

**BACHTOLD ANNEXATION:**

# **Answers to questions**

Table Rock HOA  
August 9, 2019

**Q. What's the interest of Table Rock in the Bachtold annexation/development proposal?**

A. The Bachtold property, comprising 104 acres, borders the Table Rock neighborhood to the south and east. Jon Bachtold, the current landowner, has been a good neighbor over the years. The interest of Table Rock in the development of this property as currently proposed includes how it affects homeowners directly, but also how factors such as drainage, infrastructure costs, increased traffic, zoning density, and potentially hidden costs impact people throughout Walla Walla.

**Q. Is the Table Rock neighborhood against all development of the Bachtold property?**

A. No, but we believe any new development should be in character with its surroundings. One good example of this is the Boulders subdivision just north of Table Rock. It matches surrounding neighborhoods and is a welcome addition to the area.

**Q. Is the proposed Hayden Homes development high-density?**

A. Yes. In surrounding neighborhoods, lot sizes are at least 9,600 square feet. Hayden Homes does include 112 lots of at least 9,600 square feet, mostly on the periphery of the proposed development. However, within the proposed development more than two-thirds (260) of the 372 lots are sized at less than 9,600 square feet; 166 are less than 7,200 square feet; 86 are less than 6,000 square feet; and 14 of the smallest lots contain less than 3,000 square feet. Here is a [plat](#) of the proposed development and an [Excel spreadsheet](#) detailing lot sizes.

If the annexation/development is approved, this would be the largest, densest development in Walla Walla. It would be roughly the equivalent of putting a city the size of Waitsburg (population 1,195) in a small field on the south side of Walla Walla.

To look at it another way, Walla Walla averages 2,366 people per square mile. If approved, and based on the current plan, this development would have an equivalent density of 5,786 people per square mile. That's more than double the average population density of the rest of Walla Walla. And it would populate Walla Walla's outskirts with a density 75 percent higher than the city of Spokane's average (3,526 people per square mile).

**Q. Why didn't Table Rock homeowners meet with Hayden Homes?**

A. Earlier this year, Hayden Homes invited the Table Rock HOA to a private meeting. But board members felt that annexation/development would affect a much broader area of Walla Walla than just the Table Rock subdivision. Yes, we care about our neighborhood, but we also care about our friends, families, co-workers and neighbors throughout the city and how this proposal might affect them, quite possibly in unanticipated ways. So we chose to be part of the public discussion and respectfully declined the Hayden Homes invitation.

**Q. Wouldn't the proposed Hayden Homes development bring much-needed affordable housing to Walla Walla?**

A. That depends on the definition of "affordable housing." Homes are always affordable to people who have the money and desire to buy them. So which people would be able to afford houses in the proposed development?

According to Hayden Homes, people would need to earn at least 90 percent of Walla Walla's median income to purchase a house in the proposed development. In 2017, HUD's area median income for Walla Walla County was \$62,900, which means Hayden Homes is targeting homebuyers with a yearly household income of at least \$56,610. Hayden says the proposed development would help Walla Walla meet its goals of housing affordability as outlined in the [City of Walla Walla 2040 Comprehensive Plan](#). However, it's worth noting that the particular need for affordable housing is among households that make less than 50 percent of the median income (\$31,450), according to page H-14 of the comprehensive plan.

Houses in Hayden's proposed development won't be priced for the group of people who have the greatest need for affordable housing.

**Q. Hayden Homes says the company will solve flooding problems in the area. What does this mean?**

A. Portions of the Table Rock neighborhood flooded early in its development. To address that problem, a holding pond/drainage system was engineered and installed. Homeowners were assured that the system was robust enough to handle major events. However, additional study suggested the runoff in a major flood event might exceed the 45 cubic feet per second that the current Table Rock drainage system can safely handle.

This led to an [estimate of roughly \\$1 million](#) (Anderson Perry, p. 8) to control drainage and prevent flooding in the area. In a meeting earlier this year, a city official suggested that this cost could be collected from Table Rock homeowners—possibly via a special public utility district (PUD)—if they didn't go along with the Hayden Homes development proposal. In this case, Table Rock homeowners would have to determine whether to assess the extra tax, which could be spread out over five to 30 years. An important point here is that Table Rock could have more input on the process rather than trusting the Hayden Homes drainage engineer.

With the proposed development, Hayden Homes would be required to install a drainage system that in concept would retain its water on site, preventing it from reaching Table Rock. Yet the plan still includes use of the Table Rock pond.

We aren't convinced that Hayden Homes would fix the potential flooding problem, and the proposed development may even compound it. They have submitted a concept for drainage that could handle a

25-year event. The development would create up to 20 acres of impervious surface (not counting roofs, driveways, patios or sidewalks), meaning the resulting runoff from these areas would need to be drained and retained within that neighborhood. As currently planned, the land topography would also be significantly altered. If the drainage engineering isn't adequate to handle major events, the excess would flood the Table Rock neighborhood.

We're being asked to trust a drainage concept submitted by Hayden Homes. Yet, when we look at their track record, we see drainage problems in areas far less complex than the Bachtold/Table Rock area. For example, in online review sites ([site 1](#) & [site 2](#)), some Hayden Homes homeowners have complained about grading and drainage issues. Here in Walla Walla, Blue Mountain Estates, which was built by Hayden Homes, has ongoing drainage problems. At Blue Mountain Estates, Hayden Homes changed the topography of the land to maximize the number of houses that could be built, just as the company plans to do with the Bachtold property.



**Photo from a Hayden Homes homeowner.**

In addition, the Anderson Perry and Aspect reports only discussed and proposed ways to handle water from the west side of the field. It did not do anything for the east side. Hayden Homes would build on the east side too, with the plan being to use Table Rock's drainage system to take some of that water.

**Q. Won't the proposed development provide donations to the Walla Walla community?**

A. Hayden Homes advertises that charitable donations will be contributed to First Story, their nonprofit foundation. They say these donations (\$130,000) will be put back into the community.

In an [ad that ran in the Walla Walla Union-Bulletin](#) on August 1, it looks as if Hayden Homes donates this money. But some or all of the funds may actually come from "charitable fees," which are paid by homebuyers, and not by Hayden Homes. This has led to a [lawsuit](#) currently underway in Sisters, Oregon.

We have no problem with Hayden Homes providing a voluntary charitable giving program for homebuyers. But if the donations referenced in Hayden's ads are coming from homebuyers, it's misleading not to state the fact.