COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

TETON COUNTY, IDAHO

DRAFT

Core Committee Review Working DRAFT, 27 April 2012

Teton County Comprehensive Plan Core Committee
Teton County Comprehensive Plan Sub-Committees
(Economic Development, Transportation, Natural Resources + Outdoor Recreation, Community Events + Facilities, Agricultural + Rural Heritage)

Teton County, Idaho

Harmony Design & Engineering and AECOM
Jorgensen Associates, PC
Intermountain Aquatics, Inc.

Teton County Comprehensive Plan
20 April 2012

Cover photo by Sandy Mason

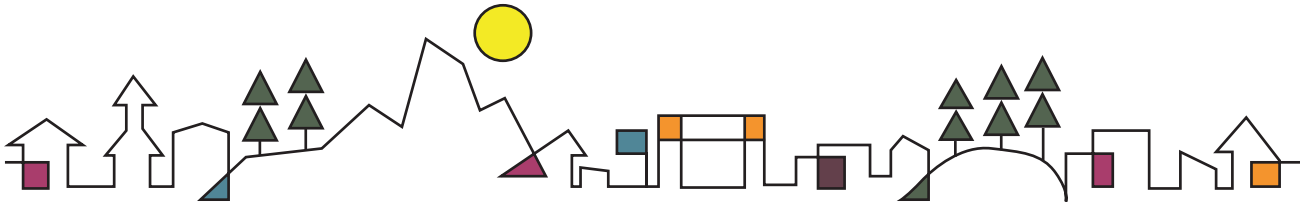
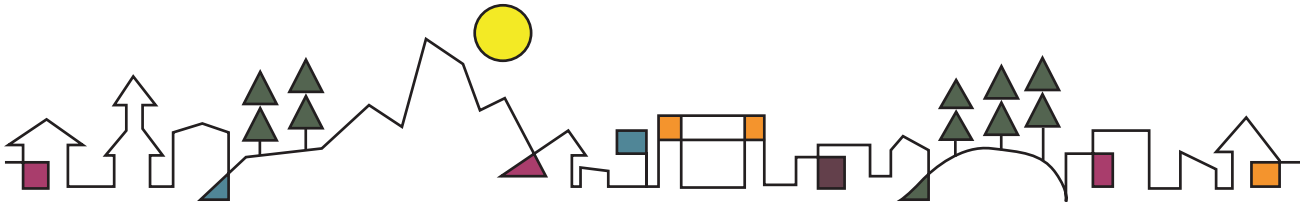
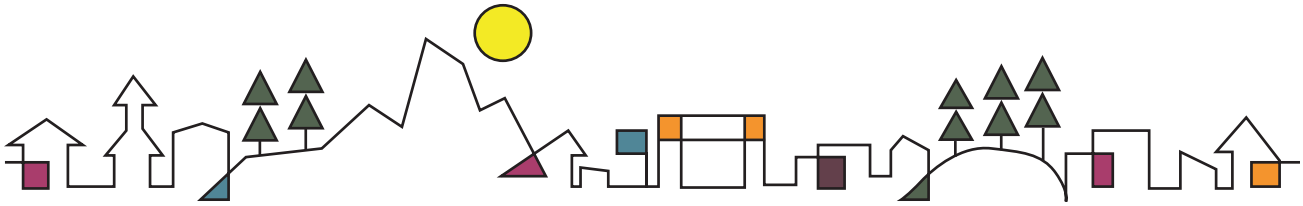


Table of Contents

Chapter 1. Executive Summary	1-1
Chapter 2. Thinking About Our Future	2-1
Chapter 3. A Community Based Plan	3-1
Chapter 4. Vision for a Vibrant Future	4-1
Chapter 5. The Framework Plan	5-1
Chapter 6. Implementation	6-1



