RESOLUTION OF THE PITKIN COUNTY PLANNING AND ZONING COMMISSION
ADOPTING THE UPPER SNOWMASS CREEK CAUCUS MASTER PLAN

Resolution No. PZ 2018-2

RECITALS

1. By State statute, the Pitkin County Planning and Zoning Commission (P&Z) has the responsibility and the authority to adopt master plans for Pitkin County.

2. Adopted plans are used by the public, appointed and elected officials as a guide in consideration of County-wide land use related policies, as well as future land use designations, planning issues and development proposals within the Plan area boundaries.

3. The Pitkin County Land Use Code specifically requires consideration of master plans as a criterion of approval for certain types of land use reviews (including, but not limited to special review, location and extent review, code amendments, rezoning, activities of local and state interest, and growth management exemptions).

4. Recommendations made within all of the respective Caucus/Neighborhood master plans will be considered by appointed and elected officials in the context of consistency with overarching County land use policies and programs, and broader community goals, including but not limited to infrastructure and essential community facility needs. If a determination is made by the elected and/or appointed officials that a plan recommendation is inconsistent with broader community goals and does not benefit the community as a whole, such recommendation may be considered, but not implemented.

5. All of the respective Pitkin County Caucus/neighborhood plan updates will be adopted by the Planning & Zoning Commission separately. At such time as all of the plans have been adopted, they will be reviewed as a whole to ensure that there are no inherent conflicts that will impair the County’s ability to achieve overarching community goals, land use policies and functional needs. Subsequently, the P&Z will identify and consolidate common plan themes in an update to the 2003 Overview of the Pitkin County Comprehensive Plan. The Comprehensive Plan will provide the overall framework and approach for planning in rural Pitkin County, and the neighborhood plans will provide detail for specific areas.

6. The Upper Snowmass Creek Caucus Land Use Master Plan was prepared by the Upper Snowmass Creek Caucus Master Plan Committee with limited assistance from the Pitkin County Community Development Department and input from interested members of the public who reside in the Upper Snowmass Creek Caucus area, as depicted on the attached map (Exhibit B.)

7. The Pitkin County Planning and Zoning Commission reviewed the plan at a worksession, which was a public meeting on October 17, 2017, and at a duly noticed public hearing on January 16, 2018, at which time public comment was heard with respect to the Master Plan.
NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Pitkin County Planning Commission that it does hereby adopt the Upper Snowmass Creek Caucus Land Use Master Plan, attached as Exhibit “A.”


APPROVED AND ADOPTED on the 16th day of January, 2018.

PITKIN COUNTY PLANNING AND ZONING COMMISSION

By Jeffrey Conklin, Chair
Date 2/16/2018

ATTEST:

Bonnie Shiles, Administrative Assistant

APPROVED AS TO FORM:

APPROVED AS TO CONTENT:

Cindy Houben, Community Development Director
Exhibit A

Upper Snowmass Creek Caucus Master Plan

*Adopted by the Pitkin County Planning & Zoning Commission, January 16, 2018*

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of the Upper Snowmass Creek Caucus’s Master Plan is to provide policy guidelines for its Board when directing and implementing projects, programs, and public policies that require review, recommendations, and approvals. The Plan may also be used as an advisory document by Pitkin County staff, appointed and elected officials in review of land use proposals and in development of land use-related policies and regulations. This Master Plan serves the community by providing policies and principles for a sustained and enhanced environment for living in the Caucus area.

The goal of the Caucus is to improve and support community involvement through public discourse to insure issues, policies and actions are commensurate with the vision of the residents of the valley.

MASTER PLAN PROCESS

The Upper Snowmass Creek Board favored a participatory process for composing a Master Plan. To achieve this, a survey was developed and submitted to the residents for their input. Fifty-one respondents returned their surveys to the Board. Some surveys represented a household while others represented individuals. To further insure that those who wanted input regarding the character and philosophy of the Master Plan had an opportunity to voice their opinions, two public meetings were held, one in May and one in June. From these results, an analysis was conducted which became the backbone of the Master Plan. On most of the issues presented there was overwhelming consensus among the responding residents. On the remaining issues there was a clear majority in favor of one path or another. Based on these findings, we present the Master Plan.

