

# Next Comp Plan draft due out ‘soon’

## Will it work to protect Jackson Hole’s cherished wildlife and wildlands?

By **Kristy Bruner**, *Alliance Community Planning Director*

During the past year, many people have participated in the Jackson/Teton County Comprehensive Plan update process, investing time and effort to voice their perspectives on the future of Jackson Hole. Repeatedly and consistently, our community has made its top priorities clear – we want growth managed responsibly, and our wildlife and natural resources protected. (See survey info on next page.) Now, after months of revisions to the first draft, the community, including the Conservation Alliance, awaits a new document.



“The Hay Field” by Jeff Hagan

The second draft is now expected out this spring, and when it surfaces, the Alliance will evaluate it with these questions at heart: Does the plan represent the will of our community? Will it work to protect the qualities of Jackson Hole that matter most to its residents – our rural landscape, open spaces, scenery and diverse wildlife? Will the plan strengthen our community’s ability to shape its own future? Will it protect the values most important to our community and its long-term economy?

We have high hopes for the answers to these questions, particularly considering how critical a good plan is to the future of this valley. After all, if the Comp Plan doesn’t aim to protect the values of our community, whose values is it protecting?

In the box at right are some of the broad values and policy directions that our community has stated it wants to see in the new plan, and that we at the Alliance have worked to ensure are included.

All of us who are privileged to experience Jackson Hole have an obligation to take care of it. As our world, country and community face increasingly challenging times, it’s critical for us to step back and appreciate the larger role that Jackson Hole plays. We, as a community, need to embrace how incredibly rare and precious this place is, and how much work will be required to make sure it stays that way.

Protecting what matters most about this valley won’t be simple. It won’t be easy. But it’s the right thing to do – for our community, for those drawn to Jackson Hole, for the wildlife that roam through and beyond it, and for all the generations to come.

If our community can work toward adopting a comprehensive plan that clearly embodies these values of long-term stewardship, we’ll be headed in the right direction. ■

### The Comp Plan needs to include policies that will:

- prioritize community goals clearly and comprehensively (policies to achieve top goals, such as protecting wildlife, should apply throughout Teton County and the Town of Jackson, and not be limited to just certain areas)
- show a strong, science-based understanding of the factors that influence the capacity to achieve these goals
- recognize the consequences of the pattern, pace and scale of development
- strengthen protections for sensitive wildlife habitat and movement corridors (to include more stringent development standards and clear direction for long-term research and monitoring of direct, indirect and cumulative impacts, particularly given the effects of human activities on wildlife)
- implement tradeoffs suggested by community surveys (for example, permanent upzones in any locations should be contingent on permanent conservation in other areas)
- reduce overall development potential (to protect rural character, scenic vistas and wildlife)
- promote long-term workforce housing solutions (to include greater housing requirements for new developments, more focus on rental housing, and increased accountability for the true impacts of commercial development)
- reconcile the goals of preserving community character with pressures for redevelopment in the Town of Jackson
- protect a “small town” environment by stipulating modest scales of development (including lower building heights) in the Town of Jackson
- allow no new resorts and no resort development expansions
- reflect fiscal responsibility, based on an analysis of impacts and carrying capacities for basic infrastructure and services
- truly represent the concepts of sustainability by acknowledging limits, thresholds and capacities
- provide more predictability and clarity, and reconcile the differences between regulatory requirements and incentives
- keep relevant policies of the 1994 Comp Plan, such as those meant to protect our valley’s character and scenic views (the current revision is supposed to be an update, not a rewrite)

### The land use plan maps should be based on:

- strong intergovernmental coordination between the Town of Jackson and Teton County
- strong conservation planning principles, the best available science, and a precautionary approach where science is outdated or unavailable
- overall buildout ranges that don’t exceed what’s allowed by current zoning

Visit [www.jhalliance.org/issuescompplan.htm](http://www.jhalliance.org/issuescompplan.htm) for details.

WHAT DOES OUR COMMUNITY WANT?