Chapter 1. Executive Summary

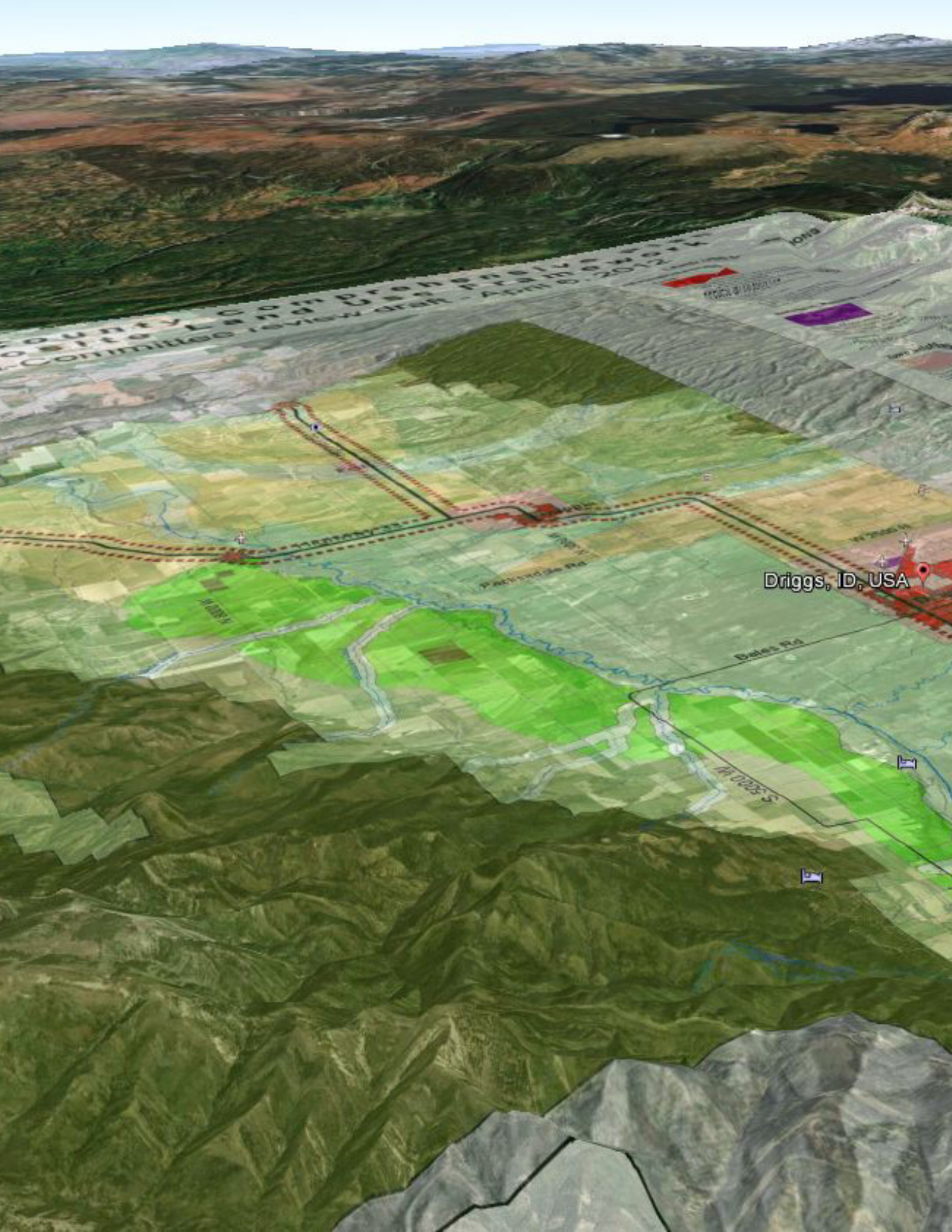


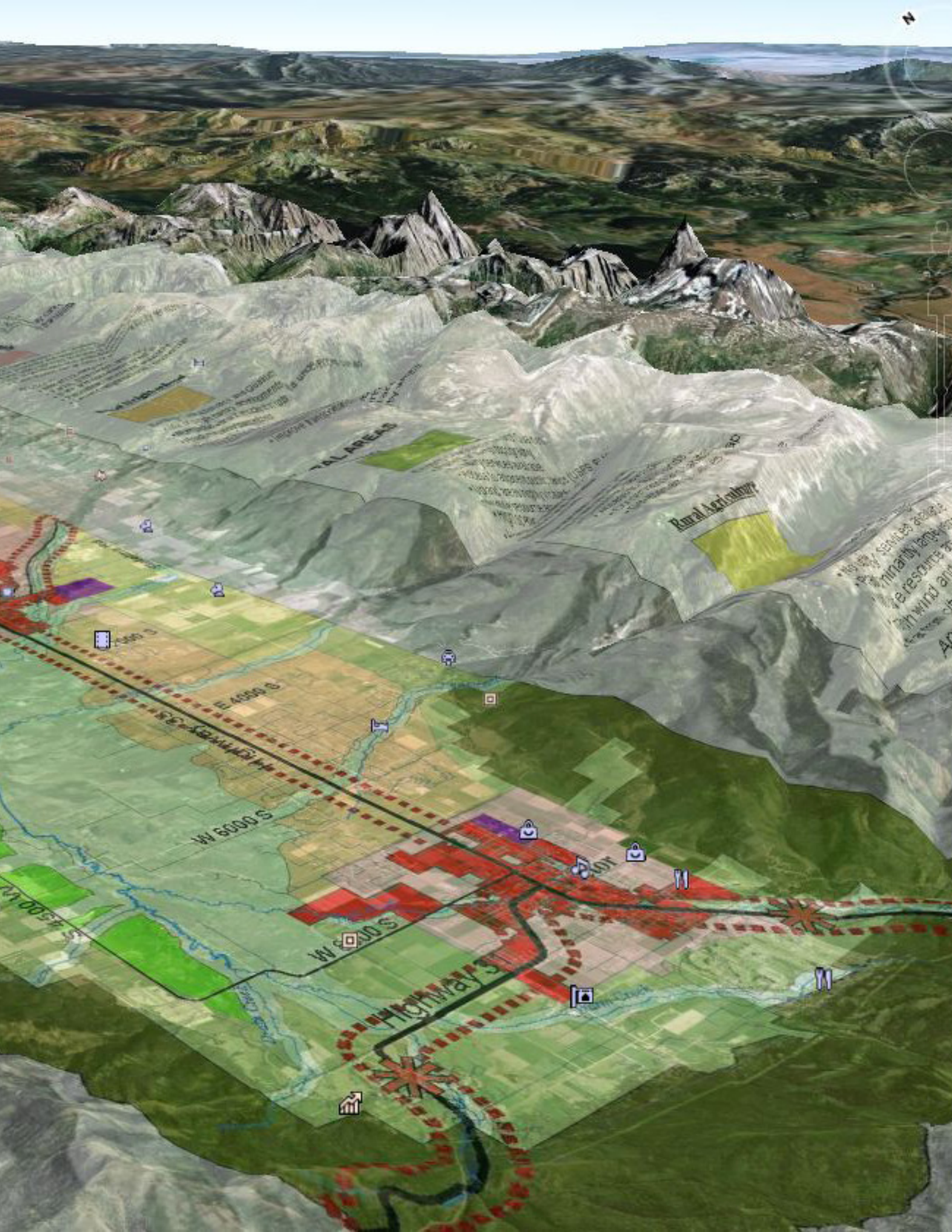
Over the last decade, Teton County has been one of the fastest growing counties in the nation. To visitors, it is considered one of the most beautiful places on earth, with wildlife ranging from wolves to grizzlies. To many new residents, Teton County, Idaho is an undiscovered gem located on the western slope of the Teton Range with breathtaking mountain views, clean water, fresh air, abundant wildlife, a friendly community and world class outdoor recreation opportunities. To many whose families homesteaded in Teton County in the late 1800's, it is a place where generations of hard work created a solid home, tight knit families and a meager living by farming and ranching the land. Whatever your perspective, everyone shares a love for this place that they call home. This Comprehensive Plan is for everyone in the community and was created to help move the community into the future in a prosperous and an economically viable way.

Now is an opportune time to outline the new direction - one based on lessons learned from the past and from other western communities. The previous comprehensive plan, Teton County Comprehensive Plan: A Guide for Development 2004 - 2010, was laden with controversy from its adoption and has been difficult to use due to its lack of clarity and contradictions. During the years the plan was in force, Teton County experienced its largest development boom and subsequent bust in its history. The resulting oversupply of residential lots has severely depressed the real estate market, and the economy, which was largely based on residential construction, is still suffering today. Conditions have changed so drastically since 2004 that the current comprehensive plan is no longer relevant, and in this quiet time the Plan was developed.

Thousands of acres of private, vacant land, cheap homes, land speculation and few barriers led to sprawling and unoccupied development.

