

# Whadda ya mean, 'There goes the rope'?

*Sometimes, even  
the best laid plans  
go awry.*

We're afraid that's what has happened with the Jackson/Teton County Comprehensive Plan.

Nearly a year after our community saw the first draft of the Comp Plan, a new draft was released in April 2009.

And while this draft plan looks good at first glance, a closer look shows that it lacks essential policies needed to ensure that it will do what our community has repeatedly said it wants the plan to do:

- Protect wildlife and open space
- Manage growth responsibly
- Provide workforce housing

The question is, do we want a plan that won't protect Jackson Hole's irreplaceable wildlife, scenery and community character?

Or do we want a plan that backs up its intentions with real solutions?

## **The choice is up to you.**

Please, get informed and get involved. Read the draft plan. Read this flier. Discuss the Comp Plan with your friends. Share your thoughts with the commissioners and councilors who will vote on the plan, and do it soon.

Let's work together to create a Comp Plan that will do what our community wants.

Every voice counts. ■

*Jackson Hole Conservation Alliance*  
[www.jhalliance.org](http://www.jhalliance.org) • (307) 733-9417





You brought the water, right?

## Please help

### It takes a community to find community solutions.

Dear friends of Jackson Hole,

As the Jackson Hole Conservation Alliance nears its 30th anniversary, we've been taking time to reflect on our role as one of the valley's oldest and most-respected grassroots organizations.

The Jackson Hole community has also had a similar chance to reflect during the ongoing Comprehensive Plan update process – to reflect on our community's values, on how the valley has changed over the years, and on creating a vision for the future.

As I look back at former Comp Plan processes I've been involved in – as a long-time resident, a board member of the Alliance and then in my role as Executive Director – I'm heartened to see that our community's desire to live in harmony with wildlife, protect scenic views, and preserve our irreplaceable natural resources has remained at the core of our shared values.

A group of concerned neighbors formed the Alliance in 1979 to help improve Teton County's first Comprehensive Plan – a government policy document that was so controversial, construction trucks ringed the courthouse in protest. In the end, the Alliance and the community at large stood up and voiced their support for developing the valley in a way that preserves the values we all treasure.

Over time, I've seen little change in the community values that were voiced in 1979, voiced again during the 1994 rewrite of the Comp

Plan, and then reiterated most recently in three government-sponsored surveys of community members. It's clear that this is a community that has been and is still willing to stand up for its wildlife, community character, scenery, environmental health and for its working families.

The issues we face today are much the same as they were in 1979, but the pressures are greater and the stakes are higher. That's why the Conservation Alliance is providing this publication. We want to share our thoughts with you about what we believe is one of the most important local decisions to be made by this generation.

This publication gives a preliminary analysis of a very complicated document. We hope it will help you understand what's at stake in this revision of our current Comp Plan, and that it will help you get involved in the community process, have informed discussions with your elected officials, and make constructive suggestions for improving the draft plan.

As history has shown us, it takes a community to find community solutions. And if any community can create solutions, this one can! Please get involved.

Sincerely,

Franz Camenzind, Executive Director  
Jackson Hole Conservation Alliance

### *What's a Comp Plan?*

A Comprehensive Plan is a long-range blueprint to guide the growth and development of a community according to the vision of the members of that community. Jackson and Teton County are currently operating under a Comp Plan that was passed in 1994. In 2007, the town and county began the process of updating the plan. Evaluating the current draft, available at [www.jacksonstetontetonplan.com](http://www.jacksonstetontetonplan.com), is the next step in that process.

### *And why should you care?*

Growth proposed under the new Comp Plan draft could permanently degrade what makes Jackson Hole unique – our wildlife, open spaces, scenic vistas and community character.

Although it's hard to quantify the qualities of small-town life that we cherish and want to preserve, it's a fair guess that a large increase in numbers of buildings and people will result in a corresponding decrease in the quality of life and experience for all who live and visit here. Picture more traffic jams, longer lines at the post office and stores, higher taxes, fighting for parking spaces at trailheads and searching for solitude on crowded trails.

Since development on private lands has a direct, negative impact on the wildlife depending on them for survival, also imagine yourself looking for say, moose, and not finding any. Pretty scary, huh? Especially when you consider how much our community character and tourism-based economy depend on wildlife.

