

Public Hearings on the draft Jackson/Teton County Comprehensive Plan as of July 8, 2010

(CLICK HERE for a recap of the Comp Plan hearings that took place in 2009.)

Now in the fourth year of the Comp Plan revision process, planners released a third draft of the themes and policies section of the new Comp Plan on May 7, 2010. The town and county planning commissions wrapped up their joint review of this section on July 1 prior to sending it on to the town councilors and county commissioners for their review. Please see the other side of this sheet for details and the tentative schedule for the remaining review process.

The official Comp Plan website is www.jacksontetonplan.com. This address is also where you can make comments online, or you can submit them to: Jeff Noffsinger, Jackson principal planner, jnoffsinger@ci.jackson.wy.us, Town of Jackson, P.O. Box 1687, Jackson, WY 83001; and Alex Norton, Teton County lead planner, anorton@tetonwyo.org, Teton County Planning Department, P.O. Box 1727, Jackson, WY 83001.

Throughout the Comp Plan revision process, the Conservation Alliance will continue to work for a plan that will preserve and protect Jackson Hole's unique ecosystem, wildlife, natural resources, quality of life and community character in a sustainable and predictable manner. [Click here](#) for links to our detailed comments.

For background information on the Comp Plan revision process, visit www.jhalliance.org/issuescompplan.htm. Contact Kristy Bruner, Alliance community planning director, at Kristy@jhalliance.org or (307) 733-9417 for details.

Jan. 7, 2010: Joint Town/County Planning Commission meeting on current draft of Comp Plan: The planning commissioners wrapped up their review of Theme Three, "Uphold Jackson as Heart of the Region" with joint recommendations for the draft to include plans to improve Jackson's gateways, and to include special protections for the Flat Creek and Cache Creek corridors. On the down side, although the town planning commissioners voted to add a paragraph recognizing the importance of many areas of the Town of Jackson to wildlife, the county planning commissioners' 2-2 vote on this measure dooms it to footnote status in the revised draft. Also, both boards unanimously voted down a recommendation to remove the planned-use and planned mixed-use development tools from the draft Comp Plan, but left the door open to possible changes to these two tools down the road. Finally, as a precursor to next week's hearing, the commissioners each gave their views on affordable and workforce housing.

Jan. 14: Joint Town/County Planning Commission meeting on current draft of Comp Plan: The Teton County Housing Authority presented a report regarding a goal in the draft plan to house 65 percent of our workforce locally. ([Click here](#) for their report.) Town and county planning staffs then presented an overview of Theme Four, "Meet Our Community's Housing Needs," after which the planning commissioners unanimously voted to recommend that "a housing program is still necessary" and that its basis should be "maintaining a local workforce, maintaining socioeconomic diversity, encouraging generational continuity of local families, and not exporting our housing impacts to neighboring communities." [Click here](#) for comments the Alliance made during this hearing.

Jan. 21: Joint Town/County Planning Commission meeting on current draft of Comp Plan: This hearing was cancelled, due to a lack of quorum.

Jan. 28: Joint Town/County Planning Commission meeting on current draft of Comp Plan: Christine Walker of the Teton County Housing Authority began the meeting by talking about the "spectrum" of housing needs and how they've traditionally been met. The planning commissioners then took a series of unanimous votes, deciding that all of the bases of the housing program (as discussed on Jan. 14 – see above) are equally important; that maintaining "a sense of community" should also be a basis; that subsidized housing programs should focus on full-time workers (to include full-time residents with seasonal jobs); that density bonuses should continue to be a housing strategy, as long as they correlate to a commensurate decrease in density elsewhere; and that the Comp Plan should focus on preserving existing workforce housing stock, with an emphasis on not displacing the middle class. Planning commissioners also unanimously voted that creating a permanent funding source should be a housing strategy. A motion to recommend that mitigation requirements on new developments should continue to be a housing strategy also passed.