As part of the Comp Plan update process, planners conducted three public surveys early last year, consisting of a keypad poll of about 200 people who attended a Jan. 30 public meeting; an online survey offered during February and March that more than 950 people filled out; and a University of Wyoming phone and mail survey taken

■ Keypad poll    ■ Online survey    ■ University of Wyoming survey

Stronger standards should be implemented to protect natural resources as part of new developments:  
 Agree: 87.0% 82.2% 80.4%    Disagree: 7.1% 7.9% 11.4%

The town and county should require a higher amount of deed-restricted workforce/affordable housing to be built as part of new developments:  
 Agree: 71.2% 69.7% 69.2%    Disagree: 23.4% 19.9% 23.2%

A restriction should be set on the amount of annual growth allowed (e.g., 1 or 2 percent increase per year):  
 Agree: 58.5% 54.0% 48%    Disagree: 36.5% 25.3% 38.7%

A funding source should be established to acquire open space or conservation areas for critical habitat:  
 Agree: 78.0% 69.6% 59.8%    Disagree: 13.8% 14.7% 29.1%

between Feb. 27 and April 14. (This last survey is considered the most statistically valid since all of the 584 respondents had been chosen at random.) The results, available at [www.jacksontetonplan.com/surveys](http://www.jacksontetonplan.com/surveys), all showed strong community support for managing growth responsibly and protecting wildlife. Here's a sampling:

Which goal do you think is a higher priority for Jackson Hole?  
 1) Preserve wildlife habitat and corridors: 66.9% 55.0% 59.5%  
 or Build deed-restricted workforce housing: 15.4% 19.4% 20.7%  
 2) Limit overall growth in the valley: 56.3% 48.6% 53.2%  
 or Build deed-restricted workforce housing: 23.2% 33.9% 36.5%  
 3) Preserve wildlife migration corridors: 84.5% 75.3% 54.7%  
 or Add traffic capacity by widening roads: 6.2% 8.8% 26.3%

More development and population in the Town of Jackson is OK  
 1) If this means less development in the county:  
 Agree: 78.2% 66.1% N/A    Disagree: 11.9% 19.9% N/A  
 2) If this means preserving agricultural and natural resource areas in the county:  
 Agree: 85.5% 78.5% N/A    Disagree: 7.7% 11.7% N/A

WHAT'S NEXT?

*When the next Comp Plan draft is released, the Alliance will analyze it and make comments, which we'll post at [www.jhalliance.org/issuescompplan.htm](http://www.jhalliance.org/issuescompplan.htm). We'll also post details there on how you can comment as soon as the information is available. (You can also access links to background information regarding the Comp Plan update at this address, and at the Jackson/Teton County Comp Plan website, [www.jacksontetonplan.com](http://www.jacksontetonplan.com).) Meanwhile, we asked the planners directly involved in the update to provide a timeline. Here is their response:*

**By Tyler Sinclair, Town of Jackson Planning Director, Jeff Daugherty, Teton County Planning Director, Jeff Noffsinger, Town of Jackson Principal Planner and Alex Norton, Teton County Lead Planner**

The planning team anticipates that a draft of the entire updated Comprehensive Plan should be available for public review and comment before spring break in late March. The public release will be followed by a comment period and informational public meetings as directed by the Jackson Town Council and the Teton Board of County Commissioners. Based on community feedback, the planning team will finalize the plan update in preparation for its adoption. The final steps of the plan update process will be recommendation by the Town and County Planning Commissions, and then a decision by the joint Town Council and Board of County Commissioners on adoption of the plan update.

In May 2008, draft documents were released to the public in order for the community to discuss the plan update's content prior to compilation of a full draft of the update. Through the summer of 2008 numerous public comments were received. This past fall, those comments were discussed with the elected officials, planning commissions and community stakeholders. Since the fall, the planning team has used the discussions of the summer and fall of 2008, as well as the discussions and surveys

dating back to the fall of 2007, to revise the content of the Comp Plan and compile a full draft for review by the community.

This next draft of the Comprehensive Plan will be a full release that includes:

- an Introduction
- a Community Vision Chapter that discusses the interrelationship and prioritization of the community's policies
- the policies of the community – organized into seven Themes
- a Future Land Use Plan (including a future land use map), and
- an Administration Chapter that discusses the administration, monitoring and amendment of the Comprehensive Plan.

The updated Comp Plan will differ from the 1994 Plan in that it will not include a zoning map or land development regulations that enumerate the exact development potential for each property in the town and county. It will not include prescriptive workforce housing mitigation rates, detailed traffic studies, or specific implementation programs.

The updated Comp Plan will address larger community questions at a community-wide scale, reducing elected official discretion and providing long-term guidance and predictability in the implementation of the community's land use and transportation vision. ■

# Why reinvent the wheel?

Next Steps series shares solutions that have worked elsewhere.

