



The Jackson Hole Conservation Alliance's detailed written comments regarding the second draft of the Jackson/Teton County Comprehensive Plan (released in April 2009) are all available via: <http://www.jhalliance.org/library.htm#comments>.

The following document includes our verbal comments made in Fall 2009 during the joint town/county planning commission hearings regarding Theme Two, "Manage Growth Responsibly."

Re: Theme Two Discussions

Below are the comments Paul Hansen, Executive Director, verbally presented at the September 24, 2009, Hearing. The Conservation Alliance also submitted the following summary as a handout to commissioners at the hearing.

This is a list of the Conservation Alliance's broad, high-level concerns regarding Theme Two. We hope that throughout the review of this Theme you will refer to our written comments submitted on July 30 that raise a number of specific questions, concerns, and recommendations.

This theme needs a lot of attention and work to get it to a place that accurately reflects the community's priorities. There needs to be a focus on not only what is currently written in Theme Two, but, **more importantly, what is missing.**

General

- **A narrow focus on development pattern as the only important element of "managing growth" is, as we have stated throughout this process, a flawed approach. This Theme must more adequately address not only the location of development, but also the overall amount, rate, the types of development.**

Changing Meaning of "Managing Growth Responsibly" since Public Polling

- **(See handout presented today and included in our July 30th written comments.) Please address why some of the four original key objectives of the "manage growth responsibly" theme were largely changed/ignored in the current iteration of the Theme. (Obvious important ones are "defining the end state" and "fully addressing the cost of growth" that are now completely absent in this theme.) It is questionable to substantially change the basis of a particular theme that people voted for as a priority and still identify it as the second priority in the overall plan and the first priority in a majority of districts.**

FLUP maps

- Language will need to be rewritten so that this document does not imply that the Future Land Use Plan and accordant maps will guide the formation of the policies. Unfortunately, the policies as written, instead of describing the values/types of character that are preferred and that would then be depicted in the FLUP maps, primarily includes language that “development should be consistent with the FLUP”.

“Node” Concept

- While we support concentrated development patterns as a general principle, this plan misapplies the concept by essentially proposing sprawling ‘nodes’ throughout the county. The idea of planning for both county “nodes” and town intensification would be defined by many as sprawl. It is critical that the nodal concept be rooted in the unique contexts of the county (wildlife issues, transportation capacity etc...) as well as in the acknowledgement of existing development patterns and the establishment of clear node boundaries.
- This plan’s language is inconsistent and unclear regarding growth in “nodes.” Specifically, in some instances, it is suggested that growth in “nodes” is intended to be substitutive growth (i.e., not adding, but shifting growth). Other sections of the plan, including the FLUP itself and Appendix I, clearly demonstrate additive growth. This plan rests on a fundamental assumption in many areas about shifting growth, but it is highly vague about realistic applications.

WHAT IS MISSING – a few examples

- **An analysis of the amount of growth allowed and a recognition of the community’s preferred amount of growth are critical aspects of managing growth responsibly, and are currently absent from this Theme and from the plan as a whole. *The community strongly supports limited growth. This must be incorporated.***
- **This Theme must address our unique planning challenges as a gateway community with high visitor populations (growth-related issues regarding permanent population, visitor population, commuters, seasonal variations in employment numbers, etc...).**
- **We should be establishing clear goals (growth rate/cap) based on an adequate understanding of where we are today.**
- **This chapter must define character – without defining what we want to protect, we won’t end up protecting it.**
- **This Theme needs to ensure that growth in one sector (e.g. commercial) does not outpace growth in another sector (e.g. residential accessible to the workforce).**
- **This Theme needs to include other key aspects of planning responsibly - age population demographics, makeup of economic industries, etc... - to be able to adequately plan for future community infrastructure needs.**

- **This Theme must ensure that new growth pay its way regardless of location.**
- **This Theme must mention heritage preservation.**
- **The indicators in this theme must actually measure growth impacts and help us determine whether or not we are “growing responsibly.”**

Given that many broad issues are not addressed at all, it is likely more effective for you to give broad direction for revisions to staff prior to a detailed line-by-line review. Many important concepts related to “managing growth responsibly” must be incorporated for this chapter to be an acceptable representation of community vision and goals.

