

## **Uphold Jackson as “Heart of the Region” (Theme 4)**

### **Statement of Ideal**

Residents and visitors will continue to rely on Jackson as the center of the region and primary location for jobs, housing, shopping, educational, and cultural and arts activities.

### **What does the theme address?**

“Jackson is the historical and community hub for the region, where people live, work and play.” (Town Council’s current “Statement of Strategic Intent)

The concept of Jackson as the “heart of the region” refers to a planning strategy that recognizes and plans for the concentration of development, particularly workforce housing and commercial services, within the Town of Jackson and **immediately adjoining area**. This theme is key to reducing vehicle trip reduction and conserving natural areas and wildlife habitat in the region. The “heart” idea is also an emotional, cultural, and values-driven concept that refers to the role that the town plays as the region’s center. Jackson always has been the nucleus of the area as Teton County’s population slowly grew outward from the center of town. Maintaining town as the nucleus of the region is a major theme of this Plan, and steering development into the town helps implement many principles of this Plan. **But it also is crucial that the character and charm of Jackson be protected and enhanced, for they too create the heart of the region.** The redevelopment of town must be managed to produce great public spaces and pedestrian-friendly streets; result in architecture and site design that **contributes to the community; and preserve cultural and historic features that retain our regional heritage.**

*Will this Plan retain some of the strong language of the 94 Plan that described “character”. This draft does not appear to attempt to define the character or “rarity” of Jackson. Without this definition, how will it be “protected and enhanced”? **On a practical level, do planning staff and elected officials perceive recent developments in Town as representative of protecting and enhancing Jackson’s unique gateway community character?** In the November 2007 public workshop on development character, it would have been helpful to provide examples of (all) local developments, and then request public feedback on tangible, local examples. It would have been a good way to assess current policies (Design Review Committee, etc.) that supposedly work to shape development in a way that protects character and that contributes to the community. It appears to many members of the public that the current process is failing, as current practices do not uphold the vision of the 94 Comprehensive Plan.*

*Significantly more work needs to be done (details need to be identified) to evaluate how the Town of Jackson can redevelop without losing its character. Certainly some areas are more or less appropriate for intensification. To date, and as the 94 Plan predicted and gave warning, economic pressures have begun to increase demands for larger, “more efficient” structures. In a nutshell, it’s important to spell out consequences of decisions, such as the loss of unique character – Without detailed boundaries that designate quantitative, specific scales of development, a long-term balance will not be achieved. **Economic pressures alone should not dictate the nature of redevelopment in Jackson – the voices of the citizens who call it home and the millions of visitors who travel far to visit a small town in one of the most amazing places on earth should as well.***

This theme addresses the broad role and function of Jackson in the region rather than detailed design characteristics. The Jackson Framework Plan and Future Land Use Plan (draft under separate cover) provide greater design and neighborhood and district level detail to complement this theme. *To date, detail has not been provided. If the information that has been provided so far in the public process is supposed to represent this “detail”, it is insufficient. Increased predictability, a goal of this process, will only result from an understanding of proposed “details.”*

Where is this theme a priority?

The Town of Jackson Future Land Use Plan depicts how the town will continue to be the civic, cultural, and historic center of activity with a mixed-use core and healthy neighborhoods.

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### **Summary of this Theme’s Topics**

This theme addresses the following topics:

- Recognizing and accommodating Jackson as the population center;
- Continuing to support Jackson’s role as civic, cultural, and historic center of activity;
- Maintaining a vital retail/mixed-use core that provides regional services;
- Fostering healthy and stable neighborhoods;
- Focusing on a vibrant public realm with public gathering places; and
- Providing town transportation network with complete streets and focus on transit.

How does the theme relate to core values?

Environment: Ability to conserve natural areas and lands and wildlife habitat, air quality,  
Community: Economic viability (i.e., development decisions are made for revenue purposes and assumed economic viability?) stable neighborhoods, quality public spaces, historic preservation

*Core values should include “wildlife,” not just “areas and wildlife habitat”. Town has wildlife and wildlife habitat. As we’ve stated before, it is important to understand that increases in density (residential and commercial) in Town will have effects on wildlife at the valley-wide level (as well as localized effects in Town.) For example, an ecologically sensitive riparian area could be “protected” in the County, but if 8,000+ new people that reside in the Town go to this “undeveloped” area to recreate (many with dogs), wildlife at the valley level will be strongly impacted. This also points to why it is critical to explore potentials for indirect and cumulative effects of development, rather than just direct effects.*

*What assumptions were made to determine “economic viability”? Economic viability for whom? Given that this Plan appears to not include a fiscal impacts analysis or any type of assessment of what the proposed Plan directs in terms of long-term fiscal benefits and costs to the community, what is the basis? Study after study demonstrates that growth very rarely pays for itself.*

## Guiding Principles

The following guiding principles support these objectives:

### **Principle 4.1—Maintain the Town of Jackson as the population center of the region**

Why is This Important?