All of us who are privileged to experience Jackson Hole have an obligation to take care of it. Now, more than ever, it's time to join those who have worked for decades to keep this precious place a global treasure and demand a Comp Plan that will do what our community wants: Protect our irreplaceable wildlife, open spaces and character. ■

“Gateway communities seeking to develop a vital local economy must ensure that growth and economic development don't come at the expense of their unique identity, quality of life, economic diversity, and fiscal well-being.... Without well-designed and publicly supported strategies to preserve their character and surroundings, gateway communities risk undermining the very assets responsible for their economic vitality and future potential. – *Balancing Nature and Commerce in Gateway Communities*” by Jim Howe, Ed McMahon and Luther Propst

# Take a second look

## Analysis of the new draft Comp Plan reveals major flaws.

The new draft of the Jackson/Teton County Comprehensive Plan states that “Preservation and protection of the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem and the area’s natural resources is the top priority of our community.”

But a close look shows that the draft lacks essential policies needed to uphold its number one priority.

**Without fundamental changes, the new draft Comp Plan will not protect Jackson Hole’s irreplaceable wildlife, open spaces and community character.**

The Conservation Alliance’s detailed comments on the draft Comp Plan will be available shortly via [www.jhalliance.org/issuescompplan.htm](http://www.jhalliance.org/issuescompplan.htm). Meanwhile, here’s an overview of our major concerns:

- Despite its statements to the contrary, this draft does not represent the will of our community, which has repeatedly voiced what we want, and in what order:
  - 1) Our irreplaceable wildlife and open space protected *permanently*.
  - 2) Growth managed responsibly, to include *limiting growth* if that growth might harm wildlife and community character.
  - 3) Long-term affordable housing solutions.

The new draft fails the community’s mandate for it to consider the implications of buildout and evaluate the consequences of overall growth in the valley. *See related stories on Pages 4 and 6.*

- Intended as an update of the 1994 Comp Plan, the new draft has ended up a complete rewrite that has lost many of the protections of the ’94 plan. *See Page 5.*
- The draft plan focuses too much on the location of future growth, and not enough on the community costs of the growth it proposes.
- The draft Comp Plan proposes too much development overall – up to 9,880 *new* residential units and 8.8 million *new* square feet of com-

mercial development in Jackson Hole. This would more than double the amount of development that’s on the ground today. What impacts will that have on our wildlife and quality of life?

- The draft Comp Plan does not take an integrated approach to land use planning decisions. For example, it fails to acknowledge that the amount of commercial development it proposes will make our workforce housing shortage worse, not better. For instance, 8.8 million new square feet of commercial development will generate about 36,000 new jobs, which will in turn generate a demand for about 29,000 new workers. Where are they going to live? The draft also lacks evaluations of the impacts of the development it outlines.
- The draft contends that allowing significantly increased development in the Town of Jackson, Teton Village, The Aspens, Wilson and South Park will result in open space protection everywhere else, without harming wildlife. But all these areas have wildlife values. Not only that, the draft plan fails to include strong, clear policies to ensure that we’ll actually get permanent protection for rural areas in return for increased density elsewhere.

Where does our community go from here? We’ve outlined some possible solutions on Page 7. ■

“...future generations will not complain that we protected too much land; rather they will wonder why we protected so little.”  
 – Conservationist George Wuerthner

### COMMUNITY’S TOP PRIORITY: PROTECTING WILDLIFE

As part of the Comp Plan update process, planners conducted three public surveys early last year, consisting of a keypad poll of about 200 people who attended a Jan. 30 public meeting; an online survey offered during February and March that more than 950 people filled out; and a University of Wyoming phone and mail survey taken between Feb. 27 and April 14.

(This last survey is considered the most statistically valid since all of its 584 respondents had been chosen at random.) The results, available at [www.jacksontetonplan.com/surveys](http://www.jacksontetonplan.com/surveys), all showed the highest community support for protecting wildlife and managing growth responsibly. Here’s a sampling:

■ Keypad poll   ■ Online survey   ■ University of Wyoming survey

Which goal do you think is a higher priority for Jackson Hole?

