

Appendix 1 – Summary of Public Input

This summary provides an overview of the public input received from January 24th, 2019 to May 13th, 2019. Public input suggesting the need to review and/or revise the Cascade County Growth Policy emerged during the ongoing solicitation of public comments concerning proposed zoning regulation revisions first noticed on February 3, 2019 in the Great Falls Tribune. Since several comments addressed the Growth Policy directly, these comments have been included in the staff assessment of public input solicited for consideration of the need for revisions to the Growth Policy. Public notice soliciting public comments on the need to revise the Growth Policy were published in the Great Falls Tribune on April 21st, 2019 and April 28th, 2019. This summary covers both sets of comments received within the timeline described above.

A Note on the Analysis

This assessment of public comments is a very basic thematic analysis and is limited in its scope. Only submitted written comments have been included in this assessment. Comments provided during relevant Planning Board Meetings are available in audio format and summarized in the posted Meeting Minutes available on the Planning Division website. The goal of the assessment is to reduce 542 pages of public comments into a concise statement that will inform the Growth Policy review process. As such, the analysis is necessarily a generalization over each individual comment and the specifics of the content contained therein. Themes were determined by planning staff and emerged from reading the comments. Sub-themes were then devised to provide specific topics of focus for each theme.

Descriptive Statistics

The datasets described below correspond with the two collections of public comments used in the qualitative assessment. Both datasets are distinguished by topic and collection period.

Dataset	Begin Coverage	End Coverage	Unique Contributors	Total Contributions	Total Pages
Zoning Revision Comments	1/24/2019	5/13/2019	139	183	429
Growth Policy Review Comments	4/16/2019	5/13/2019	21	32	113

Primary Themes

There were seven primary themes that emerged in the 215 public comments. These themes are briefly described below. Figure 1 displays the total number of comments categorized under each theme in the form of a bar graph. Figure 2 displays the percentage of total comments within each theme in the form of a pie chart.

Environmental Quality

This theme covers comments that expressed concerns about environmental impacts associated with agricultural and industrial activities. These concerns were often explicitly directed towards slaughterhouse and concentrated animal feeding operations (CAFO). Several comments also focused on the following: distinctions between different types of agriculture; requiring more analysis for permitting

processes; implementing performance standards; advocating for focus on certain growth policy goals and objectives; and, concern over rezoning the Agriculture District to Mixed Use – 20/40 Districts.

Compliance

This theme covers comments that expressed concerns over compliance with state statutes, local zoning regulations, the Growth Policy, or other process practices. Many of these comments focused on specific compliance issues with §14 of the Cascade County Zoning Regulations, Growth Policy review, the relationship between growth policies and zoning regulations, and other regulations.

Public Involvement

This theme covers comments that expressed concerns about processes involving the public's participation. Most of these comments expressed discontent with planning board meeting times, access to information, transparency, and propose extending public outreach efforts.

Access

This theme covers comments that expressed concerns about access to Medical Marijuana service providers. Several comments described access issues related to current zoning policy for medical marijuana dispensaries and other registered premises.

Economic Development

This theme covers comments that expressed concerns about impacts to socio-economic aspects of the county. These comments primarily focused on impacts from CAFOs and slaughterhouses to economic sectors like tourism.

Housing

This theme covers one comment that focused on a proposed change to zoning for community residential facilities.

Values

This theme covers the Growth Policy oriented comments that discussed specific values, recommendations for changes to goals and objectives, opposition to revision, and other aspects of the growth policy.

Conclusion

Environmental quality, compliance, and public involvement were the dominant themes to emerge in the analysis. This suggests that the public comments received represent a stronger emphasis on environmental concerns; particularly those associated with large-scale agricultural operations. Concerns over compliance varied greatly and spanned state statutes, local regulations, and best practices. The numerous comments concerned with public involvement call for several improvements to public participation including evening meeting times, larger meeting venues, increases in public access to information and processes. The pervasive allusion to and explicit reference to concentrated feeding operations (CAFOs) and/or slaughterhouse facilities suggests that these comments are best understood in the context of the greater public concern over the 2017 Madison Food Park slaughterhouse proposal. In that context, the community vision for agriculture in the county may need to be revisited. This is briefly discussed further in Growth Policy review assessment criteria #4 and #5 of the staff report. As

pointed out in those discussions, the further and more extensive public outreach and analysis would be required to provided stronger evidence for a general shift in community goals.

