

Memorandum

To: Cindy Houben, Community Development Director
CC: Members of the Emma Caucus Board
From: Tim Malloy
Date: February 9, 2006
Re: Emma Sub-Area Plan – Summary of Opinion Survey Results

BACKGROUND AND METHODOLOGY

At a regular meeting of the Emma Caucus on November 2, 2005, a summary of the site analysis and property owner interviews portion of the Emma Sub-Area Plan was presented and discussed. During this meeting, it was decided that an opinion survey should be conducted to gather input from residents of the entire Emma Caucus Area with respect to key issues associated with the study area properties. The issues covered in the survey include:

- Preservation of historic structures within the study area of the Emma Sub-Area Plan;
- Transportation and safety associated with Highway 82 and the intersections located within the Study Area;
- Attitudes and acceptance of the anomalous uses that exist within the Study Area (Emma School House, Divide Corporation, Larson Trucking, vintage vehicle storage site, Pitkin County Fueling Station); and
- Open space and wildlife habitat.

In addition, the survey included a write-in section that allowed people to provide comments on topics not included in the survey questionnaire. These individual comments are included in the survey results that are attached to this memo.

The survey was conducted utilizing Speed Survey, a web-based survey service that Pitkin County has used previously. A survey questionnaire was prepared and posted on the Emma Caucus web page. Notice of the survey was then provided to land owners within the Caucus Area via a post card, which was distributed by mail around the 1st of January. This card also provided each eligible survey participant with a code number to ensure that the survey results would reflect the opinions of Caucus Area residents. The survey questionnaire remained open from approximately January 1st to January 19th and the results were tallied by Speed Survey. A total of 72 completed surveys were submitted on the web page. However, three surveys were disqualified due to problems with the assigned code numbers. In one case, no code number was provided and in the other two cases the code number was duplicated. In total, 69 surveys were accepted as valid. The results are available on the Caucus website: <http://EMMACAUCUS.speedsurvey.com/report.aspx>. A paper copy of the survey results is included with this memo.

SUMMARY OF RESULTS

Introduction

Our purpose here is not to reiterate the numerical results of the survey (copy of the actual survey results is attached) but to provide some summary observations and other comments. In addition, as part of my review of the survey results, I looked at a few correlations between responses to certain questions. For example, I thought it would helpful to see how people who opposed (responded as “somewhat opposed” and “very opposed”) the installation of a signal light at the Emma Road/Highway 82 intersection responded to the question about making other improvements to the intersection. The results of these correlations are discussed in this memo.

Observations and Summary Comments

Historic Structures: A majority of respondents supported preserving the historic structures whether that meant allowing more intense use on the Minney property or relocating the structures. There was a preference for relocating the structures in order to avoid having to allow more intense development on the Minney property (comparing responses to questions 1 and 2 of this section). In response to question #1, 52% of respondents supported preservation of the structures even it meant allowing more intense use of the Minney property and more traffic at the Emma Road/Highway 82 intersection. Regarding question #2, 59% of respondents supported the idea of relocating the structures if it meant that this would avoid more intense use on the Minney property and more traffic at the intersection. Responses regarding whether to spend public funds to preserve the historic Emma Store and Storehouse buildings was close with 50% in favor, 45% opposed and 5% indifferent. This response was based on the buildings being put to some public use. Of the 35 people who supported preserving the historic buildings, even if meant more intense use on the Minney property and more traffic, 19 or 54% were opposed (combining “somewhat opposed” and “very opposed” responses) to installing a traffic signal at the Emma Road/Highway 82 intersection.

Transportation and Safety: Two-thirds of respondents work outside of the home. Of these, over 84% use the Emma Road/ Highway 82 intersection as part of their daily commute route. Of those who use the Emma Road/Highway 82 intersection for their commute, about 35% pass through the intersection during the morning peak hour (7:30 to 8:30am). Approximately 47% of these commuters pass through the intersection during the afternoon peak hour (5:00 to 6:00pm). A slight majority of respondents (approximately 52%) expressed opposition to installing a traffic signal at the Emma Road/Highway 82 intersection when advised that this signal might result in higher intensity land uses near the intersection. However, a similar majority (52%) wanted to see the intersection redesigned to include more lanes or longer, more defined acceleration and deceleration lanes regardless of whether more intense land uses are allowed at the intersection. 53% of those who opposed installing a signal at the intersection also opposed making other improvements to the intersection.

There is an interesting correlation between the responses to the question regarding support for preserving the historic structures (Question #1 of the Historic Structures section) and the question regarding the installation of the traffic signal at the Emma Road/Highway 82 Intersection (Question #4 of the Transportation and Safety section). A small majority of people supported preserving the historic structures even if this results in greater traffic at the intersection, while a similarly small majority opposed the installation of a signal when advised that this might result in higher intensity land uses at the intersection. Of the 35 people who supported preserving the historic structures, even if is meant more intense use on the Minney property and more traffic at the intersection, 19, or 54%, expressed opposition to installing a traffic signal at the intersection. The response to Question #1 of the Historic Structures section seems to indicate that the desire to preserve the historic structures outweighs the concern regarding traffic and the other impacts associated with more intense use of the Minney property. However, this conclusion is at least partially offset by the preference expressed

for preserving the historic structures by relocating them, as reflected by the response to Question #2 of the Historic Structures section.