By **Becky Tillson**, *Alliance Intern*

As the Comp Plan update process moves from identifying community values to determining ways to effectively uphold those values, it's useful to look at lessons that similar communities have learned about coping with growth. This past winter, thanks to a grant from The Community Foundation of Jackson Hole, the Conservation Alliance hosted a speaker series, "Next Steps: Exploring Solutions for Jackson Hole," so our community could learn from others' experiences.

First, Pete Coppolillo and Jeff Burrell of the Wildlife Conservation Society shared a detailed case study of wildlife in Montana's Madison Valley that was used to help officials there make responsible planning decisions. Recognizing the importance of wildlife is critical in planning for future growth and development in Jackson Hole.

The Teton County Housing Authority co-hosted our second forum, which drew about 100 people and explored affordable housing strategies. Panelists Craig Richardson of Clarion Associates, Tom McCabe of the Aspen/Pitkin County Housing Authority, and Mark White of White & Smith Planning and Law Group, took on the question, "What do we need to do here in Jackson Hole to address our affordable housing needs?" Overall, they encouraged us to plan for the long-term and make sure that housing goals are clearly outlined within broader, more comprehensive community goals.

Next, biologist Lance Craighead, executive director of the Craighead Environmental Research Institute, used data on wildlife movement and road ecology from studies elsewhere in the West to explain the risks of road expansions in Jackson and Teton County.

Our series came to a close with "Making Growth Pay Its Way" by fiscal impact analyst Gabe Preston (see his article at right).

We hope that the lessons shared during these forums will help our community make wise decisions in the months to come. ■

## PAYING FOR THE COSTS OF GROWTH

By **Gabe Preston**, *RPI Consulting*

RPI Consulting has traveled the country for more than a decade now, evaluating fiscal impacts of both specific development proposals and incremental, dispersed development in counties and busy towns alike. Along the way, we've realized that whether they're aware of it or not, local governments make one of the following decisions each time a new development application comes in the door:

1. Make growth pay its way;
2. Pace and limit growth within the existing capacity; or
3. Let the level of service degrade.

Having experienced the most recent round of development booms in the 1990s and the post 9-11 recovery, observant citizens and decision-makers are increasingly aware of these choices. Still, by far the most common choice is the do-nothing Alternative #3 – to let service levels degrade. This choice means that perhaps we hit more potholes, it might take a year to get a land use item on the agenda, or that our water use is limited to certain times of day. It means a blow to the quality of life a community offers.

Alternative #2 – to pace and limit growth – has been tried in various places and has met with variable degrees of success. Many times, attempts to limit or cap growth have resulted in unforeseen consequences. For example, Boulder, Colo., sought to limit population by limiting residential development back in the 1970s, but failed to limit the commercial base accordingly. Now tens of thousands of commuters clog the roads, driving to their jobs in the city from the satellite communities that formed to fill the unmet demand for housing in Boulder.

Alternative #1 – making growth pay its way – requires a multifaceted approach that establishes a steady tax base to cover



Gabe Preston

the cost of operations and capital facilities maintenance, and a set of up-front, fair-share mechanisms to cover the one-time cost of expanding the infrastructure:

- Impact fees – one-time fees for infrastructure expansion
- Exactions and fees in lieu – a conveyance of land for public use

or a fee in lieu of that conveyance (park land and school land dedications are most common)

- Taxes – people are never in the mood to tax themselves unless the tax will make their quality of life better
- Excise taxes – one-time taxes that can be used for infrastructure or operations and maintenance
- Special assessment – a property tax leveraged on a specific area for a specific improvement, like sidewalks
- Administrative fee – fees for services, such as building permit fees
- Special improvement districts – districts formed to tax residents for specific improvements (storm drainage, roads, etc.)
- Special districts – taxing entities developed to provide a type of service over a larger area (like fire protection districts)

Making growth pay its way takes political courage, a rational and equitable approach, and persistence. Even so, during the last 20 years, hundreds of communities ranging from small towns of 200 to the largest cities on earth have taken the steps to retool their fiscal structures to maintain their level of service and quality of life. ■

*Gabe Preston is co-owner of RPI Consulting and has worked for 12 years as a long-range planner and land use impact analyst in the interior West for local governments, states, and federal lands agencies. He lives in his native town, Durango, Colo., with his wife and two sons.*

Affordable housing and transportation are two key areas that must be considered as part of the Comp Plan update process. Here are perspectives from Christine Walker, executive director of the Teton County Housing Authority, and Robert Bernstein, P.E., a consulting

transportation engineer and planner hired by Save Historic Jackson Hole to comment on the valley's transportation plan. Visit [www.jhalliance.org/issuescompplan.htm](http://www.jhalliance.org/issuescompplan.htm) for links to additional information about these issues.