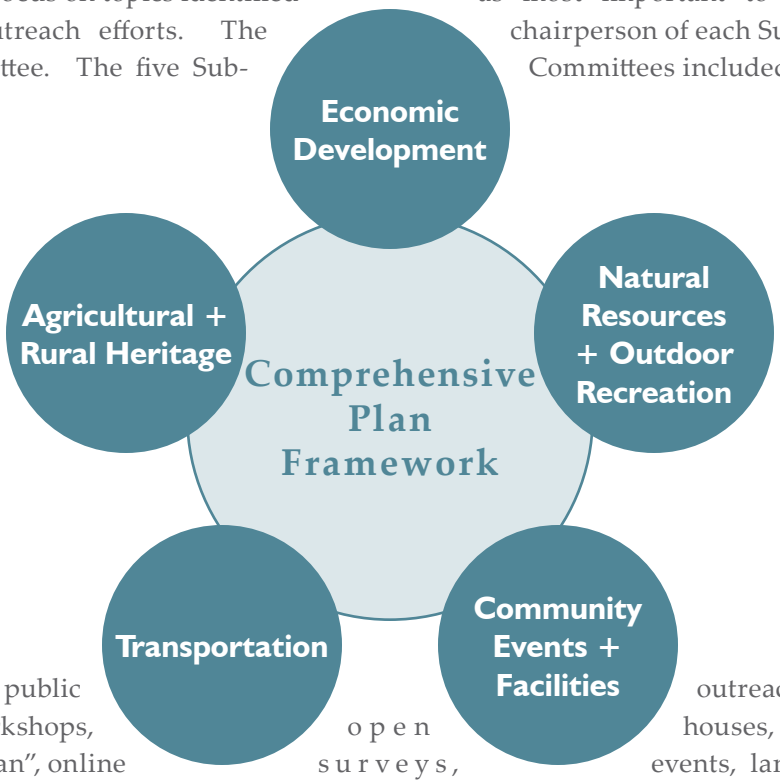
In many ways, rural areas should receive as much planning as cities. A process that represents western, grassroots planning at its best resulted in a landscape-based approach to development levels and incentives and an implementation framework aimed at creating immediate change and an economically resilient County. Very few communities get a second chance to change the fiscal outlook of their community through a community-based process.


Driggs, ID, USA
Bates Rd



Rural Agriculture
E 4000 S
W 6000 S
Highway 3

A grassroots plan, community participation was the cornerstone to this Comprehensive Plan rewrite process. The Plan was created using a "bottom-up" approach and involved citizen committees with over 90 dedicated volunteers representing the breadth of community values. The initial planning committee, the Plan for Planning Committee or P4P, began outreach efforts to the community, in advance of the Plan. A central Core Committee was formed to work directly with the consultant team. Five Sub-Committees were also formed to focus on topics identified as most important to the community by the P4P's initial outreach efforts. The chairperson of each Sub-Committee served on the Core Committee. The five Sub-Committees included:



Additional public outreach included public workshops, open houses, stakeholder interviews, a "plan van", online surveys, events, landowner workshops, newspaper articles and ads, and a dedicated website. Through these efforts and through the work of the numerous committee volunteers, it is estimated that over 4,000 of the 10,000 Teton County residents participated or gave input into the Comprehensive Plan.

Although differences in philosophies were present, values were the same, including the need to protect the beautiful Valley.

Early on, the committees followed a philosophy to tackle the challenge of a new direction. These included "This is about what we want"; "Less about the past and more about the future"; "Proactive"; "Accept the givens"; "Make common sense choices of where to focus development and where not to.". Another core philosophy was "Respect private property rights.".

Rights associated within private property have been compared to a bundle of sticks where each stick represents an individual right. Some of these represented rights within the "bundle" are mineral resources,

A BUNDLE OF PROPERTY RIGHTS

Communities also have a corresponding bundle of rights, i.e. - to acquire land for public benefit, to tax land, and regulate how land is used and developed.

air rights, the ability to sell, lease, mortgage, donate, grant easements and to subdivide.

Providing a balance between the bundle of private and public property rights is a challenge for most communities, and Teton Valley is no exception. A good local example is the "noxious weed problem". Public comments strongly suggest that the larger community opposes the spread of noxious weeds and that the burden of compliance falls on individual property owners. This is clearly a case where the community control over the spread of noxious weeds overrides the right of an individual landowner to keep their property in an unmaintained state.