1) Preserve wildlife habitat and corridors:	66.9%	55.0%	59.5%
or Build deed-restricted workforce housing:	15.4%	19.4%	20.7%
2) Limit overall growth in the valley:	56.3%	48.6%	53.2%
or Build deed-restricted workforce housing:	23.2%	33.9%	36.5%
3) Preserve wildlife migration corridors:	84.5%	75.3%	54.7%
or Add traffic capacity by widening roads:	6.2%	8.8%	26.3%

More development and population in the Town of Jackson is OK

1) If this means less development in the county:	Agree: 78.2%	66.1%	N/A	Disagree: 11.9%	19.9%	N/A
2) If this means preserving agricultural and natural resource areas in the county:	Agree: 85.5%	78.5%	N/A	Disagree: 7.7%	11.7%	N/A

Stronger standards should be implemented to protect natural resources as part of new developments:

Agree:	87.0%	82.2%	80.4%	Disagree:	7.1%	7.9%	11.4%
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A funding source should be established to acquire open space or conservation areas for critical habitat:

Agree:	78.0%	69.6%	59.8%	Disagree:	13.8%	14.7%	29.1%
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A restriction should be set on the amount of annual growth allowed (e.g., 1 or 2 percent increase per year):

Agree:	58.5%	54.0%	48%	Disagree:	36.5%	25.3%	38.7%
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The town and county should require a higher amount of deed-restricted workforce/affordable housing to be built as part of new developments:

Agree:	71.2%	69.7%	69.2%	Disagree:	23.4%	19.9%	23.2%
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## The Comprehensive Plan Will Be Responding to Public Comment

- What You Said:**
- **Wildlife** and open space protection is the most important value in the community.
  - **Buildout** should be clearly identified and provide guidance in policy creation.
  - **Growth Rate** regulation should be implemented to slow the impacts of development to natural resources and community infrastructure.
  - **Workforce Housing** should be provided in greater proportion by commercial development and include a mix of rental and ownership options.
  - **Commercial Development** potential should be limited with sensitivity to building design, community character, and not exacerbate the workforce housing shortage.
  - **South Park** should only develop at town level density in the northern portion in order to address the workforce housing needs of the community.
  - **Plan Format** should be more clear, concise, and user friendly.

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Teton County and the Town of Jackson ran this ad in the Oct. 15, 2008, *Jackson Hole News & Guide*, but the draft Comp Plan falls far short in its response to these comments.

# Whose plan is this, anyhow?

## Why are so many of the things people asked for missing from the new draft?

On April 8, 2009, Teton County Planning Director Jeff Daugherty was quoted in the *Jackson Hole News & Guide* regarding the draft Comp Plan: “At this point, it’s the public’s plan. Staff is listening. Public comment ends the day the commissioners adopt the plan.”

A week later, the newspaper quoted Daugherty as follows: “The [community] surveys are not what the Comp Plan is based on.... [They] were an important element but not the only element.”

These conflicting statements highlight confusion about the plan. Why are so many of the things the public asked for missing from the new draft Comp Plan?

For instance, it appears that much of the draft plan is based on a misperception that our community wants more growth than what’s already allowed under our current Comp Plan. (See “Regarding growth” on Page 5 of this flier for examples.) But surveys conducted in 2008 and written public comments on the first draft of the Comp Plan indicate strong community support for *limiting* overall growth. (Visit [www.jhalliance/issuescompplan.htm](http://www.jhalliance/issuescompplan.htm) for a link to details.)

Community surveys also showed that protecting Jackson Hole’s wildlife and natural resources is our number one priority. The new draft ranks this priority first in eight of the largest 25 districts that it divides the valley into, but ranks it fourth through seventh in the remaining 17 districts; last or next to last in 12 of them.

The new draft also lacks many of the items noted in the ad pictured above, such as clear buildout guidance policies and other tools to ensure responsible development. Likewise, at the start of the Comp Plan update back in 2007, planners spelled out a number of objectives, many of which the current draft fails to address. For example, a publication called “Defining Issues and Concepts” dated Aug. 8, 2007, states that some of the key goals were to: “Evaluate consequences of overall growth in the county (fiscal, environmental, social, infrastructure, transportation, public services, visual, etc.);” “Model what the county might look like at buildout, and consider the implications

for infrastructure needs, quality of life, and the environment”; and “Evaluate whether the town and county can afford the public commitments in the Comprehensive Plan, and that revenue is greater or at least equal to the cost of services.”