PHILOSOPHY

- It is the intent of the Upper Snowmass Creek Caucus to abide by the rules and regulations of all regulatory entities having jurisdiction over our geographic boundaries.
GROWTH

The Caucus believes all growth should be consistent with the rural equestrian and agricultural character of the valley. Caucus residents oppose the development of multi-family housing, trailer parks or high density development. Any development should be sensitive to the environment. The Caucus strongly supports the Pitkin County Land Use Code, including use of Transferrable Development Rights. The Caucus supports the current Land Use Code provisions allowing up to a maximum of 15,000 sq. ft. of floor area, but encourages a maximum floor area of 8,250 square feet for preservation sites and for receiving sites. All applications requesting more than 8,250 square feet of floor area should be subject to special review. New development should be sited to lessen visual impacts and include finishes that are compatible with the local neighborhood. Commercial activities, other than traditional agricultural farming or ranching, are discouraged but may be permitted by special review.

WATER

The preservation and protection of Snowmass Creek is a top priority for Caucus residents. We support efforts to monitor the availability, quality, vulnerability and sustainability of the water supply in the Upper Snowmass Creek (USC).

The Caucus encourages conservation and best practices through education and advocacy for efficient and productive water use, with property, water and easement rights respected and protected. The Caucus acknowledges the Roaring Fork Watershed Plan as a document that seeks to identify and encourage the water resources goals of the USC Caucus. Any request to the caucus for a cooperative effort to protect USC will be evaluated for cost/benefit to the Upper Snowmass Creek and its valley owners.

The Caucus pledges to be good stewards of the water of Snowmass Creek.

The Caucus will seek to avoid significant adverse impact to our wetlands, and riparian ecological systems.

The Caucus will work with and advise the agencies that impact our water interests.

ENVIRONMENT

The Upper Snowmass Creek Valley, filled with tangible memorials to nature’s wonder, is one of Colorado’s most beautiful valleys. Its main artery, Snowmass Creek Road, heaves and dips as it winds nine miles up-valley where it greets the
mountains. Along the way a traveler witnesses sloping fields where grazing equines tranquilly munch on waving mountain grasses. Rocks that witnessed the dawn of time pepper the rising ridges which silhouette the sun as it drops its great, golden form, splashing the sky with purple and rose colored streaks. The sounds of a churning creek carving its path to meet the river are the only break in the tranquility of the alpine setting.

Clearly, the stewards of this exceptional valley have a large responsibility. Residents of our valley have expressed a strong desire to maintain the rural character and lifestyle they currently enjoy, including low-density development, agricultural activities, and scenic views.

The Caucus will work with the County to protect its natural areas that provide habitat, and maintain the environmental quality of the valley. These are the assets that enrich the lives of residents by providing opportunities for education, scientific research, fishing, art, observation, and outdoor recreation.

The Caucus will support the efforts of wildlife management agencies to maintain and manage the integrity and quality of wildlife habitats and ecosystems.

It will support the continuation of ranching, equestrian and agricultural land uses.

The Caucus opposes the licensing of medical and recreational marijuana facilities. This includes growth, packaging, product infusion, testing, and sales.

The Caucus will strive to preserve and protect our water resources.

The Caucus supports the County’s existing policies and programs related to noxious weed management.

It supports the education of the community on fire mitigation and evacuation plans.

The Caucus supports the enforcement of scenic view and ridgeline regulations.

FIRE

The feedback from the Master Plan survey was nearly universal in agreement with the statement that it is important to promote land use and forest management strategies to mitigate wildfire potential.

The Upper Snowmass Creek Caucus, therefore, supports stewardship of forest resources to address wildfire-related risks to life, property, and the environment for the benefit of present and future generations.
The threat of wildfire transcends ownerships, and implementing an effective fire-hazard reduction strategy requires cooperation among all landowners. Our forested watershed contains a reservoir, water intakes, and structures that supply drinking water. It also contains important infrastructure, including power and communication lines, as well as homes and ranches. Protection of these important assets requires a sense of urgency and a cohesive fire-hazard reduction strategy.