**HOMES FOR WORKERS HELP STRENGTHEN COMMUNITY**

By Christine Walker, Teton County Housing Authority

What is different about Jackson that draws you to live here and not another resort town? A spectacular environment, yes. Wildlife and cultural appeal, sure. Great skiing, hiking, climbing and opportunity to ascend, yes again. But most of us also mention the people living in our valley. We're different in lots of ways in Teton County, and we live with a lot of different kinds of people who are connected by our appreciation for extending ourselves.

At the Teton County Housing Authority, we enable housing opportunities for local workers, which protects our social fabric and provides economic stability. We're taking a balanced "three-legged stool" approach to house 65 percent of our workforce locally through regulations, incentives and preserving existing homes. We want to be sure that our community remains healthy, functioning, and full of all kinds of workers, professionals and service providers.

The first leg of our stool involves requiring workforce housing with new development. To reflect current market conditions, Teton County and the Town of Jackson have begun to update their 1994 requirements. The Housing Authority will complete a study on affordable housing impacts later this year, which may prompt further increases. Additionally, both government bodies have updated the in-lieu fees that developers pay instead of building housing. These



Christine Walker

higher rates encourage developers to build the housing on-site, which is the ideal location. Going forward, these fees will adjust annually. The second leg of the stool uses incentives to build workforce housing to address anticipated shortages from job growth and upcoming retirees. As part of updating the community's comprehensive plan, appropriate locations for workforce housing are being identified, which would typically be more dense. When located near existing development and services, density presents opportunities to preserve open space in other areas and create walkable neighborhoods.

Feedback from the comprehensive planning process indicates that residents want to focus on preserving existing homes rather than building new ones.

In response, the third leg of our stool involves using existing buildings to meet our community's housing needs. Innovative public-private partnerships will play a role, like the Days Inn conversion from hotel rooms to employee studios. But most opportunities that exist in today's market will require funding, through the Special Purpose Excise Tax or other sources.

Jackson is a special place, and the Housing Authority is working to preserve its character by enabling workforce housing. Log onto [www.housingjacksonhole.com](http://www.housingjacksonhole.com) to participate in the process. ■

**CAN WE KEEP FROM PAVING PARADISE?**

By Robert Bernstein, P.E.,

Consulting Transportation Engineer and Armond Acri, Save Historic Jackson Hole

In Teton County's rapid growth environment, the transportation component of the Comprehensive Plan must serve two primary purposes:

1. Identify and define the transportation system needed to adequately support the land uses, population and employment envisioned in the Comp Plan; and
2. Provide the plans and standards necessary to effectively guide development in general, and to evaluate and condition individual development proposals in particular.

The transportation plan must also directly address these four distinct road network planning needs:

1. Identify new regional/arterial road links needed (e.g., the Indian Trails connector);

If the transportation system cannot be changed to accommodate additional growth, the buildout permitted under the Comp Plan should be reduced accordingly.

2. Determine additional arterial capacity needs (e.g., roadway widening and intersection improvements, such as those being considered for the highway south of Jackson – see Page 15 for details);
3. Lay out a complete arterial/collector network to serve growth areas where the existing rural road network has neither the capacity nor the coverage to provide access to new development and accommodate the traffic generated by the urban/suburban development envisioned by the Comp Plan; and
4. In cooperation with WYDOT, identify the State Highway intersection/interchange

improvements and new connections needed to accommodate the traffic to be generated by growth allowed under the Comp Plan.

Lastly, the transportation plan should include an evaluation of the buildout allowed under the Comp Plan's preferred land use scenario. If the transportation system cannot be improved to meet the additional growth, the Comp Plan should be revised so the system can meet the intended growth.

The proper time to determine if additional growth can be accommodated is during the Comp Plan update process, not when a developer has a proposal on the table. If this evaluation is done during the Comp Plan review, it allows objective decisions to be made instead of emotional arguments during the evaluation of individual projects. It also takes a bigger view of the needs of the community instead of one location. ■