

SUMMARY OF COMMENTS on June 2008 Draft “Themes & Policies”
THEME FOUR
Uphold Jackson as “Heart of the Region”

Big Picture:

This “theme” in particular lacks policies that clearly speak to the unique context of Jackson as a gateway community. In a nutshell, this theme fails to provide increased predictability because it includes language that is far too subjective, vague and inconsistent. Not only are the “Themes and Policies” vague in terms of the direction of redevelopment in Town, but the Future Land Use Plan Maps for the Town currently lack the specificity necessary to make targeted, constructive comments. The concept of “mixed use” is appropriate, but whether the concept is applied correctly within the context of Jackson is only answered through an understanding of details. The level of detail that has been provided to date gets us nowhere near increased predictability nor an ability to evaluate consequences of what is being proposed.

This section implies that “economic forces” could inevitably shape the form of redevelopment in the Town of Jackson. The Plan should not imply this. The Plan should acknowledge that community vision should *proactively* shape development. Our community should not simply react to external market forces; market forces will not protect what is rare or unique about Jackson Hole, including its irreplaceable wildlife. In order to sustain long-term economic viability, our community’s vision should shape development. If we protect what we have, which is becoming increasingly rare, our long-term economic well-being will be sustained. Unfortunately, the Plan doesn’t provide strong direction in terms of identifying elements of physical character that are rare or that contribute to the Town’s “charm.” Without adequate definition of what we are trying to protect as part of the “heart” of the community, how could we possibly succeed in protecting it?

Key Issues:

- Significantly more work needs to be done to identify how the Town can redevelop without losing essential elements of its character. Without clear definitions and boundaries for certain development types, incremental degradation is likely. To many, unacceptable degradation is already happening.
- Do citizens, elected officials, and/or planning staff perceive recent developments in Town as representative of “protecting and enhancing Jackson’s character”? Answers to this question are likely not consistent. This inconsistency reinforces the inherent challenges that come along with the Plan’s subjective guidelines.
- The “themes and policies” state that the Future Land Use Plan Map will provide greater detail to complement this “theme.” When will this greater detail be introduced into the public process?
- The Plan states that “opportunities and challenges” are created as a result of higher densities, but outlines only the “opportunities.” It fails to provide an objective summary of “challenges”, which include: 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.
- The Plan doesn’t provide a realistic analysis of potential consequences associated with different forms of redevelopment. For example, how will increased building heights and larger buildings affect sun exposure, overall energy efficiency, ice and snow maintenance, adjacent property owners, etc.?
- The Plan calls for a vital mixed-use “core”, but doesn’t define “core” in terms of geographic scope and appropriate development potential. At some point, details must be provided.
- The concept of community character has been largely dropped. The 1994 Plan included strong language regarding physical character of the built environment and how it affected overall character. Why remove it?
- Highly subjective terms need to be better defined, including: “carefully promote mixed-use development”, “highest level of design standards”, “stable neighborhoods”, “compatible in scale and use”, “appropriately scaled”, “add to the quality of the area”, and “enhance gateways”, etc.
- The Town’s wildlife issues have not been addressed. There doesn’t seem to be any mention of Karns Meadow, Flat Creek, Cache Creek, or the important deer migration corridor that crosses Broadway, etc. Jackson Hole Wildlife Foundation has identified a major vehicle-wildlife collision hotspot along this corridor, which is within Town limits. Wildlife-related issues should not be ignored in Town.
- Off-site impacts resulting in significantly increased densities in Town have not been addressed, including valley-wide consequences on traffic capacity and human activity-related impacts on wildlife.
- This theme assumes a boost to economic viability, but does so without any research or analysis of associated fiscal impacts.
- As Town development is shaped, the important issues are in the details (total amount, form and type).