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Comp Plan action lacking

I recently completed a technical analysis of the draft Jackson/Teton County Comprehensive Plan, with a focus on the ecosystem stewardship and growth management chapters. This report, funded by the Jackson Hole Conservation Alliance, Save Historic Jackson Hole and community members, represents my expert opinion as a professional planner and consultant with over 30 years of experience as to whether the draft Plan will achieve the stated community vision.

The Plan outlines an ambitious vision for the future of Jackson, to “preserve and protect the area’s ecosystem in order to ensure a healthy environment, community and economy for current and future generations.” I am struck by this vision. It’s the part of the Plan that makes me feel the community is on the right track. However, beyond the vision, in the Plan’s fundamentals, I don’t find the level of specificity the community needs to ensure its vision will be achieved.

Broadly speaking, I believe there are several key improvements to the Plan needed before it’s adopted.

First, the Character District maps are essential and must include significantly more specificity than the policies. They must identify to which locations growth will be directed, how much growth will occur there, and what type and density of uses are planned. Without this, it’s possible that the fundamental concept of the Plan – removing development pressure from the rural areas in the County - may not be achievable. So the stakes for this upcoming mapping process could not be higher.

Second, while the character maps will help to make this a more specific, detailed Plan, the policy language must be more precise if it is to support a predictable land use decision-making system. More often than not, the text lacks specificity, making it difficult to understand why certain policies are proposed and what actions are intended for implementation. Creating a more predictable system was a fundamental reason for this Comprehensive Plan update, so the document needs this precision to improve upon our current Plan.

Third, the Plan contains a range of recommended actions, but lacks an action plan establishing what will be done and how, who will do it, and when it will be completed. Incorporating an action plan is vital to the Plan’s success

I hope that the recommendations contained in my report will help to advance this Plan toward adoption and implementation, and help to preserve and enhance the spectacular place that is Jackson Hole.

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