Thanks.



Re: Theme Two Discussions

Below are the comments Becky Tillson, Community Planning Associate, verbally presented at the October 1, 2009 Hearing.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

Like last week, we will be focusing our comments on broad level issues. And as you continue to review this theme, we hope that you will refer to our written comments - submitted on July 30 - that raise specific questions, concerns, and recommendations.

To start with, this theme needs significant attention. We appreciate that you are taking the time to properly review the overall concepts central to this theme.

First, we believe that the community has voiced strong support for a limit to growth below what is currently allowed in both the commercial and residential sectors.

We must keep a low baseline and then have incentives that are ONLY there for the type of development that the community actually wants. Anything above baseline should have to be exclusively for community benefit (specifically affordable housing and permanent conservation). These incentives must be performance-based and not discretionary, and they must be prescribed in the plan's policies, not just in the Future Land Use Plan and maps.

We support the concept of infill development in town, but want to ensure that community character and community benefit are considered in the creation of infill policies and strategies. Development in the Town must directly result in reduced development in the County.

While redeveloping in Town, it will be extremely important to balance commercial and residential growth, because, among other things we need to focus on both the supply of AND the demand for workforce and affordable housing.

And when we do grow, we need to be aware that impacts, particularly cumulative impacts, of increased development anywhere in the valley do not stop at the property line, or the neighborhood, or even the County line. We have a responsibility to our overall regional ecosystem to minimize our cumulative impacts as much as possible.

Overall, this Theme needs to acknowledge that the amount, rate, and type of development matter in addition to the location of the growth.

Lastly, we are very concerned that the meaning of “Managing Growth Responsibly” has been changed so dramatically between Public Polling and the current draft:
This has to be addressed. Two of the main goals of the Theme used to be to “define an end state” and to “fully address the cost of growth.” These are exceptionally important goals and MUST be reinstated.

It is questionable to substantially change the basis of why people voted for a particular theme or policy as a priority and then still identify it as a priority.

Again, we believe that the best way to move forward with this Theme would be to return it to staff with some high-level values statements that need to be addressed and incorporated.

Thank you.



Re: Theme Two Discussions

Below are the comments Kristy Bruner, Community Planning Director, verbally presented at the October 8, 2009, Hearing.

Thanks for the opportunity to comment. As one planning commissioner stated in an early hearing “It’s time for you as commissioners to show whether you have reviewed and are going to respond/listen to community input,” from not only those in the room tonight, but from all the individuals over the last two years that have dedicated time, energy, and research to provide feedback.

We really feel that now is the time to show you are willing, as appointed officials, to recommend a revised plan that truly speaks to the public’s long-term vision. At this point in the process, one of the key musts is to include a policy that calls for defining the end state and limiting growth. I understand some of these topics were addressed last week, but without these fundamentals on the preferred amount of development, it’s difficult to have a discussion on development patterns, nodes, etc. Practically speaking, as an example, if you support “nodes” as this plan defines them, without supporting the concept of an end state, you are essentially supporting never-ending expansion of the development footprint in Jackson Hole.

Why is defining the end state so important for your discussion on Theme Two? For one, defining the end state was listed as the FIRST objective of the community’s SECOND highest priority at the time of gathering community feedback. Second, the importance of defining a predictable amount, not just pattern, was very clear in the 2008 draft of the new plan. Now, it’s no longer in the plan. And as a joint board, as of last week, you voted not to reinstate this high community priority in the plan. This is in direct conflict with public will. Until this plan includes an end state that represents the public support for limited growth, this plan is not going to benefit or be supported by the community at large. At a basic level, reinstate the objectives for which the public supported “managing growth responsibly” in this plan.