**These types of analyses are lacking in the new draft Comp Plan, raising questions about its value as a planning tool.**

Another problematic element is that the definition of what constitutes “responsible growth” appears to have changed over time, and for the worse (see below). What good is a primary goal if its meaning isn’t clear? ■

### What does “managing growth responsibly” mean? Depends on when you asked.

**Fall 2007 to Winter 2008:** In handouts used for community surveys, growth management objectives included: “Establish and define the ‘end state’ for development of the town and county and implement it through regulatory and programmatic approaches”; “Establish techniques and policies to maintain density neutrality as future changes are made”; and “Fully address the cost of growth... Future growth will pay for itself and avoid increasing the tax burden on the community.”

**June 2008:** The first draft of the Comp Plan included this statement of ideal for managing growth: “Use lands in a way that meets needs of residents and visitors, while allowing for viable populations of all native species and the preservation of scenic vistas. Limit growth to that specified by this plan – directing most new growth into the town and communities.” It also included phrases like: “Development will be balanced between the town and county and will strive for a buildout capacity number than is lower than what 2007 zoning allows.”

**April 2009:** This is the new draft’s responsible growth statement of ideal: “Meet the human needs of the community in locations identified for development.” In its “Manage Growth Responsibly” chapter, the draft doesn’t mention end states, buildout neutrality or future growth paying for itself. The draft also lacks strong predictability in the amount and types of growth it allows, and doesn’t address the costs of that growth.

# One step forward, two steps back?

New draft loses key protections of the plan it was meant to improve.

On Page 3 of the current draft of the Comp Plan, it reiterates that the new plan was meant to be an update, not a rewrite, of the 1994 Comp Plan: “In 2007, the town and county recognized the need for a Comprehensive Plan update to re-establish or reaffirm our community’s col-

lective land use vision. Although many people thought that the vision expressed in the 1994 Plan still applied to the community, the majority believed that an increased focus on stewardship of the ecosystem and predictability in land use decisions would help guide implementation

of the 1994 Plan vision.” However, a comparison of the 1994 Comp Plan with the current draft shows that much of the clear, strong language in the ’94 version has been dropped – or replaced with something quite different – in the new draft. Here are some examples:

## Regarding growth:

**1994 Vision Statement**, Page 5, Community Vision Chapter, 3rd bullet point: “Promote economic sustenance that does not depend on population growth.”

**1994 Guiding Principle 3** of 4, Page 6: “The intent of this Plan is to create conditions for a sustainable visitor-based economy not dependent upon growth, and an economy that reflects the unique small-town, Western commercial character of Jackson, and the outdoor recreational opportunities of Teton County as key components of the visitor experience.”

**2009 Vision Chapter**, Page 8: “The concept of sustainability within the context of the community’s vision delineates that...ecosystem preservation does not preclude growth and development necessary to meet our community’s human needs.”

**2009 Vision Chapter**, Page 11: “The community recognizes that growth must be managed in a responsible and sustainable manner in order to achieve the primary goal of Stewardship of Wildlife and Natural Resources. At the same time, the community recognizes that ecosystem preservation and protection does not preclude growth.”

## Regarding scenic resources:

**The 1994 Comp Plan** devoted a whole chapter to natural and scenic resources, categorizing them as distinct key assets of the community. It also placed the South Park district first in a list of the key areas to protect scenic resources and the Scenic Resources Overlay covers major sections of it.

**The 2009 Draft Plan** underemphasizes the importance of scenic resources. For instance, in the list of priorities for the South Park district outlined on Page 110, “Preserve scenic vistas and wildlife migration corridors” is ranked sixth out of seven.

## Regarding open space and rural character:

**1994 Comp Plan**, Chapter 1, Page 4: This page discusses the valley’s rural character, wildlife habitat and scenic vistas: “Examples include the hay meadows of South Park, the Spring Gulch scenic area, ranchlands along Teton Village Road, Buffalo Valley.... These areas should be kept free of development to the maximum extent possible to help preserve rural character, critical wildlife habitat and important image-setting scenic vistas and river corridors, and to encourage the continuation of ranching and other types of traditional agriculture as a vital part of the community character.”

**1994 Comp Plan**, Chapter 3, Page 2: “A fundamental objective of this Comprehensive Plan is to preserve rural character and enhance it where possible.... Preserving a rural character requires that very large amounts of open space be set aside as development occurs. Open space also results in the preservation of natural resources, wildlife habitat, and scenic vistas...”

**2009 Draft**, Page 30: “Rural development in county nodes and the Town of Jackson is inconsistent with the future land use pattern, and will not be allowed.”

