

Ten Ways That Thoughtful, Good-Hearted People Disagree About New Development in the Farmington Foothills

Given the love everyone feels about our beautiful Farmington, community discussions about future changes naturally elicit energy and passion. This is a good thing - especially if disagreements can be heard, respected, and deeply considered. In that spirit, this document has been jointly prepared with the participation of Jerry Preston (*Local Developer*) & Corey Crowell (*Our Last Mountain, Let's Protect it!*) as an effort to clarify legitimate differences of perspective about the following key questions involved in the proposed development. By fairly mapping out the respective views and positions, we aim to facilitate a more thoughtful conversation where both sides are heard fully and fairly, along the way to a resolution everyone can respect. Additionally, we hope to combat the tendency towards personal attacks that leave individuals and relationships wounded after a final decision is made. Corey said it best - "*No matter the outcome, if our community is left estranged and divided - then we've all lost.*"



1. Is this part of the mountain in Farmington safe to develop?

- ❖ Yes - there are currently many homes in Farmington built to the north and south of this proposed project on the same type of soils and conditions. To ensure safety, Farmington City has significantly increased guidelines and requirements for its great foothill ordinance that the developer will be required to follow. Geo-technical studies of the soil and fault-line will also provide data that will guide the process. The density of homes planned is far less than was built in North Salt Lake's foothills.
- ❖ A number of recent landslides in newly developed communities (which also used geo-technical studies) raise significant questions about the validity and objectivity of these studies. With a fault running along Farmington's sandy foothills and two major mudslides in the last 30 years, there are legitimate concerns of future de-stabilization from this new development. The safest possible path would be to not develop this fragile landscape.

2. How would this development affect the potential for mountain fires?

- ❖ There will always be some kind of interface between homes and the mountain. With the exception of one homeless man trying to get put in jail, all recent fires over the last decade were started by individuals accessing the mountain from Farmington Canyon across the Fire Break road. This new development would *decrease* fire risk on the mountain by providing an improved road and additional fire hydrants on a plateau that is currently hard for fire-trucks to access.
- ❖ All recent mountain fires have been caused by humans who have acted irresponsibly. This development would *increase* fire risk by moving human activity further up the mountain - requiring fire fighters to risk their lives by going further up the mountain to protect these additional homes.

3. What would this development mean for Farmington's water and sewer infrastructure?

- ❖ In a city of 21,500 people, 23 new homes would make a minimal impact and largely be managed by existing infrastructure - with any needed upgrades paid for by the developer. Central Davis sewer district and Benchland water are both prepared to support community growth - including other developments with hundreds of proposed homes currently being built in Farmington.
- ❖ In addition to more households requiring drinking water, this development will also require secondary water over its 44 acres. Since the sewer system in central Farmington is not built to handle increased sewage coming down the mountain, it may also require the expense of additional upgrades on downtown streets.

4. How much of a change would the increased local traffic cause?

- ❖ Very minimal. With only 23 new homes the traffic would be split between two access roads - 400 North and 100 North - rather than only using one road.
- ❖ Noticeable. Farmington city has already covenanted to keep 100 North in its narrow state and 400 North is also relatively narrow. If these roads become even busier, there is greater risk of fatal accidents and other safety concerns.

5. What would this development mean for the residents below - especially those who live close-by?

- ❖ It is true that residents' view of the mountain will change to some degree. While important to take into consideration, this change would not be as dramatic as feared - and should not trump the rights of other property owners. In terms of safety for existing property owners, more controlled vegetation in the foothills will decrease the risk of mudslides.
- ❖ Much like some people prefer buying a home with a lake view, the existing residents have already chosen to buy a home with a natural mountain view. For these homeowners who love this charming mountain backdrop, this experience will forever be changed and diminished with visible retaining walls and developed land spanning up to Firebreak Road. There are also concerns of projected debris from East windstorms - and potential mudslides/flooding.