Feb. 4: Joint Town/County Planning Commission meeting on current draft of Comp Plan: In several votes, the planning commissioners essentially recommended that the new Comp Plan encourage workforce housing through a combination of regulations, incentives and preservation of existing housing. They then discussed employee and affordable housing mitigation rates for residential and non-residential developments, voting that mitigation should be based on a sliding scale, determined by the size of the development's impact. They also voted that exemptions to mitigation should be considered for small businesses and small family homes. However, there was no apparent acknowledgement of the fact that new development contributes to a lack of employee and affordable housing units, and that inadequate mitigation only makes the problem worse.

Feb. 11: Joint Town/County Planning Commission meeting on current draft of Comp Plan: The planning commissioners wrapped up their review of Theme Four, "Meet Our Community's Housing Needs" with recommendations that the Comp Plan encourage deed-restricted rental units and that the Teton County Housing Authority be put under joint town and county jurisdiction. They also agreed unanimously to eliminate all the "What the community has said about this theme" sections in the draft plan – a welcome move since many of these were misleading. (Actual results from community surveys will be included in the draft's appendix.) Summing up the Theme Four discussions, aside from a sliding scale for mitigation rates and a new Housing Authority setup, the planning commissioners recommended very few changes to existing housing programs. It's still unclear how the new Comp Plan will reconcile the goal of Theme Four – to provide housing for more of the community's workforce – with the goal of Theme Two, which is to limit growth. Commitment to the concept of "no additive growth" appears to be wavering.

Feb. 16: Written comments on the revised Theme Two, "Manage Growth Responsibly," are due. The planning staff's rewrite of Theme Two – based on recommendations passed jointly by the town and county planning commissions – was released on Jan. 22. [Click here](#) for a link to the draft, which at first glance is very encouraging. For instance, the chapter's statement of ideal has been changed from "Meet the human needs of the community in locations identified for development" to "Limit growth to established development allowances while encouraging preservation of existing neighborhoods and open spaces." This is quite a switch, and one that's much more in line with what our community has said it wants from this theme. The Alliance's written comments on the new Theme Two draft are available by [clicking here](#). (See the top of this page for info on how to submit your comments.)

Feb. 18: Joint Town/County Planning Commission meeting on current draft of Comp Plan: The planning commissioners decided that the revised Theme Two, "Manage Growth Responsibly," mostly accurately represented their previous recommendations. However, they acknowledged that there were conflicts inherent in some of their previous votes. They decided they would treat each theme individually without addressing conflicts until the very end of their overall review, a step that may prove problematic, since it means that all the votes taken and recommendations made throughout the initial review could essentially be reopened for debate at that time. On a positive note, they asked for the Alliance's and the Jackson Hole Chamber of Commerce's help in estimating effective population, so that the plan can take into account not just residents but visitors, commuters and others who are here at different times of the year.

Feb. 25: Joint Town/County Planning Commission meeting on current draft of Comp Plan: This hearing was cancelled, due to a lack of quorum.

March 4: Joint Town/County Planning Commission meeting on current draft of Comp Plan: A couple of good things came out of this first hearing on Theme Five, "Provide for a Diverse and Balanced Economy." First, most of the planning commissioners publicly recognized that Jackson Hole's economy depends on protecting our wildlife and other natural resources. Secondly, they unanimously agreed to incorporate the Rocky Mountain Institute's definition of economic sustainability into Theme Five – a very encouraging move, since RMI's recommendations essentially promote building an economy not dependent on growth. [Click here](#) for information on how our community can build a better economy without growing bigger, and [here](#) for the Alliance's comments.

March 11: Joint Town/County Planning Commission meeting on current draft of Comp Plan: The planning commissioners wrapped up their initial review of Theme Five with a series of votes encouraging tourism as a basis of Jackson Hole's economy. These included recommendations to "encourage eco-tourism that sustains our natural capital" and that "outdoor recreational opportunities should continue to be a focus of the economy." They also voted to encourage local entrepreneurship and local businesses. The planning commissioners then moved on to a "hopes and dreams" exercise for Theme Seven, "Provide Quality Community Facilities, Services and Infrastructure." Most of them said that the START public transportation system needs to be expanded and many mentioned the need for a permanent Fire/EMS team. (They're skipping over Theme Six, "Develop a Multi-Modal Transportation Strategy," until after they've met with two transportation consultants on March 23 – see below.)

