GETTING THE BENEFITS OF WASHOE-RENO GROWTH WITHOUT SACRIFICING OUR QUALITY OF LIFE

By the year 2038, Washoe-Reno population may grow by more than 100,000 people. If future growth is managed as it has been in the past, many of the 43,000 new housing units these folks will live in would be spread throughout rural areas causing traffic congestion, higher taxes, and exposing more people to wildfire danger.

SMART GROWTH
By following the Smart Growth principle of concentrating new homes in or adjacent to existing population centers, we can get more growth benefits with fewer impacts to what makes the Washoe-Reno area such a great place to live. It is for this reason that we ask you to support the Smart Growth actions you’ll find at the end of this fact sheet.

SILVER KNOLLS EXAMPLE
About a fifth of anticipated Washoe-Reno growth will occur in the Silver Knolls area along Red Rock Road. We’ll use Silver Knolls area growth to illustrate the benefits of Smart Growth. Three development projects have been proposed for the Silver Knolls area: Evans Ranch, Silver Hills, and Silver Star Ranch. Combined these three projects could add more than 9,000 housing units increasing Silver Knolls area population from the current 2,000 to 24,000. Following is a summary of how this growth could affect three aspects of Silver Knolls area quality of life. These impacts and solutions illustrate how Smart Growth could benefit those living throughout the Washoe-Reno area.

TRAFFIC
Presently, the Washoe-Reno area suffers relatively little traffic congestion when compared to other areas, like California. Red Rock Road traffic volume is now about 7,000 trips/day. Each new home adds about ten trips/day to our roads. All three projects would add 9,000 new housing units to the Red Rock corridor, increasing traffic volume twelve-fold to 90,000 trips/day! Red Rock Road is presently two-lanes – one north bound; one south bound. Red Rock Road is slated to be widened to four-lanes. The Washoe County Master Plan calls for no more than 32,200 trips/day on a four-lane road like Red Rock – a third of that from all three projects. Severe congestion on Red Rock Road will be the end result if all three projects are built out. Recent scientific studies documented that the pollution emitted from traffic harms the health of those living within 1,000 feet of a road carrying more than 24,000 trips/day. Children and pregnant women are particularly at risk. There are

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presently dozens of homes within 1,000 feet of Red Rock Road. Neither the congestion nor health issue has been addressed by Washoe County or any other agency.

**WILDFIRE**
Over the past 17 years Nevada wildfires have increased dramatically and some researchers estimate another 500% increase in the future! The Red Rock corridor and all three proposed development projects are in an area designated at high risk for wildfires by Washoe County and Nevada. Most wildfires are caused by people. Adding more people to a high-risk area increases the likelihood of future wildfires. In the event of such a disaster Red Rock Road will be the sole evacuation route for up to 24,000 people. As explained above, Red Rock Road will be severely congested during normal times. Evacuation may be near impossible during a wildfire or other emergency. This is another issue which has not been addressed by Washoe County or any other agency. Some U.S. counties now restrict the building new homes in wildfire high-risk areas. Washoe-Reno elected officials should adopt this same Smart Growth policy, particularly where evacuation routes are inadequate.

**HIGHER TAXES**
It costs more to provide roads, water-sewer, schools, and other public services to areas located far away from where these services presently end. Compared to growth near existing population centers, it can cost 20% to 50% more to extend water-sewer lines to growth sprawling into rural areas. Widening Red Rock Road to four-lanes will cost $41 million. The impact fees paid by developers may cover only a fraction of this cost. The remainder will come out of the taxes we all pay. The net result of this sprawling growth is higher taxes for all when compared to adding homes to Smart Growth areas where roads, water, sewers and other services only need expansion.

**SUPPORT OUR ELECTED OFFICIALS**
We know our elected officials care as much as we do about preserving quality of life. We also know that they would like to move the Washoe-Reno region closer to Smart Growth. However, they face tremendous pressure to continue business as usual. This is why it’s vitally important that we let our County Commissioners and City Councilmembers know we support their efforts to preserve Washoe-Reno quality of life for all current and future residents.

If you live in Washoe County, then please contact your County Commissioner today and urge them to adopt the following Smart Growth measures:

1. The traffic added by all development proposed for a road corridor should not cause excessive congestion, adverse health effects, or jeopardize evacuation during emergencies.
2. New homes should be guided away from areas at high risk for wildfire, especially where evacuation routes are inadequate or firefighting capabilities are understaffed or inadequately equipped.
3. New homes should be guided to Smart Growth areas in or near existing population centers where public services can be provided without an excessive burden on all taxpayers.
4. Begin adopting these measures by upholding the Washoe Planning Commission decision to deny the rezoning needed for Silver Hills to go from 680 to 1,872 housing units.

To find out who your Washoe Commissioner is and to get their contact information, go to: [https://www.washoecounty.us/bcc/index.php](https://www.washoecounty.us/bcc/index.php)

For the Reno City Council go to: [https://www.reno.gov/government/city-council](https://www.reno.gov/government/city-council)

For further detail on these issues visit the Washoe-Reno Smart Growth Alliance webpage at: [https://ceds.org/wrsga](https://ceds.org/wrsga).