

SUMMARY OF COMMENTS on June 2008 Draft “Themes & Policies”
THEME TWO
Manage Growth Responsibly

Big Picture:

Given the importance of this theme to the community – as the second most voiced priority in all surveys – policy language needs to be clear and strong. Currently, the policies outlined in this theme fall short in addressing *all* aspects of “responsible” or smart growth. In a nutshell, this section needs significant work. As stated in the Theme One summary, this Plan too narrowly focuses the discussion on development patterns – or the location of development. Undoubtedly, strategic development patterns are absolutely essential. But, so are other issues, such as the overall amount, timing, type, and cost of development, all of which should be addressed collectively to enhance our community’s ability to manage growth responsibly. Under “What does this theme address?” all of these issues should be listed. Policies should also be added that *clearly and consistently* address them.

Even though there is mention that this Plan will outline a predictable amount of growth, it has not yet happened. This “end state” is at the core of community concerns. Actual numbers (for both residential and commercial) need to be readily available so that the public has a real understanding of what the Plan proposes, and therefore potential consequences. This needs to occur as part of a community discussion, and as part of data-based planning scenarios, well before a revised draft enters Planning Commission hearings. Without these critical components, the nature of the planning process is likely to be strongly questioned within the community.

In general, this section suggests the use of incorrect, or incomplete, underlying assumptions about conservation-based planning. For example, it states, “By directing most future growth to well-defined contiguous areas, the town and county can conserve open space, wildlife habitat, and natural resources.” However, human activities (and impacts) associated with development do not stop at the boundaries of development. The impacts from these activities occur at the valley-wide level, on both public and private lands. The amount and type of development in these “well-defined” areas matter. And, to date, these areas are not “well-defined.”

This Plan needs to truly direct smart growth in Jackson Hole. To do that, it needs to identify policies that will first and foremost protect its unique context as a gateway community to one of the last relatively intact ecosystems in North America. Our community and landscape are a global treasure; we cannot afford to make mistakes. We need to grow at a responsible rate, strategically configure development patterns to protect wildlife, ecological functions and a high quality of life, and integrate densities and scales of development appropriate to sustaining community character and the overall integrity of the underlying ecosystem. To ensure that this happens, this theme needs considerably stronger and unique policy language.

Key Issues:

- Community vision and strong conservation planning approaches must guide the Plan and land-use decisions in Jackson Hole, not “market demand.”
- Overall development potential should be reduced. Not only did the public express support for this concept, but it also makes sense as a conservation planning approach. Lower residential and commercial potentials stand to incur fewer impacts on wildlife and pose fewer growth-related challenges overall. Throughout this process, there has been an inconsistent message regarding the need to look at buildout.
- Living compatibly with wildlife, on a day-to-day basis within the valley itself, defines Jackson Hole for many people. Excessive densities that would undermine this compatibility should be avoided.
- *All* assumptions regarding “what 2007 zoning allows” need to be clearly defined. For example, how (and to where) is density being “transferred” from Alta? Estimations based on density options versus baseline zoning could result in highly varied numbers. Also, as numbers (or ranges) are presented with the Future Land Use Plan Map, it is critical that all assumptions are clearly outlined.
- Is this theme firmly based on strong intergovernmental coordination between the Town and County? Tradeoffs are the basis of this theme, yet it appears highly uncertain how implementation will happen.
- The Plan briefly mentions the need to “monitor the rate of growth.” What does this mean? The rate of growth should be monitored and managed. Policies that regulate the rate of growth provide a critical means to learn from land-use decisions and make adjustments accordingly.
- Terminology regarding future redevelopment is far too subjective. Examples include: “The Town will guide development to ensure it is of *high quality* and does not negatively affect existing *stable neighborhoods*”, “Redevelopment and infill must occur *in a measured and deliberate way* so it does not detract from existing neighborhoods”, and “The goals of this Plan call for *careful redevelopment* in town and communities.” (*emphasis added*) This subjectivity will not lead to increased predictability, which was the key goal of this Plan. How is this proposed language any “stronger” than our current Plan?