It seems that there are also other areas of agreement in the Teton Valley where regulations make sense given the context. For example, many agree that the adequate delivery of roads and utility services by a developer usually enhances property values of the surrounding area and can reduce the burden to the County and individual taxpayers. The same may be said for land use and subdivision regulations protecting basic community health and safety such as those enacted to improve surface and groundwater quality, provide safe and well-maintained roads, control noise, and avoid health concerns.

Property Title Owner	*Public Use*	*Government*	*Third Party*
Mortgage	*Railroad*	*Collect property tax*	*Homeowners association*
Lease	*Public works*	*Enforce a lien*	*Historic preservation*
Sell	*Electric power transmission lines*	*Protect endangered species*	*Conservation easement*
Subdivide the property	*Air rights*	*Protect wetlands*	
Create a covenant running with the land	*Riparian water rights*	*Zoning*	
	Mineral rights	*Eminent domain*	
	Grazing rights		

Source: Daniel R. Mandelker (2003). Land Use Law

The Valley Speaks

The Values Survey, which had over 700 participants, reinforced the community's top values of outdoor recreation, schools and rural character. According to the Survey a better future for the Teton Valley would include additional employment, further habitat protection and new recreational amenities.

Very few communities can say they truly control their destiny. However, this is not the case for Teton County. We live in a closed valley, where each one of us helps determine our own future. The Vision ensures that County residents' values and goals are accurately reflected in the Plan's elements, policies and frameworks. The Vision provides the foundation for Framework and Implementation. It creates the structure and initial agreements necessary to tackle tough issues even when disagreements exist over property rights and funding priorities. The following Vision drives our community toward an economically sustainable future that preserves the quality of life we have come to know and love.

Our Community Envisions a Sustainable Future for Teton County

We will strive to:

- **Establish a vibrant, diverse and stable economy.**
- **Create and maintain a well connected, multi-modal network of transportation infrastructure to provide convenient and safe mobility for all residents, visitors and businesses.**
- **Preserve natural resources and a healthy environment, which is essential for creating viable future economic and recreational opportunities for all users.**
- **Contribute to our strong sense of community by providing quality facilities, services and activities to benefit the community.**
- **Preserve and enhance the rural character and heritage of Teton Valley.**

The Framework Plan is the physical embodiment of our Vision and moves away from the existing two-zoned plan and a suburbanized Valley. It depicts a Valley divided by the Teton River, surrounded by majestic Teton and Big Hole mountain ranges. The community lives primarily on the eastern side of the river with efficient access to services, jobs and cities. These neighborhoods range in size and shape, providing a variety of housing options for residents. The majority of future residents will live near the Valley's cultural hearts of Driggs, Victor and Tetonia. The western slope, valley floor, and northern plains are home to rural areas including lower density residential areas, agricultural areas, river valleys, wildlife habitat and foothills. The Plan proposes steady and logical growth patterns. A variety of land use zones protect the Valley's character and provide guidance and incentives for appropriate development types. It is a future where development is directed towards existing population centers in order to preserve the rural character and scenic valley vistas that drive our economy and quality of life.

The Valley will have a perimeter trail that rivals the best system in the nation. Trail connections along old railroad beds and existing roads continue to the Teton River, completing the network. The road system is anchored by formalized gateways and flanked by scenic viewsheds. Our scenic vista protection is centered along Highways 33, 32 and Ski Hill Road - the primary transportation routes through the Valley. Although, we sit in the heart of the mountains, we are served by a multimodal road and trail system, connecting towns, Grand Targhee Resort, Idaho Falls and Jackson.

People do not choose to live and open a business here because it is easy. Instead they are attracted to the community because of its friendly people and recreational opportunities which make it a "lifestyle" community. They come to enjoy all that the Valley has to offer: from motorized and non-motorized trail systems; outstanding hunting and fishing; excellent alpine and nordic skiing; quiet and scenic rivers; to beautiful vistas of one of the most majestic mountain ranges in the world.

Teton Valley's Vision inspires us to take action. The test of the Plan is not whether it turns out to portray the future accurately, but whether it allows the County to learn, adapt and implement new actions and tools depending on alternative future conditions. The Implementation Plan examines where we are now; where we want to go; what tools are available; and key actions necessary to attain our desired goals, even with an uncertain future. The Plan stresses flexibility and adaptability, while encouraging bold moves that will have the greatest beneficial impact on the Valley.