

Recap of public hearings on the draft Jackson/Teton County Comprehensive Plan that took place in 2009

[\(Click here for a recap of the Comp Plan hearings that took place in 2010.\)](#)

[\(Click here for information regarding 2011 Comp Plan hearings.\)](#)

About 20 joint and separate town and county planning commission public hearings on the current draft of the Comp Plan (released in April 2009) were scheduled for the summer of 2009. However, differences of opinion among the planning commissioners about how to proceed with reviewing and revising the draft put this schedule off track.

Public hearings on the draft resumed on July 30. Town and county planning commissioners committed to meeting **each Thursday from 5:30 to 8:30 p.m. in the county commissioners' chambers at 200 S. Willow** to make recommendations for revising the draft. Meeting agendas and staff reports are being posted at www.jacksontetonplan.com as they become available. Visit www.jacksontetonplan.com/blog/2009/08/planning-commission-review for a link to the list of the planning commissioners' recommendations to date.

The Conservation Alliance will continue to work to ensure that both planning commissions incorporate the majority of public comments to date to come up with a Comp Plan that will actually protect Jackson Hole's wildlife, open spaces and community character. [Click here](#) for links to our detailed comments.

Below is a list of key meetings held in 2009 and what happened at them. Visit www.jhalliance.org/issuescompplan.htm for background information on the Comp Plan update

June 11, Joint Town/County Planning Commission meeting: Citing concerns that problems with the new draft were beyond the scope of the public hearing process to fix, the Teton County Planning Commission voted 3-1 at this first hearing on the Comp Plan draft to recommend that the Teton Board of County Commissioners send the draft back to the planning staff for major revisions, prior to proceeding with the review process.

June 15 & 22, Teton Board of County Commissioners and Teton County Planning Commission meetings: The Teton County commissioners urged the county planning commissioners to reconsider their motion of June 11. They also urged the county planning commissioners to work with the town planning commissioners on the present draft, and suggested that the planning commissioners come up with specific recommendations.

June 29, Teton County Planning Commission meeting: At this 5-hour meeting, the county planning commissioners drafted specific recommendations for revisions to the draft plan that would better uphold our community's vision. ([Click here](#) for the list of recommendations.) They also voted to continue their discussion at a joint meeting with the Town of Jackson planning commissioners scheduled for July 9.

July 9, Joint Town/County Planning Commission meeting to discuss Comp Plan review process: At this meeting, the county planning commissioners decided not to send the draft plan back to staff to rework after all. In a separate 3-2 vote, they decided to proceed with a joint review of the current draft with town planning commissioners. No public comment was allowed during the meeting.

July 13, Teton County Planning Commission, moratorium discussion: Since the Comp Plan update process is taking longer than originally thought, the county planning commissioners decided to recommend to the county commissioners that the present moratorium on large residential subdivisions in the county should be extended to Dec. 31. (While our community figures out how to plan for responsible growth, this temporary freeze provides relief from development pressures that could otherwise compromise the process.)

July 30, Joint Town/County Planning Commission meeting: The planning commissioners reviewed the vision statement and overall structure of the plan, decided to delay discussion of the draft's future land use maps, and identified areas where needed data was missing.

Aug. 13, Joint Town/County Planning Commission meeting on current draft of Comp Plan: The planning commissioners finished reviewing pages 7, 8 and 9 of the Vision chapter and decided to add a public comment period at each meeting.

Aug. 18, Teton Board of County Commissioners, moratorium discussion, 9 a.m., County commissioners' chambers, 200 S. Willow
The county commissioners voted to extend the present moratorium on large residential subdivisions through March 31, 2010. (See July 13 item above.)

Aug. 20, Joint Town/County Planning Commission meeting on current draft of Comp Plan: The planning commissioners began reviewing the first theme of the Comp Plan draft – "Promote Stewardship of Wildlife and Natural Resources." Encouragingly, they unanimously voted to recommend that wildlife protection policies apply throughout Teton County, not just in the Natural Resources Overlay.