6. How would this development impact hiking and access to the greater Bonneville Shoreline Trail?

- ❖ Rather than decreasing access, the new development would provide *more access* to trails through the creation of a permanent easement, established access to trails and space for parking. If this development does not get approval, these property owners will likely no longer allow hikers to access trails running through their land – asking people to use Farmington Canyon road.
- ❖ Despite plans to provide easement and parking for access to trails, questions remain about a portion of the trail that will run through private property and can be closed off at any time if the owner decides to reduce traffic through his/her private property. The quality of hiking even on public trails will decline since planned housing lots border Bonneville Shoreline Trail. Twenty migratory birds and at least one endangered species (the yellow-billed cuckoo) also make their home in this specific area.

7. Would this development violate the spirit of the "historic district" which was put in place to maintain the integrity of old town Farmington?

- ❖ The strong intention of this development is to improve and add to the beauty of Farmington. Closer attention to the area around historic Farmington reveals abundant diversity in building types even in the historic district. This development - like Farmington Grove, Deer Hollow subdivision, Sunset Hills, Compton Bench - simply allows other people to join our wonderful community.
- ❖ One of the most important features for Farmington being voted as one of the top 20 places to live in the USA is for its historic beauty and scenic mountain backdrop above old town. Both young and seasoned residents have expressed concern that the addition of larger homes on the mountain will contrast and clash with the unique appearance of the adjoining neighborhood of smaller, historic homes below.

8. What role does money play in this decision?

- ❖ Although money is naturally involved in any development, it is unfair to portray it solely as an issue of money. Nine different property owners have invested for years and paid taxes on their land anticipating a future possibility of development. If money was the primary interest, three times as many homes could have been planned on this same amount of property. For existing property owners, this new development would likely increase the market value of their homes in adjoining neighborhoods.
- ❖ Building these homes will bring money to the developer and property owners. Farmington City and its tax-payers, however, will not likely gain financially and only stand to lose in a natural disaster. The majority of residents below the development feel the intrinsic value of their property (charm) will decrease with the addition of larger homes on the mountain above them.

9. What role do the rights of property owners play in this proposed development?

- ❖ The rights of property owners in the United States are constitutionally protected. Despite this, these nine property owners have been attacked as merely selfish and irresponsible for considering this plan. As long as this development is deemed safe to develop from experts who will evaluate the conditions and meets all development standards approved by our city leaders, the rights of property owners to develop their own land outweigh concerns expressed over a change in view.
- ❖ People have property rights so far as they don't cause substantial detriment to the already-existing property owners nearby. Farmington was founded on the principle of doing what is best for the community. In this case, the risks and negative effects to existing property owners far outweigh the benefits for developing these 44 acres for residential use.

10. If permission for residential development is denied, will it be approved in the future?

- ❖ Yes, private property that is already zoned for residential houses is intended to be developed. History demonstrates that what one city council turns down another city council later approves. A future developer may add many more homes on the same site.
- ❖ Not likely. This case will take precedence showing that if a well-respected, local developer does not receive approval, it will be much more difficult for any other developer to gain approval in the future. Having the mindset of “we don't want it, but it will eventually happen someday” creates an unnecessary lack of trust in future leaders and will lead to mediocre decisions that are not in the best interests of the community.

Special thanks to Corey & Jerry for their generous contributions to this document. Despite significant differences in perspective, these individuals share a strong commitment to respectful engagement. If you would like to join Jerry and Corey in an online conversation further exploring these differences, add your voice online at www.facebook.com/VillageSquareUtah

At the Village Square, we believe that vigorous, open-hearted conversation between citizens with diverse views reflects something beautiful about America. We believe, however, that our capacity (and freedom) to disagree in healthy ways will continue to diminish if we do not (a) preserve and protect this space to disagree and (b) come together to practice this in the public sphere. To find out how you can get involved with similar efforts in Utah to foster more generous conversations about gay rights, religious freedom, climate change and other issues, visit VillageSquareUtah.org or contact Jacob Hess (jzhess@gmail.com).