## Regarding transportation:

**The 1994 Comp Plan** Transportation Chapter (adopted in 2000) outlined three land use strategies the community could implement to help our transportation system: 1) Town as Heart of the Region; 2) Mixed Use Villages; and 3) Continued Conservation Acquisitions “eliminating anticipated transportation demand by reducing the overall amount of residential development in the County.”

**2009 Draft**: Strategy number three doesn’t appear in the draft plan. As demonstrated by this omission, the new draft no longer addresses the impacts of the overall amount of development on our transportation system (which can in turn have enormous impacts on wildlife movements). ■

I thought you had the map.



**Steps in the right direction:** The new draft Comp Plan does make progress in several areas. Below are a few examples, and as we post our line-by-line comments at [www.jhalliance.org/issuescompplan.htm](http://www.jhalliance.org/issuescompplan.htm), we’ll summarize other positive policies in the new draft.

**Focal species:** The draft plan includes some important new language and policies for wildlife protection. For example, on Page 18, it notes the need to identify a broader set of focal wildlife species (to build upon the currently identified “species of special concern”), which should provide a better basis for monitoring ecosystem health.

**Environment Commission:** On Page 25, the new draft also calls for the establishment of an appointed volunteer Environment Commission

to help provide recommendations on wildlife-related issues in the county and research ways to address cumulative impacts.

**Some long-term solutions for workforce housing:** The new draft includes a number of strong policy recommendations under Theme 4 (Meet Our Community’s Housing Needs), including an emphasis on preservation of workforce housing. For example, Policy 4.3a on Page 48 notes that deed-restricting existing homes “also avoids the environmental, social and economic impacts of new construction.”

## Other

The draft includes a number of strategies, such as the use of indicators, aimed at monitoring ecosystem health. It also includes new policies to promote sustainable use of resources. ■

NUMBERS MATTER

Despite unmistakable direction from the community that the new Comp Plan needs to include a comprehensive buildout analysis, it doesn't. (A buildout analysis evaluates what effects development allowed under the Comp Plan would have on our community.)

Planning is figuring out what needs to be done and how to do it. It can't be done well without data.

Could you plan a budget without knowing what your rent and groceries cost? Similarly, a good Comp Plan depends on having answers to "carrying capacity" questions, such as:

What's the ability of our natural resources (like wildlife and aquifers) and our built resources (roads, schools, etc.) to absorb population growth and related development without degradation?

Unfortunately, the new draft Comp Plan fails to provide these types of analyses.

Without them, we can't assess what effects the development proposed under the draft's future land use plans will have on our community (see sidebar below). Given the level of detail in the future land use plan maps, it's particularly troubling that there's no analysis of their impacts.

Some significant numbers the new draft does provide are inconsistent with previous planning documents. For example:

These numbers are from Comp Plan consultant Clarion Associates' "Existing Conditions Snapshot," handed out in January of 2008:

These numbers are from Pages I-4 and I-5 of the current draft's "Appendix I: Future Growth and Development." Planners say these numbers are more accurate:

Existing development (2005) in Jackson & Teton County	Additional capacity for more development at 1994 Comp Plan "base zoning"	Existing development (2009) in Jackson & Teton County	Additional capacity at '94 plan "base zoning plus land development regulations"	Total potential buildout (new draft plan)
Approx. 11,300 housing units 9.5 million sq. ft. of commercial	1.9 million sq. ft. of commercial	Approx. 9,815 housing units 7.917 million sq. ft. of commercial	9.453 million sq. ft. of commercial	19,695 housing units 16.724 million sq. ft. of commercial

Even without consistent numbers, common sense at least tells us that as building numbers increase, their impacts increase. The new draft's figures above show that it would allow more than **double** the development Jackson Hole already has on the ground. And how many more people would this mean?

(9,880 additional housing units) x (anywhere between 1.74 and 2.37 people per unit)  
(2.37 is the standard multiplier; planners sometimes use 1.74 to adjust for part-time residents)  
= anywhere between 17,191 and 23,415 **more** residents upon buildout

(8.807 million sq. ft. of new commercial) x (1 job per 240 sq. ft.) = 36,695 jobs  
(Jobs per sq. ft. and jobs per worker estimates are from the draft's Appendix C, Page 16)  
36,695 jobs ÷ 1.26 jobs per worker = demand for 29, 123 **more** workers

About 20,000 people currently live in Jackson Hole, others commute here to work, and at peak times of the year, upwards of 400,000 tourists are visiting each month.\* The upshot? Not even counting the demand for additional workers, future "off-season" populations and their effects will at best resemble what we now experience during the summer. And come summertime? Use your imagination. ■

\*Grand Teton National Park visitation statistics

Will "future land use plan" maps will get us where we want to go? Not if Wilson's any example...