A core concept of this Plan is to direct most future town-level development into town, and to a lesser degree, the outlying communities. To provide workers with housing opportunities, intensification of development in **certain districts** (*Which ones?*) within the town over time is a goal. These goals are important because:

The Town of Jackson always has been the population center of the Valley, around which other small communities have evolved in the outlying areas. Approximately 48% of the county's population is located in the two square miles of town ,

This concentration of population creates **opportunities and challenges**, including a vibrant and active downtown with many activities and cultural events, enjoyable neighborhoods in which to live, work and play with services and recreational activities in close proximity, and wonderful places for an active public to meet. *Interestingly, only the "opportunities" are listed. To be objective, at least a few of the potential challenges associated with concentrations of populations should be listed (such as increased crime, elevated noise, diminished "dark skies", a gradual loss of a sense of community, reduced sun exposure, lowered air quality, traffic congestion and parking deficiencies, reduced scenic views, tax increases, and all the on-the-ground challenges associated with an increasingly urban area in a northern, high-altitude climate. For example, how will increased building heights affect sun exposure, and therefore energy efficiency, ice maintenance, etc.? It is critical that the real consequences (associated with different forms of redevelopment) are objectively spelled out.*

**Economic forces** have the town on the verge of a major phase of redevelopment and infill. *Elaborate. Yes, land prices are high. But the types of redevelopment, in particular planned mixed-use developments, that the Town promotes and endorses contribute to the escalation of land prices. Economic forces alone should not dictate the form of redevelopment. Refer to the Plan's policy "do not make land use decisions for revenue purposes."*

The challenge is to positively manage changes to maintain the character and charm of the town.

Town is the most appropriate location for housing for a diverse population—including seniors and families with children, because of proximity of medical services and schools and jobs, availability of transit and walkability.

Concentrating much of future development in the town also will help prevent a sprawling pattern of development that degrades the natural resources of the region.

The 1994 Plan Transportation chapter (2002) called for increasing the amount of residential development by approximately **1,200 units** strategically located within the town near the largest job center to reduce overall commuter trips between town and the surrounding counties. **This goal holds true.** *Clarify – Is this the number that is still being proposed? What about commercial development potential?*

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**Policy 4.1a: Redevelopment and infill should enhance Jackson as an enjoyable place to live** *"Should" isn't good enough. THIS IS JACKSON HOLE!!! Redevelopment must occur in a way that it will enhance...*

Town contains many **pleasant** neighborhoods and living opportunities, and future development should reinforce neighborhoods of the town. Design guidelines and sub area plans will steer the physical development of town in targeted areas **while preserve its physical**

**character.** *Define attributes that make neighborhoods “pleasant” in order to protect them. Also, as an example of current policy, it is clear that the proposed Mills hotel will not preserve the physical character of that part of town.*

**Policy 4.1b: Emphasize a variety of housing types, including deed-restricted housing, to accommodate a diversity of households in Jackson** *Why “emphasize” and not “require”?*

The town currently has the greatest diversity of housing and the most workforce housing in the county. As the regional population center, maintaining this diversity of housing types and styles (e.g., single family homes, duplexes, condos, lofts, and apartments) and the inventory of workforce housing, including deed restricted housing is critical. (See also Policy 5.2a, workforce housing.) *Maintenance of adequate proportions of types is critical, not just “diversity.”*

**Principle 4.2—Continue to plan for Jackson as the civic and cultural heart of the region**

Why is This Important?

Historically, the Town of Jackson has served as the cultural and social hub for the region and Teton County.

It is the primary location for municipal and county governments as well as regional headquarters for many state and federal agencies.

It is also a major tourist **destination** and a “gateway” to the national parks and Bridger-Teton National Forest.

Tourism and communities and resorts have **gradually** grown. ??