March 18: Joint Town/County Planning Commission meeting on current draft of Comp Plan: The planning commissioners finished discussing Theme Seven, "Provide Quality Community Facilities, Services and Infrastructure." In two positive moves, they voted unanimously to direct staff to include language on fiscal responsibility in the theme's statement of ideal; they also recommended that new development should pay its share of the costs of necessary facilities and services engendered by that development, so that such costs are not passed on to existing residents. However, despite votes during previous hearings to cap residential development at existing entitlements – which allow nearly double the housing units and commercial square footage we have on the ground today – the planning commissioners decided that housing for undefined "critical services" providers should be exempt from caps. Lastly, the planning commissioners decided that they will lay out their vision for the next steps in the Comp Plan review process at the April 1 hearing. (The Alliance and others commented at this hearing that the public's input wasn't being adequately considered in the review process. Read our concerns by [clicking here](#).)

March 23: Traffic consultants Carlos Hernandez and Robert Bernstein were in Jackson for two public meetings on Theme Six, the transportation theme of the draft Comp Plan. Hernandez, the traffic consultant who contributed to the writing of the plan, and Bernstein, contracted by Save Historic Jackson Hole, met with the Transportation Advisory Committee (a technical committee comprised mainly of town and county staff) and later with the planning commissioners. In general, there seems to be agreement for a plan that would encourage alternatives to single-passenger vehicles (such as expanding the START bus transit system, and increasing ride-sharing and pathways use). But the implications of an expanded transit system (which, in the draft Comp Plan's transportation chapter, relies on there being "nodes" or population centers around the valley) have yet to be addressed. Both traffic consultants did recommend that our community work to better implement the policies and goals that already exist in our current Comp Plan. [Click here](#) for the Alliance's Theme Six comments.

No public hearing on Thursday, March 25; the Thursday hearings are set to resume on April 1.

April 1: Joint Town/County Planning Commission meeting on current draft of Comp Plan: The planning commissioners postponed discussions about the remaining review process until April 8, but proceeded with recommendations on Theme Six, "Develop a Multi-Modal Transportation Strategy."

April 8: Joint Town/County Planning Commission meeting on current draft of Comp Plan: Even though many questions remain unanswered – and many of the public's concerns unaddressed – the planning commissioners decided to wrap up their initial review of the draft Comp Plan on April 8, just a few days shy of the one-year anniversary of the day it was released. They decided to postpone discussions on the draft's administration chapter and the still unwritten "energy conservation" chapter until their final review begins in early June. The planning commissioners also decided to put off reviewing the draft's Future Land Use Plan section until after the elected officials complete their review of the plan. ([Click here](#) for a link to all their votes to date.)

Also on April 8, the planning commissioners and planning staff agreed to a schedule for the remainder of the review process, but on April 28, they postponed everything by a week. Here is the current schedule:

May 7: On May 7, a rewritten draft of the themes and policies section of the new Comp Plan incorporating all the joint town and county planning commission recommendations was released on the Comp Plan website at www.jacksontetonplan.com/2010/04/pc-draft-comprehensive-plan-update-release. (For a May 19, 2010, *Jackson Hole News&Guide* article that reports on concerns regarding the new draft, [click here](#).)

May 28: To be included in the staff report for the June 10 hearing, public comments on the new, rewritten draft of the Comp Plan were due by May 28 to the planning staffs. However, written comments will continue to be accepted throughout the revision process, either via www.jacksontetonplan.com, via email to Jeff Noffsinger (jnoffsinger@ci.jackson.wy.us) or Alex Norton (anorton@tetonwyo.org), or in person to the town or county planning departments.