The new draft Comp Plan states that stewardship of wildlife is a top priority, yet it lacks the broad range of policies necessary to uphold that priority. The draft fails to connect the dots between its stated goals and the tool it proposes to reach them – the "future land use plans" for each of its proposed 25 districts.

The statement of ideal for the future land use plan section of the draft is: "Protect wildlife and natural and scenic resources by concentrating development in town and county nodes." However, it appears that "proximity to existing services" is outweighing "proximity to important wildlife habitat" as a priority in many of the districts.

nity in previous planning documents? Shouldn't it matter that the public spent time and effort during a recent subarea planning process for Wilson, and that a majority opposed the level of development outlined in the new FLUP?



A look at just one example – the plan for Wilson – shows that the future land use plan maps raise more questions than they answer:

- Will the FLUP maps form the basis for future zoning decisions? What are we signing on to?
- The Wilson District plan would allow 400 more housing units in the area mapped at left, on top of the 120 additional units already permitted by current zoning. This means that downtown Wilson could grow from a village of 170 homes to almost 700. Where is the analysis to support that this is good planning? What consequences will 520 additional housing units have on the quality of life in Wilson? What will this mean in terms of traffic and fiscal impacts, such as the demand for new schools and other types of infrastructure? What about social impacts and the loss of rural character? What will happen to wildlife in the Wilson area?
- Why is Wilson being proposed as an urban area, when it was described as a rural commu-

- In the Wilson plan, "wildlife and natural resources" is listed as priority number five (out of seven). Plus, the plan proposes town-level densities (9 units per acre) in the middle of crucial moose winter range. Is this going to protect wildlife?
- While Wilson has historically been identified as a node, is it good planning to suggest that nodes should be able to expand indefinitely, and into sensitive riparian areas?
- If conservation is our top priority, and given the increasing costs of permanent conservation, shouldn't we be thinking about how we can uphold the function of the easements we have on the ground today? Why would we want high density development so close to large conservation easements in Wilson when we know this type of development will have cumulative impacts on the easement's function to provide wildlife habitat and other community benefits?
- Is it realistic to argue that by adding many more people in the node of Wilson a *reduced* traffic volume will result? ■

## Iffy foundation?

The draft Comp Plan appears to be based on a number of questionable assumptions. For instance, it contends that allowing increased development potential in the Town of Jackson and certain “nodes” in the county will result in open space protection everywhere else. But its specific policy language doesn’t include any assurances that we’ll actually get permanent protection for rural areas in return for permanently increased density elsewhere.

The draft also fails to give strong, clear guidance about the conditions that must be met to uphold community priorities. Below are a few examples, pulled from just one page of the draft (Page 11). (Visit [www.jhalliance.org/issuescompplan.htm](http://www.jhalliance.org/issuescompplan.htm) for a link to our full comments.)

**“A nodal development pattern of town-level densities in Town, northern South Park, Teton Village, Wilson, and near the Aspens, allows for the provision of community needs while minimizing impacts to the local and regional ecosystem.”** While minimizing impacts to the ecosystem is a worthy goal, the draft plan includes no analysis of the impacts expected to result from “town-level” densities in these nodes. There’s no data suggesting that the nodes could handle the amount of development proposed without significant ecological, social and fiscal impacts. Also, there are no strong policies to identify node boundaries as growth boundaries in the long term.

**“Maintaining Town as the Heart of the region fulfills our community vision by lowering our dependence on neighboring communities to meet our housing needs.”** The new draft proposes a huge increase in commercial growth (up to 8.8 million new square feet beyond what’s already built; 4.9 million of it in town), which will likely generate a demand for about 29,000 new workers in the valley. Since this plan doesn’t give strong direction on limiting commercial development – or on requiring much more affordable housing to be built as part of new developments– the likely effect of this growth will be an increased dependence on commuters.

