

September 19, 2011

To: Jeff Daugherty, Tyler Sinclair, Alex Norton, Shawn Hill, Bruce Meighen
Cc: Teton Board of County Commissioners, Mayor Barron and Jackson Town Council
Re: Character District Mapping Community Involvement

Dear Town and County Planning Staffs and Mr. Meighen,

On behalf of the Conservation Alliance, thank you for your attention to this letter. We recently had a productive meeting with Jeff and Tyler, and wanted to follow-up with this brief memo outlining that conversation and the conclusions that we drew.

We appreciated the clarification of the different phases of the process, specifically the emphasis on public participation. As you know, the Alliance will be working hard to motivate the public to participate if we believe that their involvement will result in meaningful improvements to the plan.

We are encouraged that the planning staff intends to submit press releases to the local papers to outline the overall process, and then again in advance of each of the phases to alert the public to the goals and logistics of each phase. This process is complicated, and the more it can be explained to the public, the more likely they are to participate. Press releases are a vital part of your overall outreach and community engagement strategy.

A more specific definition of a “character district” and what it means for an area to have lines drawn around it would also benefit your communications to the community. A key way to engage the public effectively will be to make sure that they understand the goals and content of this character district review process, and what their role in this process is.

We recommend that you clearly explain why the public should invest time in this process.

This is what we understand the first three phases of process to be; we would appreciate any clarifications if we are incorrect.

Phase 1: Community Workshops

We see that the primary contribution of the public in this phase is ground-truthing, or confirming that the existing conditions as laid out in the draft character district maps are accurate.

Phase 2: Neighborhood Workshops

This phase seems to be the most important for public involvement. This is the primary opportunity for the community to share their opinions on what their neighborhood (within the character districts) should look like in the future. This is also a time to bring forward new ideas for the desired future of each district.

Phase 3: Open House

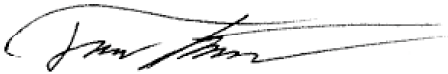
This is one of the final opportunities that the public has to ensure that the maps will implement the community’s vision for the life of the Plan. This is the chance for the community to review the policies once they see them illustrated, and give feedback on whether the policies are generating the desired results as seen in the maps.

The character district maps, as outlined in the Plan's policies, are meant to be a reflection and illustration of the policies themselves, in map and text form. That said, one of the most important aspects of the resolution to accept the policies was that there be room for refinements to the policies if the character district mapping process revealed inadequacies in the policies. Allowing space for this final check-back of the policies is an important part of public input before final adoption of the new Comprehensive Plan.

We continue to believe that effective community engagement is central to the success of this character district mapping exercise and to the overall plan. The community needs to be sure that their input is valued and has the potential to improve the final product. It will be important to not only inform the public, but also solicit and incorporate their input.

Thank you for your work on behalf of the community and your commitment to the success of this community exercise. The Alliance is eager to help you find ways to effectively engage the community, and we hope that you will be in touch if we can advise on how to best conduct this important final phase of the Comp Plan process.

Sincerely,



Trevor Stevenson
Executive Director



Becky Tillson
Community Planning Associate