Anomalous Uses: This section of the survey was intended to gauge people's attitudes regarding the existing anomalous use, which were defined on the survey questionnaire as "uses which are dissimilar from the uses in the surrounding area and which would require some form of land use approval from the County, under the existing AFR-10 zoning, if they were to starting out today." The survey focused on five of these existing uses including the vintage vehicle storage lot located on the south side of Highway 82, east of the Emma Schoolhouse; the Emma Schoolhouse; Divide Corporation; Larson Trucking and the Pitkin County Fueling Facility, located across from the Emma Schoolhouse. The results to the questions in this section provide fairly clear direction regarding the existing anomalous uses and for using rezoning to accommodate existing or potential future commercial or institutional uses.

With the exception of the Emma Schoolhouse and the Pitkin County Fueling Facility, respondents to the survey indicated that the existing anomalous uses are acceptable but only for the life of the current user and should be returned to a use allowed under the current AFR-10 zoning once the current user sells or otherwise disposes of the property. With respect to the Emma Schoolhouse, an overwhelming majority (84%) of people believe that the use is acceptable should be allowed to continue and expand. Most of the respondents (70%) even supported the idea of rezoning the property to allow the use to remain and expand.

The results for the Pitkin County Fueling Facility are more complicated. Nearly 60% of respondents thought this use was unacceptable and should be eliminated. However, in response to the follow-up question about whether those who found the use unacceptable would find it acceptable if it were moved to less visible location on the Grace Church property, 52% responded positively. When we combine the number of people who found the use acceptable in its current location with those who would accept it in a less visible location, we find the acceptance rate increases to 59%.

This section of the survey questionnaire also includes a question allowing people to provide any personal knowledge they may have regarding any of the existing anomalous uses. There were 16 comments offered in response to this question (see attachment). The comments include three statements supporting the use of the Emma Schoolhouse as a community gathering facility. There was also one statement of support for building the Grace Church and relocating the Pitkin County Fueling Facility elsewhere on the Grace Church property.

The survey shows that 72% of respondents do not support rezoning any property within the Study Area (except the Emma Schoolhouse site) either to accommodate existing anomalous uses or to allow new commercial or institutional uses on other properties within the Study Area.

The last set of questions in this section was intended to assist in the process of determining the best way to handle the existing anomalous use properties by determining which of a list of factors is most important and least important to people in terms of their concerns about these properties. The list of factors included visual impacts, traffic impacts, density, property ownership rights and precedent. The most important factor turned out to be traffic (based on the combined number of people who rated it most important and second most important). The second most important factor was visual impacts (based on the combined number of people who rated it most important and second most important). The least important factor was property owner rights and the second least important was precedent. This would suggest that solutions should focus on ways of reducing the traffic and visual impacts associated with these uses.

Open Space and Wildlife Habitat: An overwhelming majority of respondents (88%) support current planning policies which suggest that the Emma Area should be preserved for rural residential, agriculture, open space and recreational uses. In addition, 75% of respondents indicated that they would support spending public funds to purchase additional open space in the Emma Area to ensure its rural residential, agricultural and open space character.

Other Comments or Thoughts: There were 22 comments offered as part of the survey response. These are included in the attachment to this memo. There were five separate comments supporting maintaining the area for rural, recreational, open space and agricultural uses and preventing “strip development.” There were also several comments regarding the Grace Church proposal, including four in support of allowing the church to be built and one opposed. In addition, there were two comments that expressed support for allowing more intensive development in the Emma Area, one of which was linked to preserving the historic structures.

Summary Comments

When viewed in total, the results of the survey suggest that residents of the Emma Caucus Area do not support any significant new commercial or institutional uses within the Study Area and would like to see the area preserved for rural residential, agricultural, open space and recreational uses. This conclusion is based on the overwhelming support expressed for current planning policies which recommend that the area be preserved for rural residential, agriculture, open space and recreation uses as well as strong opposition to the idea of rezoning any property (other than the Emma Schoolhouse) for commercial or institutional uses and the expressed concern regarding traffic and visual impacts. The caveat to this conclusion is the willingness to accept more intense uses and more traffic in the area in exchange for preserving the historic structures on the Minney property (52% favorable response to questions #1 of the Historic Structures section). However, this willingness is somewhat offset by the fact that nearly 60% of respondents favored preserving the historic structures by relocating them if this meant not having to accept more intense development and more traffic. Further, with the exception of the Emma Schoolhouse, which a majority of the survey respondents believe should be allowed to continue and expand, residents of the area would prefer that the existing anomalous uses be allowed to continue for the life of the current owners and then be returned to uses allowed under the current AFR-10 zoning. Regarding the County’s Fueling Facility, it would appear that a majority of people would accept the idea of allowing this use to continue if it were moved to a less visible location.

Attachment: Emma Caucus Survey Results