**“The Town of Jackson has already developed the social, transit and municipal infrastructure to allow for the provision of community needs with negligible ecological impact.”** It’s true that infilling and redeveloping areas in town, where infrastructure and services already exist, makes more sense than breaking ground in undeveloped areas of the county. But the *amount* and *rate* of development, infill or not, matter a lot in terms of overall ecological impacts. The Comp Plan needs to consider the direct, indirect and cumulative impacts of humans on wildlife – impacts that accompany *all* increased development, regardless of where it occurs. ■

## Now, how can we fix it?

### Solutions won’t happen without your help.

The Jackson Hole Conservation Alliance believes in working for solutions that are informed by scientific data and that strengthen the town, region and ecosystem as a whole.

In this publication, we’ve outlined how we think the new draft plan would affect our community and its natural resources. Now it’s time to focus on turning the analysis into constructive suggestions for the people who will vote on the plan this summer.

Below are some themes that each of you who care so much about this valley might consider including in your comments. For details about deadlines and people to make your comments to, please see the back cover.

- Our community said that protecting wildlife is its number one priority, yet the draft plan ranks it last or next to last in 12 of the 25 districts. Ask your commissioners and councilors to make sure that the Comp Plan includes planning tools to ensure that protecting wildlife is the top priority across the board.
- The residential and commercial development proposed by the new draft Comp Plan could more than double what’s already on the ground today. What impacts will that have on Jackson Hole’s wildlife and quality of life? The Comp Plan needs to evaluate the consequences of overall growth in the valley.
- The plan needs to have an empirical basis for assessing the impacts of development on wildlife, natural resources, roads, schools, taxes and other quality of life issues. Tell officials that without ways to measure impacts, we are gambling with our valley’s future. Ask them to include ways to evaluate and verify the impacts of proposed development.
- If we simply don’t have enough specific information about the impacts of growth to make informed decisions, let’s ask our representatives to use the well-founded “precautionary principle” and err on the side of caution. Conservative buildout numbers and caps on our rate of growth could allow us to see what toll growth is taking before it’s too late. At the very least, base allowances for density should not be increased over what’s allowed under current regulations.



We’ll just follow our footprints back.

- The draft needs to take a much more integrated approach to land use planning decisions. For example, it fails to acknowledge that the amount of commercial development it proposes will worsen, not relieve, our workforce housing shortage. The truth is, Jackson Hole can’t grow its way out of growth-related problems. Tell your representatives that development needs to offset its direct impacts on workforce housing and its demands on infrastructure like roads, water and sewer.
- Ask your elected officials to require that critical policies from the 1994 Comp Plan be reinstated in the draft plan. For instance, ask that they reinsert language from the 1994 plan that was meant to protect our valley’s rural character and scenic views. The new plan was supposed to be an update, not a rewrite.
- Allowing more development potential in town and in “nodes” will not result in permanent protection in the rest of the county unless there’s a specific mechanism in place to guarantee it. Other communities have set growth boundaries, used transfers of development rights, implemented strict zoning and used other methods to spell it out. Let’s ask our officials to ensure that our Comp Plan includes specific guarantees that are currently missing. (Visit [www.jhalliance.org/solutions.pdf](http://www.jhalliance.org/solutions.pdf) for examples of planning tools we could use to help our community “Grow Slow, Grow Smart.”)
- **If it takes more time than we thought to get the Comp Plan right, let’s take it.** Ask your elected officials to slow down the process enough for the community to digest – and adequately comment on – all the important policies that will affect our community’s growth, character, views, wildlife habitat and quality of life for years to come. Jackson Hole deserves no less. ■

# What can *you* do?

## Help create a plan that works.

Anthropologist Margaret Mead had it right when she wrote, “Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.”

Although some people are disheartened about the Comp Plan process, this is no time to give up or give in. It's time to speak up yet again and ask our public officials to uphold the will of the community.

The citizens of Jackson Hole have told town and county officials what our top priorities are, and in what order:

- 1) Protect wildlife and open space
- 2) Manage growth responsibly – to include *limiting growth* if it's going to harm wildlife and community character
- 3) Provide affordable housing opportunities for most of our workforce.

We believe Jackson Hole's elected and appointed officials are willing and committed to maintaining the public's trust. We just have to keep letting them know we need a plan that will actually protect this precious valley.