Now a couple of specifics...

Regarding your discussions on the nodes, the future land use plan, etc....

While we support the concept of concentrated development patterns as a general planning principle, we do not support the way this plan oversimplifies and misapplies the concept of the “node.” It essentially fails to acknowledge the importance of the scale at which we are planning, and by doing so proposes sprawling nodes throughout the county – from places with sensitive habitat, to those that lack transportation capacity, etc. Arguably, particularly in the case of additive growth, having both county nodes and town intensification is promoting a sprawling development pattern.

Also, in your discussions, please do not oversimplify the public vision. Always keep in mind the tradeoffs on which the public was asked to vote. We hope that blanket statements, such as “the public supports higher density in town” are avoided. These statements misrepresent the outcomes of the public process and what the public truly supports. Specifically, the public voiced that more development should be pursued in town, BUT only in the case that specific tradeoffs and assurances are met, such as protection of habitat in the county or truly affordable housing. Importantly, even with this preferred development pattern, the public supports limiting growth overall in both the town and county, which this draft unacceptably avoids.

We recognize that you are trying to stay at the 30,000 ft. level, but whether these policies are effective/feasible lie in the details. Our community should be assured that development within strategic locations would only occur in the case that it is really helping density-neutral redistribution from outlying areas. This plan should not move phantom density, i.e., a level of development that would not have occurred anyway, and by doing so, actually accelerate the rate of growth valley-wide. The public has made it very clear that the acceleration of growth is not the preferred planning approach.

At the end of the day, it’s important to understand the rationale for limiting the amount of development in Jackson Hole. As we have expressed before, limiting growth, is, in and of itself, not the top community vision. However, it is a fundamental necessary goal to meet in order to protect the most important assets of Jackson Hole. These include its small town and rural landscape that are home to irreplaceable wildlife, amazing scenic vistas and a high quality of life and experience for residents and visitors.

As for other more specific comments, we will continue to submit them in written form. We know this task is difficult, and we thank you for your efforts, but please always keep in mind that this new plan should be the community’s plan. To be effective, it must better incorporate years of public input. How you vote to amend this theme will demonstrate to what extent this process is on the right path.

Thanks.



Re: Theme Two Discussions

*Below are the comments Becky Tillson, Community Planning Associate, verbally presented at the **October 15, 2009, Hearing.***

This will be brief, because you have already received pretty extensive comments from us and you know where we stand. To begin with, as we have said before, this plan should aim to provide solutions to growth-related problems, which includes answering the question of how much, not just where.

Regarding the concept of nodes, we urge you to not oversimplify. We cannot support the concept as it is presented in this plan – as town-level density development without clear boundaries. This is inappropriate anywhere but in Town, and is a clear departure from the way that concentrated growth was discussed in the 1994 Plan.

We know that you have significant discussion ahead of you on this Theme, and we appreciate all of your hard work.

Thanks.



Re: Theme Two Discussions

Below are the comments Kristy Bruner, Community Planning Director, verbally presented at the October 22, 2009, Hearing.

We have already submitted written comments on many of the issues you will be discussing, so I will keep it brief.

First – scattered nodes “**at town-level densities**” – which is how this plan uniquely identifies nodes - throughout the county do not represent the public vision. If elements of the plan do not represent the community vision, they shouldn’t be included. One can take a brief, objective look at public comment, and it is abundantly clear the public does not support the idea of nodes as this plan identifies them. (One specific example – the “compact centers and housing” scenario which this theme and the associated Future Land Use Plan (FLUP) promote – **was the least liked scenario of all presented**... yet it ended up being the basis of the new plan.) This is not ok – and neither is promoting an across-the-board, town-level characteristic throughout different communities in the valley.