The aim of this Plan is to maintain and enhance the important role of Jackson as the regional center for tourism, government offices, and as an organized gateway to the nation’s parks and forests. *What about the long-term effects of shifting lodging types to high-end luxury hotels? How will this affect a large portion of the families that comprise the tourism base? For whom will the “destination” be, and how will this affect the “civic and cultural heart” of the region?*

**Policy 4.2a: Make public investments in strategic locations**

Continue to invest in public facilities such as government buildings, parks, recreation, trails, workforce housing, arts and cultural facilities, in locations in town that enhance the town as a civic and cultural hub. *This policy is very subjective and vague and has no connection to Jackson conditions.*

**Policy 4.2b: Continue traditions and community events**

Continue to sponsor and foster community events in the Jackson downtown that retain the character of the region. Examples of community events and traditions that occur in downtown are: Old West Days; art gallery walk; Old Bill’s Fun Run; art fairs; Arts Festival; Easter egg hunt on town square; lighting of the square for Christmas; the shoot out; elk antler auction; July 4th parade; July 4th fireworks; outdoor concerts at Snow King; the Hill Climb snow mobile competition; rodeo; county fair. The town square is a major visitation site for visitors. New to downtown are the concerts and events at the new Community Center for the Arts. (See Theme 7, Arts and Culture section.)

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**Policy 4.2c: Recognize and enhance town recreational opportunities**

Continue maintaining the parks and working to connect town to the regional pathway network. Emphasize the connections between town and the surrounding recreational opportunities on federal land (National Elk Refuge, Cache Creek, Snow King Mountain).

*Stewardship of these public lands should be emphasized. Along with these opportunities, particularly for drastically increased numbers of people, come many management challenges.*

*This should be recognized.*

**Policy 4.2d: Facilitate town educational opportunities**

Coordinate to maintain neighborhood schools and other facilities for life-long learning that are important to the community. Educational facilities should be part of mixed-use developments. *(Should there be a base size?)*

**Principle 4.3—Maintain a vital retail/mixed-use core in**

**Jackson** *Given the “core” depicted in the Future Land Use Plan Map for the Town, it is easy to see that the concept of “core” is likely to mean very different things to different people ( in terms of geographic scope and appropriate development potential). For example, does “core” entail geographic areas where recent developments have been proposed – everywhere from Sagebrush Motel to North Cache, etc.?*

Why is This Important?

Jackson’s downtown is the retail and business center of the region, where most shopping and jobs are located in a centralized, compact area near the population center. *(Other than restaurants, there are nearly no “local services.”)*

Sales taxes provide significant revenue for operating the community.

Throughout the planning process, participants have strongly expressed their support for the concept of a strong town core and housing downtown. **Town should continue to be the commercial center providing community-wide services to the population and visitors and a large part of the economic strength of the town is the unique town square and character of the surrounding buildings that form the center of town.** *This is a long sentence.*

The Town Square park is a perfect example of a great public space and preserving it and the character of the surrounding block faces is a goal of this Plan. The commercial area that encompasses the **very center of town** *define* will experience major redevelopment in the next several

years and managing these changes **to sustain and enhance the commercial role will sustain an economic engine that finances many civic functions.** *What happened to preservation of character? Research points to character preservation as a long-term economic contributor and “quality of life” contributor..* The Jackson Framework Plan and **land use chapter** address important design issues for the town square and the downtown area **immediately surrounding** the square. *When will this be released? Define “immediately surrounding.”*

**Policy 4.3a: Protect the image and function of Town Square**

Town Square is Jackson’s major tourism draw and visitor retail center. It is also the area that has historically evolved over time and evokes the greatest amount of sentiment and concern over architecture, scale, and community character. The town square area will have the **highest levels of design standards** to guide future development, uses, and scale of development. *All of Jackson Hole should have the highest levels of design standards. Again, who sets these standards? THIS IS JACKSON HOLE!!*

**Policy 4.3b: Continue to promote downtown as a retail and business center**

The downtown area immediately surrounding the town square area is also important from an economic standpoint and town image and character for visitors and tourists. The town will continue to support the Downtown as a mixed-use district that is important for civic functions, retail, businesses, and housing. The **Town Framework Plan** addresses design and scale. ??  
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**Policy 4.3c: Promote mixed-use redevelopment in designated districts within Jackson**

**The Jackson Framework Plan and Land Use Plan** *WHEN WILL THE PUBLIC SEE THIS?*  
identifies areas for future mixed-use

redevelopment opportunities for residents to work, live, and play all within one neighborhood or district, such as near the “Y” or south of downtown along Cache corridor. The mixed-use areas should emphasize pedestrian comfort and safety and should include and support connections to nearby neighborhoods. The town will **carefully promote** mixed-use development with an emphasis on workforce residential, civic functions (such as schools), and commercial in these locations. (Note: the Town Framework Plan will address design issues.)