### Get informed

Read the Comp Plan draft online at [www.jacksontetonplan.com](http://www.jacksontetonplan.com), at Teton County Library or at the Conservation Alliance office, 685 S. Cache St. at the base of Snow King. Or buy a copy at Staples.

Check [www.jhalliance.org/issuescompplan.htm](http://www.jhalliance.org/issuescompplan.htm) for updates, a copy of our detailed comments and recommendations, info on currently scheduled meetings on the Comp Plan, and links to publications like “Balancing Act – Balancing Growth with Conservation,” which provides a clear, concise overview of many growth-related issues.

### Get involved

**Each person's voice is critical.** Talk with your friends about the plan. Comment online at [www.jacksontetonplan.com](http://www.jacksontetonplan.com). Show up and speak up at the town and county hearings this summer. Share what you think with the people listed at right.

Your knowledgeable and straightforward written and verbal public comments *will* have an impact. Your letters to the editor *will* get other people thinking. Your support of organizations working to protect this wild and beautiful valley *will* make a difference. ■

“Unless someone like you cares a whole awful lot,  
nothing is going to get better. It's not.”  
– Dr. Seuss, “The Lorax”

## MAKE YOUR COMMENTS COUNT

**When:** Planners say that comments on the draft Comp Plan are being accepted throughout the process, but it's a case of “the sooner, the better.” Please get your initial comments in by May 29 at the latest. Town and county planning commission hearings are expected to start in early June, so comments received before then will be the most timely.

**How:** Planners want everyone to comment online at [www.jacksontetonplan.com](http://www.jacksontetonplan.com). You can also send written comments to:

**Jeff Noffsinger**, Town of Jackson principal planner  
Town of Jackson, P.O. Box 1687, Jackson, WY 83001  
[jnoffsinger@ci.jackson.wy.us](mailto:jnoffsinger@ci.jackson.wy.us)

**Alex Norton**, Teton County lead planner  
Teton County Planning Dept., P.O. Box 1727, Jackson, WY 83001  
[anorton@tetonwyo.org](mailto:anorton@tetonwyo.org)

### We urge you to send copies to these people, too:

#### Teton Board of County Commissioners

Hank Phibbs, Chair, Ben Ellis, Vice Chair,  
Leland Christensen, Andy Schwartz, Paul Vogelheim  
Teton County, P.O. Box 3594, Jackson, WY 83001  
[commissioners@tetonwyo.org](mailto:commissioners@tetonwyo.org)

#### Teton County Planning Commissioners

Paul Duncker, Larry Hamilton, Forrest McCarthy,  
Joseph Palmer, Tony Wall  
[planningcom@tetonwyo.org](mailto:planningcom@tetonwyo.org)

#### Town of Jackson Mayor Mark Barron

Town of Jackson, P.O. Box 1687, Jackson, WY 83001  
[mbarron@ci.jackson.wy.us](mailto:mbarron@ci.jackson.wy.us)

#### Jackson Town Council:

Bob Lenz, Greg Miles, Mark Obringer, Melissa Turley  
Town of Jackson, P.O. Box 1687, Jackson, WY 83001  
[electedofficials@ci.jackson.wy.us](mailto:electedofficials@ci.jackson.wy.us)

**Jackson Planning Commissioners:** Barbara Allen, Geneva Chong,  
Lisa daCosta, Michael Pruett, Ben Read, Jessica Rutzick, Nancy Shea  
Email care of Judy Gordon, [jgordon@ci.jackson.wy.us](mailto:jgordon@ci.jackson.wy.us)

#### Letters to Editors

*Jackson Hole News & Guide*, [editor@jhnewsandguide.com](mailto:editor@jhnewsandguide.com)  
Thomas Dewell and Angus M. Thuermer Jr., editors  
(400-word max. for letters; 800-word max. for guest editorials)

*Planet JH*, [editor@planetjh.com](mailto:editor@planetjh.com)

Matthew Irwin, editor (300-word maximum)

(Remember to include your full name, hometown and a means of contacting you for verification.)



**Jackson Hole  
Conservation Alliance**

Partnering for a wild & beautiful valley since 1979

The Jackson Hole Conservation Alliance published this brochure to encourage friends and neighbors to stand up for our unique community, wildlife and natural resources.

For more information on how you can get involved, please contact us at (307) 733-9417 or [info@jhalliance.org](mailto:info@jhalliance.org), or visit our website at [www.jhalliance.org](http://www.jhalliance.org). Thanks!