

2/9/11 *Jackson Hole News&Guide*

Comprehensive land-use plan a flop without a FLUP

It's time to stand up once more and share your voice. Next Tuesday, Feb. 15 – after approximately four years of community work on a new Comprehensive Plan for Teton County and the Town of Jackson – elected officials will hold their first hearing to review the “PC Certified Jackson/Teton County Comprehensive Plan.” This document is set to replace our existing Comp Plan, which was adopted in 1994. Because it defines the community vision for Jackson Hole into the future, it is a really important tool to help protect the things about Jackson Hole that matter most to residents and visitors – its rural character, open spaces, scenic vistas and diverse wildlife. And everyone's voice matters.

The Feb. 15 meeting (2 to 6 p.m. at Snow King Resort) is an important one. Not only will we all get a glimpse of the new plan review process under a contracted facilitator, we'll also see discussion of two fundamental issues: 1) what opportunities the public will have to give input during this phase and 2) the role of the Future Land Use Plan, or FLUP. The Jackson Hole Conservation Alliance strongly believes the public must be given reasonable and timely opportunities – during hearings – to express support for ideas, as well as share other thoughts or concerns with elected officials. While our organization fully supports the effort to make this an efficient, cost-effective review, above all else the Comp Plan needs to reflect the will of the community.

Also important is what route elected officials will opt to take with the Future Land Use Plan (FLUP). This is a significant issue for several reasons. First, the public needs to understand what the most basic framework of the new plan will be. Will the FLUP be a **part of** the plan scheduled for adoption in early July of this year? Second, as a 65-page section, it constituted nearly half – no small part – of the original April 2009 draft plan. Third, no one in the community has formally evaluated any part of the FLUP yet – including our local planning commissioners, who have already generously donated nearly a year of volunteer time to improve the “themes and policies” segment of our community's plan.

So, why should we all care? First and foremost, the FLUP was explicitly designed to be a critical piece to bring increased predictability to the overall plan. It includes considerable narrative on what types of development and conservation efforts are appropriate across the valley's 25 districts, it provides wide ranges of expected development potential for newly proposed land-use types, and perhaps most significantly, it includes tables that identify the priorities (by themes) that will take precedence in each of the districts. The FLUP is simply not a minor item that can be left open to interpretation and figured out later.

While the Conservation Alliance believes that substantial modifications should be made to the FLUP first brought forward in the April 2009 draft, we have always recognized the complementary role it was supposed to play with regard to the “themes and policies” segment of the plan. Without the FLUP, the draft plan doesn't do much in terms of increasing predictability, accountability and measurability, the key reasons for pursuing

an “update” of the 1994 Plan. Given this point, we believe it is essential that elected officials allot adequate time in their review of the draft plan to discuss their intentions for the FLUP.

The Conservation Alliance raises these points simply because we want the overall review process to be efficient and positive. At the end of the day, we believe that the review of the FLUP will be the part of the review process that will test everyone’s understanding of the “themes and policies” segment of the plan. For this reason, until our community has had an opportunity to review the draft plan in its entirety – including both the themes and policies section and the FLUP – we should not adopt a new plan to replace our existing plan.

The Conservation Alliance has actively participated throughout this planning process for a key reason: We believe that all of us who are privileged to experience Jackson Hole, residents and visitors alike, have an obligation to take care of it. Having a strong local comprehensive plan is one way to do this. Now, more than ever, as our elected officials are making critical decisions, our community needs to embrace how incredibly rare and precious this place is, and encourage our local officials to do the same. This planning process won’t be simple or easy, but spending adequate time – now – to thoroughly discuss the complex issues that our community faces, as well as the potential implications of our decisions, will be worth it in the long run.

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