*What is “carefully promote?” Also, clarify if “mixed use” as a concept is to be applied to each and every individual redevelopment project, or if the goal is to encourage a mix of uses in a general area. These are very different.*

#### **Principle 4.4—Foster **healthy** neighborhoods in Jackson**

Why is This Important?

Jackson residents value their neighborhoods and are concerned about seeing too much change too quickly. As parts of town redevelop and see infill over time, this Plan also acknowledges that many neighborhoods will **remain stable in terms of their scale, image, and uses.**

*It is critical that the general public understand what is meant by “stable neighborhoods.” First, many of these neighborhoods have very different housing types already within those areas. Which of these types are intended to remain “stable”? Or, is it the current proportion/mix of types that is intended to remain stable? Second, in many of these “stable areas”, current underlying zoning would allow very different types of developments (scale, image, etc.) that one would see on the ground today. Therefore, does the Plan propose to keep current zoning stable or current “scales and image” stable? This should be clarified within the current public process.*

Preserving neighborhoods can help maintain an existing inventory of workforce housing and keep workers near the region’s major employment center.

#### **Policy 4.4a: **Preserve stable neighborhoods****

The town will undertake programs targeted towards enhancement and **stabilization** of established neighborhoods that may include upkeep and preservation of older housing stock. Design standards and guidelines will guide infill and redevelopment projects and encourage housing diversity and rehabilitation. (See the Framework plan map for identification of neighborhoods and reference to neighborhood planning policy above.)

*Clarify “stabilization”.*

#### **Policy 4.4b: **Promote **compatible** infill that fits Jackson’s neighborhoods****

Infill should be **compatible in scale and use with existing stable neighborhoods** and districts. Key considerations should include the identification of appropriate transitions between land uses and developments of varying intensities, and incorporation of roadway, park, open space, and trail/pedestrian connections that enhance the quality of residential experiences.

*If the goal of the Plan is to increase predictability, terms such as “compatibility” need to be better defined.*

#### **Policy 4.4c: **Prepare focused neighborhood plans for areas of potential change****

Neighborhood planning is a means of drilling into a greater level of detail to address focused area needs than what a comprehensive plan can provide. Certain parts of town may need additional focus and planning and a greater detail than what this Comprehensive plan can provide. Several candidate areas include:

The area around the Fairgrounds

The designated “Y redevelopment” area

*What about other areas proposed for significant changes?*

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#### **Principle 4.5—Create vibrant, attractive public places in Town**

Why is This Important?

Jackson and Teton County enjoy the luxury of being located in a natural (*national?*) treasure of scenic

beauty. Three million tourists are drawn to the Valley every year to experience the beauty and enjoy the activities and ambiance.

The town functions as a gateway to the national parks and forests and serves as hub for the region's tourism economy. Managing the physical development of the community to compliment the natural scenery is a major focus of the town and county.

The stewardship of the area's natural assets should include building the manmade elements that **add to the quality of the area**. The gateways to town, public places and corridors throughout the community are important features in establishing the region's image and commercial success. *How does hillside development and increased building heights in gateway areas (as proposed in the future land use plan map) "add to the quality of the area" or provide a positive transition between the surrounding landscape and the Town?*

##### **Policy 4.5a: Enhance town gateways**

The town framework plan addresses the three major gateways for town and calls for **visual upgrades** in both the public realm and on private property. *Who defines "visual upgrades"? Land use broadly described to-date arguably does not "enhance" gateways.*

##### **Policy 4.5b: Enhance pedestrian corridors**

The town framework plan addresses pedestrian connections (e.g., between the town square area and Snow King that connects the two major downtown attractions) and calls for enhancements to the pedestrian quality of the community.

##### **Policy 4.5c: Provide high quality parks and recreation**

**The surrounding national parks and forests can suggest that community parks are less important, ??** however green infrastructure and parks play a critical role in creating a great community. As redevelopment and infill occurs in town, community parks will become increasingly important to provide open spaces and recreational activities. (See Theme 7, Parks and Recreation.)