Aug. 27, Joint Town/County Planning Commission meeting on current draft of Comp Plan: The planning commissioners continued reviewing the first theme of the Comp Plan draft and took verbal public comments on their recommendations regarding the plan's vision. Again encouragingly, a majority of both commissions recommended that community character and quality of life be added to the vision statement, and that "least growth" solutions be considered. But there's mounting evidence of differences between the county and town planning commissions. For instance, the county planning commission passed the following recommendation 5-0, while the town rejected it 1-6: Under Theme One's "Why is this theme addressed?" replace Paragraph 1 with: Because Teton County's abundant wildlife, natural and scenic resources are an international treasure, and the protection of these resources is our community's highest priority. We recognize that our policies regarding development, transportation, recreation, and energy consumption all have impacts on these resources, so it is our responsibility to create policies and enact regulations which protect them.

Sept. 3, Joint Town/County Planning Commission meeting on current draft of Comp Plan: Laurie Andrews of the Jackson Hole Land Trust and rancher Brad Mead talked about using density bonuses to conserve open space and agriculture, then the planning commissioners took brief public comments and continued discussing Theme One. Key unanimous recommendations included: prioritizing the conservation of agricultural land use throughout Teton County; providing incentives for permanent open space; and continuing support for a Scenic Resource Overlay.

Sept. 10, Joint Town/County Planning Commission meeting on current draft of Comp Plan: The planning commissioners wrapped up their discussion of Theme One, again with differences between the town and county commissions. The county planning commissioners passed a vote directing staff to incorporate the Wyoming Game and Fish Department's recommendations throughout the draft plan, but the town commissioners flunked it. ([Click here](#) for WGFD's comments.) The same thing happened with a recommendation that would allow the public to vote on a dedicated funding source for conservation easements. On a more cheery note, a majority of town and county planning commissioners passed a recommendation to establish an Environmental Commission (as outlined on page 25 of the draft plan) now instead of waiting for the Comp Plan revision to be completed.

Sept. 14, Joint information meeting of the Jackson Town Council and the Teton Board of County Commissioners: The electeds agreed to direct planning staff to get started on setting up a volunteer Environmental Commission, whose job will be to make recommendations regarding stewardship of wildlife and natural resources.

Sept. 24, Joint Town/County Planning Commission meeting on current draft of Comp Plan: The buildout numbers taskforce (of which the Alliance is a member) presented its preliminary findings ([click here](#) for the report), and the planning commissioners began discussing Theme Two, "Manage Growth Responsibly." In a positive move, four Teton County and three Jackson planning commissioners voted in favor of a recommendation that would limit development in the county to what is currently allowed.

Oct. 1, Joint Town/County Planning Commission meeting on current draft of Comp Plan: Planning staff outlined their thinking while they were writing Theme Two and gave a rundown on the number of units allowed under the draft plan. The joint commissions then took a series of votes regarding buildout numbers, density bonuses and growth limits. Disappointingly, despite major community support for limiting growth if it's going to harm Jackson Hole's wildlife and character, they failed to recommend that the draft Comp Plan include an overall growth cap. The county planning commissioners did support the concept of a growth rate cap; their town counterparts did not.

Oct. 8, Joint Town/County Planning Commission meeting on current draft of Comp Plan: The planning commissioners completed their preliminary review of Theme One (Promote Stewardship of Wildlife and Natural Resources) and directed staff to rewrite this chapter, incorporating the recommendations to date. We don't know yet how long this will take; there should be more info on when and how the public will be able to comment on the revised chapter after the Oct. 15 hearing. The joint planning commissions also voted to recognize that any and all growth in the valley impacts both wildlife and natural resources, and heard presentations regarding accessory residential units (i.e., guest houses) and affordable housing unit numbers.

Oct. 15, Joint Town/County Planning Commission meeting on current draft of Comp Plan: Planning staff gave a talk about using transferable development rights and nodes as tools for growth management. The planning commissioners discussed ways that development in the rural parts of the county could be reduced and/or clustered, but didn't make any recommendations beyond voting that Wilson should retain its existing base zoning. They also voted against including a transferable development rights program in the new Comp Plan. The following very tentative schedule was also discussed: End of October, Rewritten Theme One to be released; Nov. 12, Written public comment on Theme One due for inclusion in the staff report; and Nov. 19, Planning commissioners to discuss the rewritten Theme One. It is still unclear whether the planning commissioners are willing to limit overall growth in the valley.