Also, the rationale for this approach – town level densities in nodes – is not explained in this plan. To be blunt, the benefits of such an approach are not clear and they are not **realistically** tied to other elements of the plan like transportation, community character preservation, and wildlife protection. **We shouldn’t be identifying places for additional growth without first clearly articulating why it is needed in the first place.** No analysis was done, to show that this preferred pattern and amount would result in the greatest community benefit. (For example, what are the alternatives? Are we assuming increased density is the only means to achieve permanent open space or workforce housing?)

Given this lack of analysis in the formation of the FLUP maps, (i.e., any proof that this added density will actually have net benefits for the community), the public’s desire for limited growth, the fact that we still have ample development potential under baseline zoning, and the fact that our highest priorities would benefit from reduced development potentials, **keep allowable densities at baseline in these proposed county centers.**

In summary, remove the concept of expanding county centers, and nodes as this plan defines them, from the plan. This, combined with the PRD at a lower density allowance, will result in a plan much more in line with public vision, and with a land use pattern that is more likely to help us meet the highest community priority of wildlife protection.

Second – Related to town, do not simply upzone parcels throughout the town. By doing so, additional development is not ensured to result in the type of development that the community supports. The last thing you would want is the use of density options on top of an increased baseline development potential – and, as of right now, the plan isn’t clear about this fundamental

point – are you promoting increased baseline zoning **and** the potential use of density options in town?

One last item -

Regarding some of the earlier votes on reinstating community character in the vision chapter, will this concept be integrated throughout the entire document - **are you going to use community character definitions to frame the way in which growth will be managed in the valley?**

Thanks again for your work.



Re: Theme Two Discussions

*Below are the comments Kristy Bruner, Community Planning Director, verbally presented at the **October 29, 2009**, Hearing. (*Due to time constraints, only a few comments were verbally presented at this hearing. The remainder have been submitted in written form.)*

Thanks for your all of your work. We greatly appreciate that a lot of progress has been made, in some fundamental areas, to get the plan more representative of the community vision.

Moving forward, we were quite surprised to hear the suggestion at last week's hearing that you would likely finish discussions on Theme Two tonight. Given that projection, we primarily have a few requests to clarify the process for the public.

First, looking back a little –

Given that the Theme One rewrite will be released tomorrow, we just want a clarification on when the public will see the rewrite of the vision/intro chapters. For example, direction was given to staff to draft three different vision statements for the entire plan – When will the public review those again and be able to provide input? We recognize the process has changed since, but moving forward, we just wanted this clarified.

Second –

Could you clarify how broad level rewrites will differ from the line-by-line approach of Theme One? For example, for Theme One, staff was only going to make red-lined changes to the draft in the case that the recommendations passed both boards. In other words, the rewrite was very narrowly focused to your specific, jointly passed, recommendations on Theme One.

Is the process moving forward going to primarily include broad level rewrites on the individual chapters? And if so, will the planning commissions do line-by-line review at some future date? Or, was this broad approach just for Theme Two? A practical example – since you haven't yet discussed modifying the Statement of Ideal – is it expected to be generally changed by staff, or would you need to make a specific recommendation tonight?

We also ask these questions about process given the motion to discuss town issues only/primarily in Theme Three. We're not sure where the idea of separating the town discussion from "managing growth responsibly" originated (it was very strongly implied even in just the power point presentation last week that omitted town numbers). Because it is quite clear, as a joint plan, and the way Theme Two is written, that it is supposed to equally apply to both jurisdictions. Also, there are some issues of relevance to town in Theme Two that are not addressed in Theme Three. So, to clarify, if you skip discussions

about town until Theme Three, will you wait to do a rewrite of Theme Two until discussions on Theme Three are finished? We think, that if you move forward with the proposal to skip town issues in Theme Two, there need to be assurances that town issues will be directly addressed in the rewriting of Theme Two also. Overall, we believe that it is confusing to suggest the separation of town from the Theme Two chapter, as all the issues of growth management cross jurisdictional boundaries.