June 10: Joint Town/County Planning Commission meeting on new revised draft of the Comp Plan: There was some concern that the planning commissioners might decide to revisit previous votes at this hearing ([click here](#) for the June 10, 2010, *Jackson Hole Daily* story). However, after considering public comments, they voted to do the following: Each planning commissioner will prepare his or her own individual list of "inconsistencies" in the newest draft that he or she thinks the Teton Board of County Commissioners and the Jackson Town Council should address, and these lists will be passed along to the electeds with the draft as it's currently written. The only exceptions are Theme Eight, "Energy Conservation" and the draft plan's administration chapter, which have not yet been reviewed by the planning commissions. Once these two chapters are reviewed and the lists of inconsistencies are compiled, the planning commissioners will "certify" the plan to the elected officials. (Planning staff is currently researching legal requirements for moving the draft forward to the electeds.) We hope that prior to the end of the planning commissioners' review, they will take the time to clarify the role of the Future Land Use Plan section and its accompanying maps. **For links to all the Alliance's comments on the new draft, please [click here](#).**

June 17: Joint Town/County Planning Commission meeting on new revised draft of the Comp Plan: The planning commissioners completed their review of Theme Eight, now called "Climate Sustainability and Energy Conservation," agreeing on 23 recommendations for changes to be made before the draft plan is passed on to elected officials. They also briefly touched on the issue of whether just the Themes and Policies section of the draft plan can be "certified" without the accompanying 65-page Future Land Use Plan section, which hasn't yet been reviewed. (The FLUP section was meant to make the draft plan more predictable and provide concrete guidance for future land development regulations and land use decisions.) [Click here](#) for our comments on this matter. In brief, the Alliance believes that the Comp Plan must have a component – whether it is some form of the Future Land Use Plan or concrete language added throughout the Themes and Policies section – that will bring increased predictability and provide for enforceable policies to uphold our community's priorities.

June 24: Joint Town/County Planning Commission meeting on new revised draft of the Comp Plan: This hearing was postponed to July 1.

July 1: Joint Town/County Planning Commission meeting on new revised draft of the Comp Plan: On July 1, the planning commissioners wrapped up their year-long review by working out a way to forward just the Themes and Policies portion of the draft plan to the Jackson Town Council and Teton Board of County Commissioners, along with a recommendation that after the electeds complete their review of that section, they then ask the joint planning commissions to review the Future Land Use Plan section. (This approach should avoid the wasted effort of revising the FLUP twice in the event that the electeds make major changes in the Themes and Policies section.) The planning commissioners also voted to recommend that the electeds wait to adopt the revised plan in its entirety until after the planning commissioners finish reviewing the FLUP.

Hopefully, this admittedly lengthy process will result in a new Comp Plan that will include some teeth to back up its goals, which is what our community has been asking for since the revision began more than three years ago.

Meanwhile, it's still unclear just when the electeds will begin their review. Planners say they won't be able to finish tweaks to the draft and changes to its last two chapters (sustainability and administration) until this fall. They estimate that the electeds won't get the draft plan until sometime between October and the end of the year. Since this is an election year, which could result in significant changes in the makeup of both the Jackson Town Council and the Teton Board of County Commissioners, we expect that voters will want to find out how the candidates stand on the new plan. The Alliance's next magazine, due out in September, will include a Comp Plan Q&A with the winners of the August primary election.

The message that the electeds and candidates need to hear is that while the newest Comp Plan draft is an improvement over the second draft that came out in April 2009, much more work still needs to be done to make it better than our current plan and to ensure that it includes the policies needed to protect Jackson Hole's irreplaceable wildlife, scenery and community character.

Tuesday, July 13: Alliance open house discussion on the status of the Comp Plan revision, noon to 1 p.m. at the Alliance office, 685 S. Cache. Please join us on the 13th for a recap of the joint planning commission review process and discussion about where we go from here. Contact Becky Tillson at (307) 733-9417 or Rebecca@jhalliance.org for details.

Please check back for updates.