Oct. 22, Joint Town/County Planning Commission meeting on current draft of Comp Plan: After deciding to postpone detailed discussions regarding growth in the Town of Jackson until a later date, the joint planning commissions, in an encouraging turn, voted to recommend eliminating Wilson, South Park, Teton Village and the Aspens as nodes, leaving only Jackson as an area "appropriate for town-level densities." The planning commissioners also recommended eliminating the potential for more accessory residential units (i.e., guest houses) in the county. Finally, they jointly agreed that the planned residential development (PRD) tool should be kept to encourage permanent conservation easements on rural lands, although the town and county disagreed on how many additional units should be allowed as incentives. (Currently, by-right zoning in the county is one home per 35 acres. By using the PRD tool, landowners are allowed up to 3, 6 or 9 units per 35 acres (depending on total acreage) if they agree to cluster the development in one area, keeping the rest open. Also, since the PRD tool increases development potential, it encourages landowners to place conservation easements on their property because the amount of the tax break they can get for donating a conservation easement is based on the value of the development rights they're giving up.)

Oct. 29, Joint Town/County Planning Commission meeting on current draft of Comp Plan: Planning staff and the Jackson Hole Land Trust gave a presentation on planned residential developments that led to more discussion about incentives for permanently protecting open space, but no decisions were reached. However, in a positive move, the planning commissioners did direct staff to incorporate the concept of "effective population" into the Comp Plan. Basically, this means that the plan should take into account not just Teton County's resident population, but how many people are actually here at different times of the year, including tourists, commuters, transient workers and seasonal residents.

NOTE: The planning staff's rewrite of Theme One, now titled "Practice Stewardship of Wildlife, Natural Resources, and Scenic Vistas" and based on recommendations passed jointly by the town and county planning commissions, was released on Oct. 30. A link to the draft is available at www.jacksontetonplan.com/blog/2009/08/planning-commission-review. The joint planning commissions are scheduled to start discussing the rewritten theme on Nov. 19 and will take verbal comments at that meeting. If you want your written comments to be included in the staff report for that meeting, you must submit them by 8 a.m., Thursday, Nov. 12. (Thanks to everybody who took the time to submit these!) The Alliance's written comments are on our website at www.jhalliance.org/library.htm#comments.

Nov. 5, Joint Town/County Planning Commission meeting on current draft of Comp Plan: The planning commissioners continued to discuss the planned residential development tool and took a number of votes on different aspects of it. ([Click here](#) for a link to all their recommendations to date.) The Alliance and others believe it is time that the planning commissions get back to the bigger picture of addressing growth and its impacts on Jackson Hole. Our verbal and written comments are all available via www.jhalliance.org/library.htm#comments.

Nov. 12, Joint Town/County Planning Commission meeting on current draft of Comp Plan: The planning commissioners completed their preliminary review of Theme Two, "Manage Growth Responsibly," and heard the planning staff's summary of the growth recommendations to date. Staff also outlined how they intend to incorporate the recommendations in their revision of the Theme Two chapter. Tellingly, several planning commissioners expressed that they were disappointed in the Comp Plan revision process. As one put it, "mediocrity is the price of consensus." The Alliance is likewise concerned that compromises are gutting the stated purpose of the Comp Plan, which is to protect Jackson Hole's wildlife, open spaces and community character.

Nov. 19, Joint Town/County Planning Commission meeting on current draft of Comp Plan: During the public comment period at the start of this hearing, a roomful of wildlife supporters urged the eight planning commissioners present (Paul Duncker, Larry Hamilton, Joe Palmer and Tony Wall from the county; Geneva Chong, Lisa daCosta, Paul Nash and Michael Pruett from the town) to include much stronger language and protections in the rewritten draft of the Comp Plan's wildlife chapter (see "Note" above). In the discussion that ensued, we were encouraged that the joint planning commissions voted to incorporate in the chapter four of the seven recommendations that the Alliance proposed, including adding a strategy to establish a funding source for acquiring permanent open space. But we're disappointed that only a majority of the county planning commission and one town planning commissioner voted in favor of incorporating the Wyoming Game and Fish Department's comments. Two other Alliance proposals (one to make the chapter more science-based and the other asking for it to include language specifying that wildlife protection should be the primary consideration in all land use decisions) also resulted in split votes (county for, town against). The joint planning commissions did pass Lisa daCosta's recommendation to add the phrase "while balancing the need to protect private property rights" to the end of this sentence: "Therefore, effective stewardship of these species requires protection of crucial resources and minimizing development impacts to surrounding public lands." Also during this hearing, commissioner Tony Wall proposed that the members of the as-yet-unformed Environmental Commission be the ones to revise the wildlife chapter and Geneva Chong made a similar proposal that the Conservation Alliance be asked to draft a new version of the chapter. The county planning commission then passed a motion that further discussion of Theme One be deferred until changes recommended by the Environmental Commission and/or the Conservation Alliance were ready for review, but the town flunked it. Several other motions also resulted in split votes, leading many to question how well the joint review process is working.

