

Planners ax nodes

BY CARA RANK
JACKSON HOLE DAILY

Additional housing units should not be funneled to Wilson, South Park, The Aspens and Teton Village.

Landowners of large rural tracts should get upzones of only three homes per 35 acres instead of the nine allowed today.

And property owners across the valley should no longer be allowed to build guests houses, known as accessory residential units.

Those three recommendations came out of planning commissioners' review of the Jackson/Teton County Comprehensive Plan draft on Thursday. Many said the recommendations are the most substantial to date that deal with future growth

and development in the valley.

County Planner Alex Norton said the votes, if approved by elected officials, mean that growth in the county would not go beyond the 3,567 housing units allowed under the 1994 plan — with the exception of some additional homes in exchange for conservation easements.

The most monumental shift was the elimination of nodes, or areas targeted to receive new housing and commercial units, including up to 520 homes in Wilson, up to 1,500 in South Park, up to 310 in The Aspens and up to 240 in Teton Village.

Teton County Planning Commissioner Tony Wall said he voted the nodes out of the plan because they didn't absorb growth from elsewhere.

"They just created new development without removing it from anywhere else," he said.

Town Planning Commissioner Lisa daCosta said she voted nodes out because she is concerned about transportation — particularly how more housing units in Wilson, The Aspens and Teton Village would impact Highway 390.

Plus, daCosta said, those units should be concentrated elsewhere.

"I feel like town is the node," she said. "Nobody wants to be the receiving zone. Nobody wants it in their backyard. The population should be in town. Let's not play a game about it."

While some argue that the nodes absorb development potential from the rural zones, others say the rural

See NODES page 2

NODES

Continued from cover

zones likely will never realize all the homes that could be built there. Therefore, they argue, nodes only allow for additional housing units.

"When they voted to eliminate nodes, they eliminated the idea of having increased development potential beyond what is allowed today," Norton said.

Nonetheless, county planning commissioners decided that some incentive should be offered in exchange for conservation easements.

That incentive would be density bonuses offered in exchange for open space. For example, a landowner with 360 acres or more could get three homes per 35 acres in exchange for giving 85 percent of the land as open space. Those homes would have to be clustered.

That recommendation is a far cry from what's allowed today: nine homes per 35 acres. Only the county planning commission voted for the density bonus

of three homes per 35 acres.

County Planning Commissioner Forrest McCarthy said he wants the density bonuses to remain for rural lands because they help secure conservation easements.

"A multiplier of three would still provide tax incentives to see conservation easements while it reduces the total build-out," McCarthy said. "That is consistent with what the public has requested from the new plan."

Finally, planning commissioners recommended eliminating accessory residential units, a move that they said enables valley residents to predict how many new homes can be built. Under today's plan, the county could have more than 11,000 accessory residential units.

Though planning commissioners said they recognize many of those will never be realized, officials must plan for the worst-case scenario.

The boards will resume review of the comprehensive plan at 5:30 p.m. Thursday.