And, one more thing about the rewrite process - Given the repeated references to the Future Land Use Plan in Theme Two, will staff now initiate a rewrite of the Future Land Use Plan chapter and associated district characterizations? Or, is that going to be addressed as a separate issue later? Are you largely skipping line-by-line comments on Theme Two given the need to first drastically modify the FLUP? A clarification on next steps would be helpful.

Moving on From Process –

If you are going to vote on additional broad level directives for Theme Two at this time, please vote to direct the following as essential elements that need to still be in the new plan:

- Incorporation of an effective population study component in this chapter – See Chapter 2 of our current plan for direction
- Incorporation of text regarding “least growth” solutions – including a more objective sampling of public polls in the section “what the community has said about this theme” regarding preferred amounts of development
- *Incorporation of language that address issues that planning typically addresses (as our 1994 Plan does) such as age population demographics and makeup of economic industries – that enable us to be able to adequately plan for schools, housing needs, etc.*
- Incorporation of language that addresses the importance of the type of development (Setting maximum structure sizes, type of commercial, balancing growth in different sectors, etc.)
- Reinstatement of the objectives for which the public supported “managing growth responsibly” – For example, not all of these issues have been addressed – One key example is to “fully address the costs of growth” – Not only is fiscal responsibility an issue of great concern to the public, it is typically a huge component of responsible growth management and should be specifically addressed in this chapter.
- As for strategies and indicators – primarily, please see our written comments. However, I’ll speak to one specific strategy that is absolutely essential for managing growth responsibly. **In line with documented community will, please add the following strategy for Theme Two - “Establish a dedicated funding source to acquire permanent open space for wildlife habitat protection, scenic vistas preservation and agricultural preservation.”** In order to protect open space in perpetuity, our community and landowners need diverse options to secure open space. Alongside the use of lower density PRDs, a funding source is critical. Please take a vote on this issue, to establish it as the first strategy of this theme.

- **Pointing to a fundamental point of this chapter, and the plan as a whole - A clear underlying framework for defining desired land use characteristics (not just “according to the Future Land Use Plan) should be reintegrated-** We strongly recommend building upon the efforts of the 1994 Plan. As we have stated before, the new plan must clearly provide a foundation/legal underpinning for future land development regulations. So far, it doesn't. **This chapter should also define community character - first defining the type that exists, and second, what we want to protect or create. While it certainly could use refinement, the 1994 Plan clearly laid out guidelines for regulating character using relationships of density/structural mass to the site area/open space.** We would recommend that staff be redirected to refine the framework of community character during the rewrite of Theme Two, to be consistent with an earlier position to incorporate community character in the overall vision statement of the plan.

Again, we bring up existing resources, such as sections of our current plan, simply to suggest an option for a more efficient and effective rewrite process –we can refine, rather than reinvent the wheel. Staff has the 1994 Plan at hand – it's an accessible, efficient way to rework this chapter, and this plan.

I'll close there. Thanks again.

- 1. Leave open the option of letting the voters decide on public funding for land conservation, as Laurie Andrews mentioned last week.**
- 2. The Strategies and Indicators section needs to be discussed and updated. We need a way to measure progress against our goal.**
- 3. The community has expressed a strong desire that there be NO new resorts or resort expansion.**
- 4. As the draft is written, Theme Two covers both Town and County, as it should. Cumulative impacts of growth in any portion of our community must be accounted for.**
- 5. When will the statement of ideal be discussed or amended?**

Speaking for myself, as a relatively new observer to community planning, I wonder if we do not have a disconnect in this process that hampers progress and fuels mistrust – right or wrong. The public has asked, time and again, for a vision of how much growth is enough. Instead, we're just getting an answer on how we will grow, or where we will grow. We want assurance from our leaders that they share our love for this valley and our desire that, at some point, there will be a limit to growth.

We realize that any assurance or affirmation of an end state as a community value will have limited tangible impact over the life of this plan. We realize, under any scenario, there will be robust growth for decades to come. I think that a reassurance that we as a community share a vision that our valley will never look like Gatlinburg or even Vail, would go a long way.