Nov. 26, No Comp Plan hearing, due to the Thanksgiving holiday.

Nov. 30, Teton Board of County Commissioners and County Planning Commission meeting on Comp Plan review process: The commissioners discussed ways that the review process could become more efficient, to include the possibility of changing it from a joint process to a partially separate one, with the town and county planning commissions each reviewing each chapter of the draft separately, and each making separate recommendations for changes. After the separate review of each chapter, the joint planning commissions would share notes in an effort to reach unity between the two boards and to support the creation of a single plan for the town and county. No decisions were reached beyond a general consensus that this idea should be brought up at the Dec. 3 hearing to get the town's take on it. There's a remote possibility that it will also be discussed at the Dec. 7 Jackson Town Council and Teton Board of County Commissioners joint information meeting, 3 p.m. at 200 S. Willow. (It wasn't.)

Dec. 3, Joint Town/County Planning Commission meeting on current draft of Comp Plan: The planning commissioners completed their review of the edits recommended for Theme One (the wildlife chapter), and added several more. The planning staff will incorporate all the changes, and then the planning commissioners and the public are supposed to have one last chance to review the chapter before the plan goes to the electeds for their shot. They also discussed several proposed changes to the review process itself, but only ended up passing one, which was to delay reviews of each of the revised individual Themes Three through Eight until after preliminary reviews of all the chapters are completed. Despite expectations to the contrary, the idea of having a split town/county review process was not raised at this hearing.

Dec. 9 & 10, Joint Town/County Planning Commission meetings on current draft of Comp Plan: The planning commissioners began discussing Theme Three, "Uphold Jackson as Heart of the Region," and much of the conversation dealt with their visions for the town's future. They made a number of recommendations, including that one or more streets near Town Square be closed to motorized vehicles. However, these meetings lacked substantive discussion on two major issues: 1) What are the conditions (such as linking upzones in town to downzones in the county) that would make additional development in town "smart growth?" and 2) How can our community reconcile pressures for redevelopment with the goal of preserving Jackson's small mountain-town character?

Dec. 17, Joint Town/County Planning Commission meeting on current draft of Comp Plan: In a welcome move, following a discussion about density neutrality, the joint planning commissions voted to recommend that residential development in town be capped at current base amounts, with exceptions for increases linked to commensurate decreases in the county, or linked to conversion of non-residential development to residential. A vote to cap non-residential (i.e. commercial) development in town at current base rates also passed jointly; so did a recommendation supporting the use of density bonus incentives to encourage the conversion of non-residential to residential uses. Also, the planning staff presented a memo from the Employee Generation Taskforce, whose job was to come up with projections of how many more jobs — and therefore demand for more employees and more housing — might be generated by the buildout potential under current regulations, not including discretionary density-bonus tools, such as the town's planned mixed-use development tool. ([Click here](#) for the memo, and [click here](#) for a PDF of the accompanying Powerpoint.) According to the memo, which is calculated for a buildout about 60 years into the future, our existing base development potential could result in a demand for 86 percent more employees and 93 percent more residential units than we have today — that's about twice as many employees and twice as many homes as we have now.

Thursday, Jan. 7, Joint Town/County Planning Commission meeting on current draft of Comp Plan, 5:30 p.m., County commissioners' chambers, 200 S. Willow Hearings are scheduled to resume on Jan. 7, following a two-week holiday break. On the 7th, the planning commissioners are expected to elect new chairs for these joint meetings and then complete their review of Theme Three. Time permitting, they will discuss their overall vision for Theme Four, "Meet our Community's Housing Needs."