To provide this, the Caucus is seeking a local Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP). A CWPP is a collaboration plan created by the fire department, state and Federal forestry officials, land managers, community leaders, and the public. The planning process maps assets at risk, and requires actions to reduce that risk, such as prescribed burning, fuel reduction, or other measures that adapt a community to better confront their wildfire threat.

The greatest risk factors for wildfire are: fuel (which includes moisture levels, temperature and characteristics), topography, and weather. Our area is classified high risk due to low precipitation, steep slopes, and wildfire prone vegetation. Another important factor contributing to risk is the dispersed location of fire protection resources which leads to extended response time.

The Caucus's approach to fire mitigation is to employ a pre-fire, systematic body of concepts. These concepts are:

1. To recognize the depth and importance of the communications framework and provide resources to implement communications recommendations because this is what establishes the foundation of a collaborative process.
2. To align regulatory and management agencies (fire professionals) to improve cooperation and coordination among themselves so that they may efficiently respond to a fire incident, and may develop solutions and strategies customized to the particular circumstances of the valley.
3. To synchronize mitigation, fire education, prevention, and hazardous fuels reduction program activities.
4. To support a consistently funded, long-term public awareness campaign to promote understanding of the need for the community to become fire-adapted, and to motivate individuals to take positive action regarding fuel reduction and fire mitigation.
5. To require Land Use Applications to include a fire mitigation plan that emphasizes fire-resistant building materials and defensible spaces.
6. To become a recognized Firewise Community.

At the heart of fire adaptation is the acceptance of the responsibility of living in an area of wildfire risk.
In consideration of the concern about fire potential and disturbance of domestic and wild animals, celebratory fireworks displays in the Caucus area will not be permitted.

ROADS
The Caucus will work with the County in monitoring the conditions and maintenance of County Roads to current standards to ensure safety for residents and visitors. The Caucus will consult and advise the County Public Works Department on matters regarding periodic road repair.

Furthermore, the Caucus will advocate for safety improvements to the roads in the area to include installing guardrails and paving Watson Divide Road, as well as extending the pavement on Snowmass Creek Road to its terminus, in a manner consistent with rural character.

The Caucus discourages the use of magnesium chloride on the road to melt snow/ice.

The Caucus supports annual striping of Snowmass Creek Road.

No further widening of Snowmass Creek Road is desired.

Residents are opposed to the creation of a biking/pedestrian trail system along Snowmass Creek Road. The Caucus will collaborate with the County to explore safety measures to better protect the bicyclists, such as better lines of sight on corners and bends. While widening of the road surface and creation of a trail system along the road is not supported, safety measures may include the potential for wider shoulders, if this is determined to be the only option for improving safety, should this be desirable in the future.

WEEDS

Non-native, invasive plant species pose a threat to virtually all of the state's natural systems, including forests and grasslands. Once present in the landscape, non-native species are often able to out-compete native species because no natural controls exist to keep them in check. This is especially true when ecosystem health already is stressed by such factors as drought, fire, and ground disturbances.

The state of Colorado has designated a number of non-native plant species as "noxious-weeds". "Noxious weed is a legally defined term that refers to a specific plant species that has been designated for mandatory control by branches of local, state or federal governments due to the harm, actual or potential, that the species is capable of inflicting upon the resources and values of society" (Uhing 2009).

The Upper Snowmass Creek Caucus supports the eradication of noxious-weeds in its area and uses differing tools to accomplish this. Its web site hosts Pitkin
County's entire lists of noxious-weeds which contain photos, descriptions, and means of eradication of each weed. Additionally, during the summer months, a specific weed is targeted commensurate with its bloom cycle.

A community weed eradication day is scheduled annually to promote awareness of and education regarding the threat of noxious weeds to the landscape of the valley.

The Caucus supports the County's noxious-weed enforcement program, and seeks a community/County partnership in its efforts toward noxious-weed eradication.

In compliance with the opinions expressed in the Master Plan survey, the Caucus encourages all Land Use Applications to specifically address weed mitigation.

TELECOMMUNICATIONS

The Caucus residents agree with the need to pursue and support efforts to improve quality and access to telecommunication services.