, Community Driven.

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August 22, 2016

Dan Swallow, Director of Development Services
Jon Roorda, Planning Manager
Chaffee County
PO Box 699
Salida CO 81201

Dear Mr. Swallow and Mr. Roorda,

GARNA requests that the Planning and Zoning Commission, at a minimum, postpone the recommendation to the County Board to adopt Code changes to the visual analysis and open space requirements.

The Greater Arkansas River Nature Association (GARNA) has been part of Chaffee County for 20 years and currently has a membership of over 370 individuals and families. Our mission is to foster stewardship of the natural, cultural and historical resources of the greater Arkansas River region through education, volunteerism and experiences for all ages. In 2004, our mission was expanded when, at the request of the Chaffee County Commissioners, GARNA was asked to administer the Chaffee County Heritage Area and the Collegiate Peaks Scenic and Historic Byway.

With this mission in mind, GARNA has concerns about the recently proposed changes to the Chaffee County Land Use Code, adopted in January, 2014. We are particularly concerned with the changes proposed to open space dedication and visual analysis.

GARNA would like for open space requirements in some form (fee in lieu, for example) be continued within the county's jurisdiction. These open space areas are the refuge, food source and home to the natural resources of our valley and the trails and parks connecting to them provide safe access and viewing for residents and visitors.

GARNA would like the opportunity to determine whether the proposed visual analysis changes would jeopardize the Collegiate Peaks Scenic and Historic Byway designation through our county. The byway contributes greatly to the scenic character of the valley, is important to the county's tourism and recreational base, and contributes to the county's quality of life and economic development.

In our work, we've seen the success and importance of using a collaborative approach that engages experts and as many stakeholders as possible. This is the kind of process that led to the adoption of the January 2014 Land Use Code. We would have welcomed an opportunity to collaborate with the county in a similar manner on the changes being proposed to visual analysis and open space requirements.

We understand how important a good land use code is to maintaining the natural and cultural resources of Chaffee County. We appreciate that the Planning and Zoning Commission and staff have a difficult job in maintaining an up-to-date and useful land use code for the county. GARNA asks that recommendations to the county commissioners regarding the visual analysis and open space requirement changes be postponed until such time that GARNA and other stakeholders have an opportunity to collaborate with county staff and the Planning and Zoning Commission on the potential impacts of these proposed changes.

Sincerely,

GREATER ARKANSAS RIVER NATURE ASSOCIATION

Kate Garwood, Chair

cc: Commissioners Dennis Giese, Frank Holman and Dave Potts