##### **Policy 4.5d: Design public places that fit Jackson and are safe and inviting to pedestrians**

Emphasize quality design for public spaces—streets, civic buildings, and other public spaces—that fits the town's western heritage and character and contributes to quality visitor experiences. Public spaces will be designed for pedestrians and should include wide sidewalks or boardwalks, shade trees and snow structures, benches, lighting, public art, landscaped public spaces such as plazas, ground level retail (with opportunities for outdoor restaurant seating), **appropriately scaled parking lots or garages**, and other design features to make them vibrant and inviting. *Who defines "appropriately scaled"?*

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#### **Principle 4.6—Provide a town transportation network that promotes easy accessibility and choices of travel modes**

Why is This Important?

As town continues to infill and redevelop, emphasizing mobility throughout the community becomes increasingly important. –Maximizing opportunities for transit, walking and biking will help the town function as well as

sustain the high quality of life. *(The level of development potential also strongly influences the town's ability to provide a high quality of life and visitor experience.)*

A cornerstone to the transportation system is increasing choices residents and visitors have for traveling around the community, and minimizing the reliance on the automobile.

(See also Theme 3 Transportation.)

**Policy 4.6a: Provide pedestrian connections**

Mixed-use developments should be designed to allow for a continuous, safe, and inviting pedestrian system. Pedestrian safety as well as links to transit will be an integral part of town.

**Policy 4.6b: Ensure streets have complement of bike-ways, sidewalks, paths, and transit**

Ensure all future new and redesigned streets contain a full complement of bike-ways, sidewalks, paths, and transit. Where relevant they should contain transit facilities. Fully develop a safe and integrated pedestrian system.

**Policy 4.6c: Continue and expand the free Town Shuttle**

The ongoing growth in ridership of the Town Shuttle demonstrates the desire of visitors and residents to use transit services. Increasing the frequency of this service is critical in the town's success as a commercial center.

Suggested Strategies (Theme 4—Jackson as Heart)

(Note: The planning team will work with the community to complete the strategies sections during the next phase of work as they relate to policies. Strategies are included in this draft for discussion purposes.)

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Theme 4 Suggested Strategies

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LDR Consistency - Amend LDRs to be consistent with Future Land Use for Town of Jackson

Neighborhood Planning - Establish neighborhood planning program. – *When will this occur?*

Town CIP for Enhancement Projects - Establish a Capital Improvement Program for gateways, corridors, public investment projects to improve Jackson districts and neighborhoods.

Transit System - Increase frequency of free town transit Funding and identify needs to complete the sidewalk network throughout town.

Small Area Plans - Develop small area plan for the greater “Y” area.

Pedestrian Corridor Plan(s) - Develop small area plans for: (a) the greater “Y” area, (b) the Fairgrounds.

Design Guideline Updates - Amend the LDRs and update the design guidelines to provide more specificity, anticipating remodeling of town square buildings within existing character, reflecting goals of this Plan and sub area planning effort.

Corridor Design Plans – Develop a corridor plan for a great pedestrian connection between town square area and Snow King; consider plans for additional corridors

Possible Indicators (Theme 4—Jackson as Heart)

Possible indicators to monitor how well the community is achieving the goals of this theme include:

1. Number of annual community events
2. Number of workforce housing units built in Jackson
3. Number of housing units retained in Jackson
4. Number and type of civic improvement projects (e.g., gateways, parks)
5. Number of blocks that receive sidewalk construction that completes the network
6. Frequency of town shuttle service
7. Number of neighborhood plans completed (including a small area plan for the “Y” area)
8. Number projects completed and consistency with overall goals of this Plan and sub area plans.
9. **Sustained and/or increased commercial sales tax revenue AND FISCAL COSTS of DEVELOPMENT??** *How does this relate to policy 2.7c “Do not make land use decisions for revenue purposes”? Development intensification itself shouldn’t drive the need for “enhancements” and “improvements” throughout the Town. This would be self-defeating. For example, there are many roads in parts of town that are currently quite safe for pedestrian and bike travel. However, when development in these areas intensifies, it is only then that such “improvements” or “pedestrian corridors” will be necessary.*
10. (note: Determine a quantitative way to evaluate design of infill and redevelopment projects.) ***This is very important; it must be a top priority!!!***

*In general, these indicators should be more comprehensive and reflective of the linkages between themes, rather than particular to one theme. For example, “Jackson as Heart” should also have indicators for wildlife-related issues. In general, given the values component of this theme, indicators on resident quality of life and visitor quality of experience will be important. In general, indicators for how the comprehensive plan addresses top priorities will be more essential than isolated indicators that are not directly linked to the Plan’s fundamental goals.*

*Crime rates, fiscal impacts, etc. should also be considered as indicators of success/failure.*