

## Eagle developing its own plan for north Foothills

### Some say Ada County may not be up to the task of planning for growth

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Two plans for guiding development in the Foothills north of Eagle will be released before year's end — one plan from Ada County and one from the city of Eagle.

The area is a hotspot for future growth, including a planned community that would double the size of Eagle.

Eagle leaders have decided to embark on a "visioning" process for about 50,000 acres between Idaho 16 and Highway 55, north of Beacon Light Road. Planning staff hope to wrap it up by October.

Meanwhile, Ada County officials say they are finishing up the much-anticipated North Ada County Foothills Sub-Area Plan, which will guide land-use, transportation, open space and recreation for the Eagle Foothills. The county's plan may be done as soon as mid-August.

The county hired a consultant to help with its Foothills planning process; Eagle intends to do the same.

The county's plan will cost about \$40,000, while Eagle estimates its plan will cost \$60,000, not including staff time.

Why create two blueprints for growth for the same area?

Eagle city officials and planning staff say they were compelled by different stakeholder groups to draft a Foothills plan.

"The average citizen that lives there now, the people that have the ownership of the land, and we as neighbors to the potential development area aren't convinced the county is up to the task," Eagle City Councilman Scott Nordstrom said. "It's time to do something about it."

Ada County planner Pete Friedman, who has shepherded the county's planning process for Eagle's Foothills since last year, said the city of Eagle was invited to collaborate with the county on its plan, but leaders never responded.

Friedman said Eagle's planning staff has attended community meetings on the county's Foothills plan.

"We've had high attendance at those meetings — in excess of 200 people (residents) at a couple," he said.

"We did a keypad survey where people could see the results of what their opinions are on some of the issues."

Eagle city planner Nichoel Baird Spencer said Foothills property owners and the leaders of the North Ada County Foothills Association have asked the city of Eagle to take the lead in planning for that area.

The North Ada County Foothills Association has about 200 members, most of whom live in the Foothills.

David Head, who is co-chairman of NACFA, said that while the group has supported the county's planning efforts in the past, they think Eagle is now better suited to lead a plan for the Foothills.

He did confirm that NACFA's steering committee asked Eagle to take on the effort.

"The county is doing a yeoman's job with the resources they have," he said, adding that the county is having to deal with explosive growth in cities such as Meridian and Kuna.

But, he said, NACFA leaders believe that Eagle has more resources to devote and a vested interest in good planning in the Foothills because traffic, water and other issues there will directly impact Eagle.

"The developers are here. They've bought all the land. They're mapping it and are ready to go," Head said. "What the county was doing was just too little, too late."

NACFA residents were so concerned about water impacts from large developments planned in the Foothills that they petitioned the director of the Idaho Department of Water Resources to do a comprehensive water study. IDWR agreed to do the study, Head said.

Baird Spencer said one of the objectives of Eagle's Foothills planning process will be to determine the acceptability to Eagle residents of having planned communities in the Foothills and/or in the city limits.

"Basically, we're putting our finger in the air ... We're asking, do you want us to engage in this area," she said. "If we do, what are the issues — viewshed protection, establishment of right-of-ways, infrastructure, rural preservation. We don't know what those issues or preferences are for that type of development."

None of the land in the Foothills north of Beacon Light Road is in Eagle's city limits — or even within its impact area. So is it legal for the city to plan the future of what's now county land?

"There is nothing to say we can't plan extra-territorially," Baird Spencer said. "We just have to remember we have no jurisdiction and can't enforce the plan."

One Foothills property owner — Arizona-based developer M3 Companies, which proposes to build more than 13,000 homes on 8,800 acres — is interested in being annexed into the city of Eagle. The community could double the size of Eagle.

But M3's property is not now contiguous to the city limits, a requirement of annexation.

The city wants to acquire 2,000 acres of BLM land in the Foothills to preserve as open space and for public recreation.

If the city succeeds in that effort, M3's property could then be annexed into Eagle and the city's plan could be enforced.

Baird Spencer said Eagle would utilize as much data and information from the county's Foothills plan as possible.

For its part, the county expects to have a draft plan in about six weeks.

"Our intention, once the plan gets adopted, is to rewrite our development regulations to implement the plan," Ada County planning director Jerry Armstrong said. "What's the point of a plan, if you're not going to implement it?"

#### **Proposals for the North Ada Foothills**

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- M3 Companies: Proposed planned community of more than 12,000 homes on 8,800 acres that would be annexed into Eagle.
- Dry Creek Creek Ranch: Proposed planned community of up to 3,800 homes on 1,414 acres.
- Cartwright Ranch: Proposed planned community of up to 700 homes on 1,000 acres as an expansion of Hidden Springs.
- Bragail: Owner Cullen Connolly is proposing a subdivision of 127 homes on 636 acres.
- Kastera Homes: Two proposed subdivisions totaling 159 homes on 938 acres.