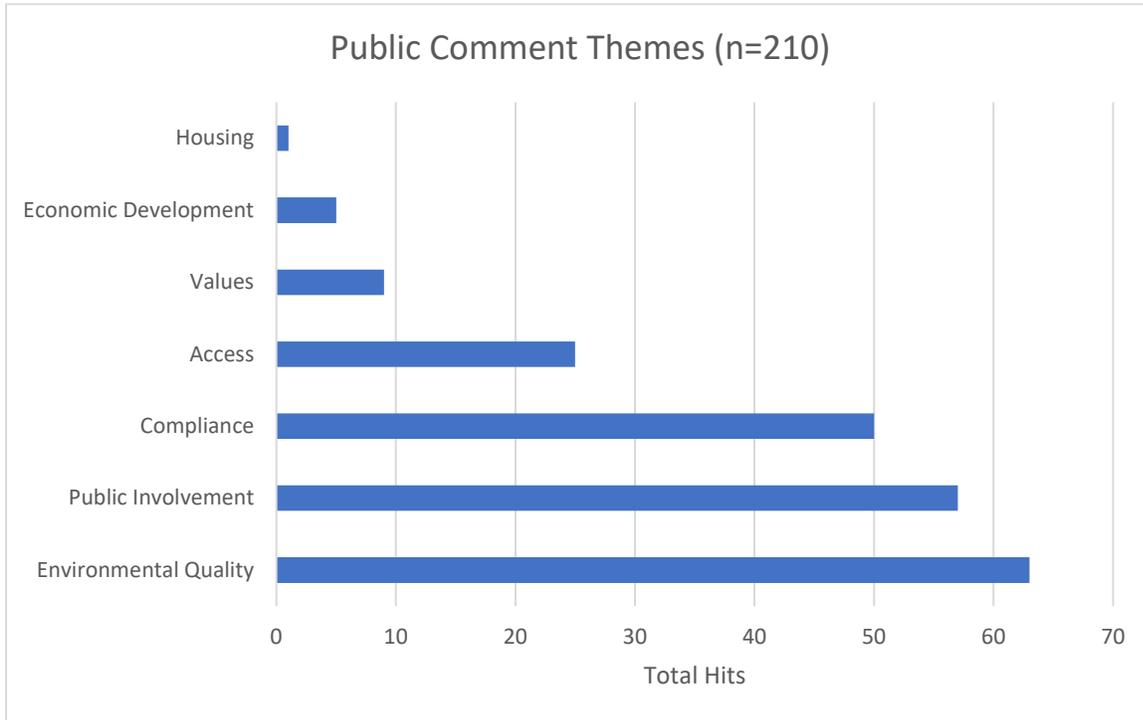


Figure 1. Public Comment Themes Bar Graph

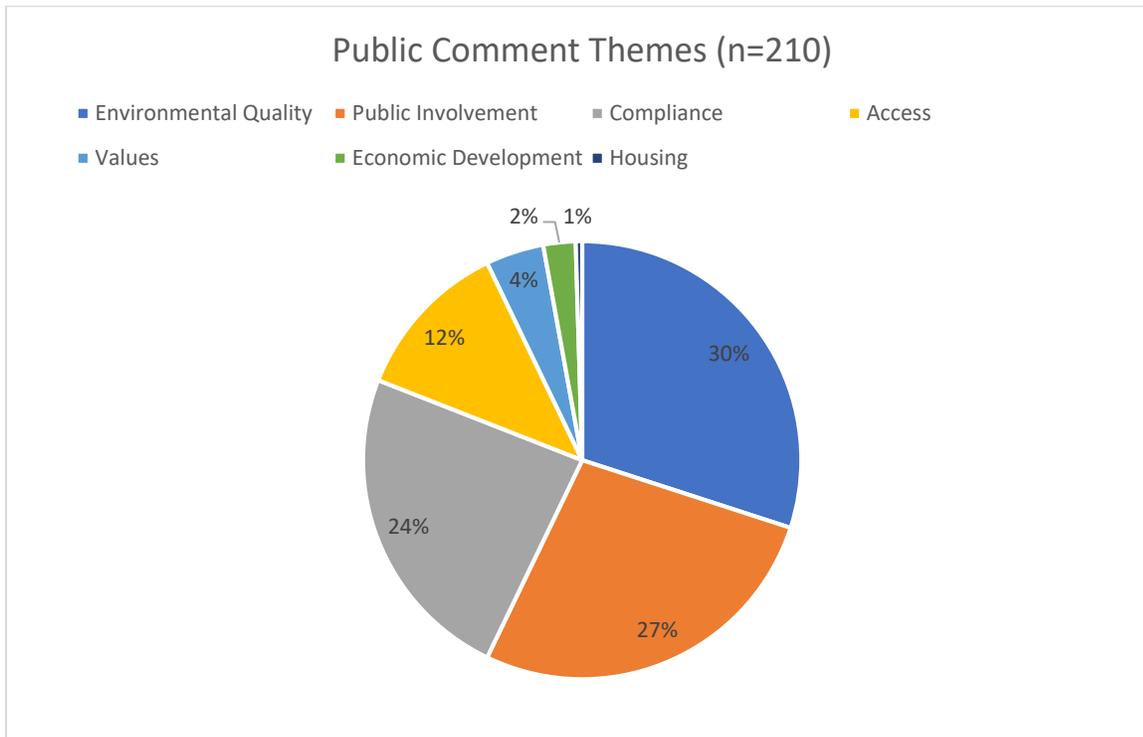


Figure 2. Public Comment Themes Pie Chart