

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN



TETON COUNTY, IDAHO

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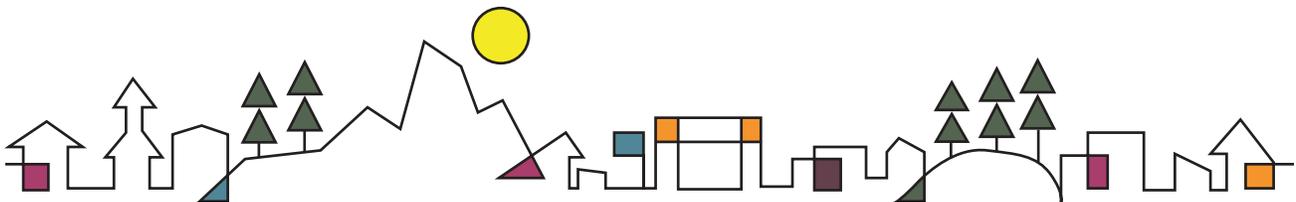
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Teton County Comprehensive Plan

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Teton County Comprehensive Plan

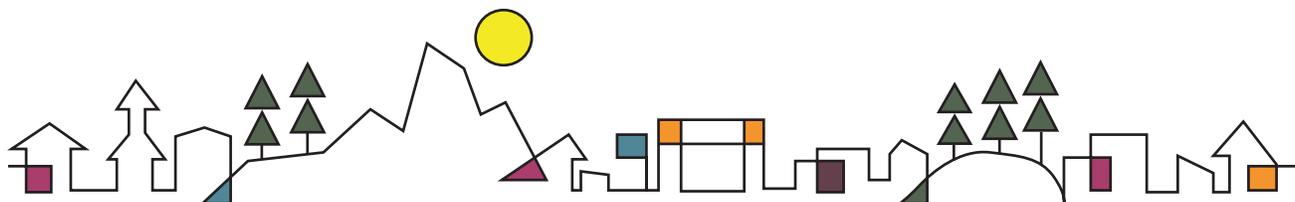
Public Open House Review

16 May 2012

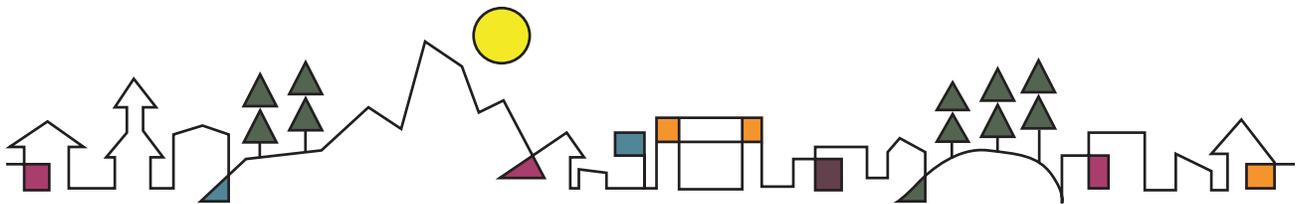
Cover photo by Reed Sullivan

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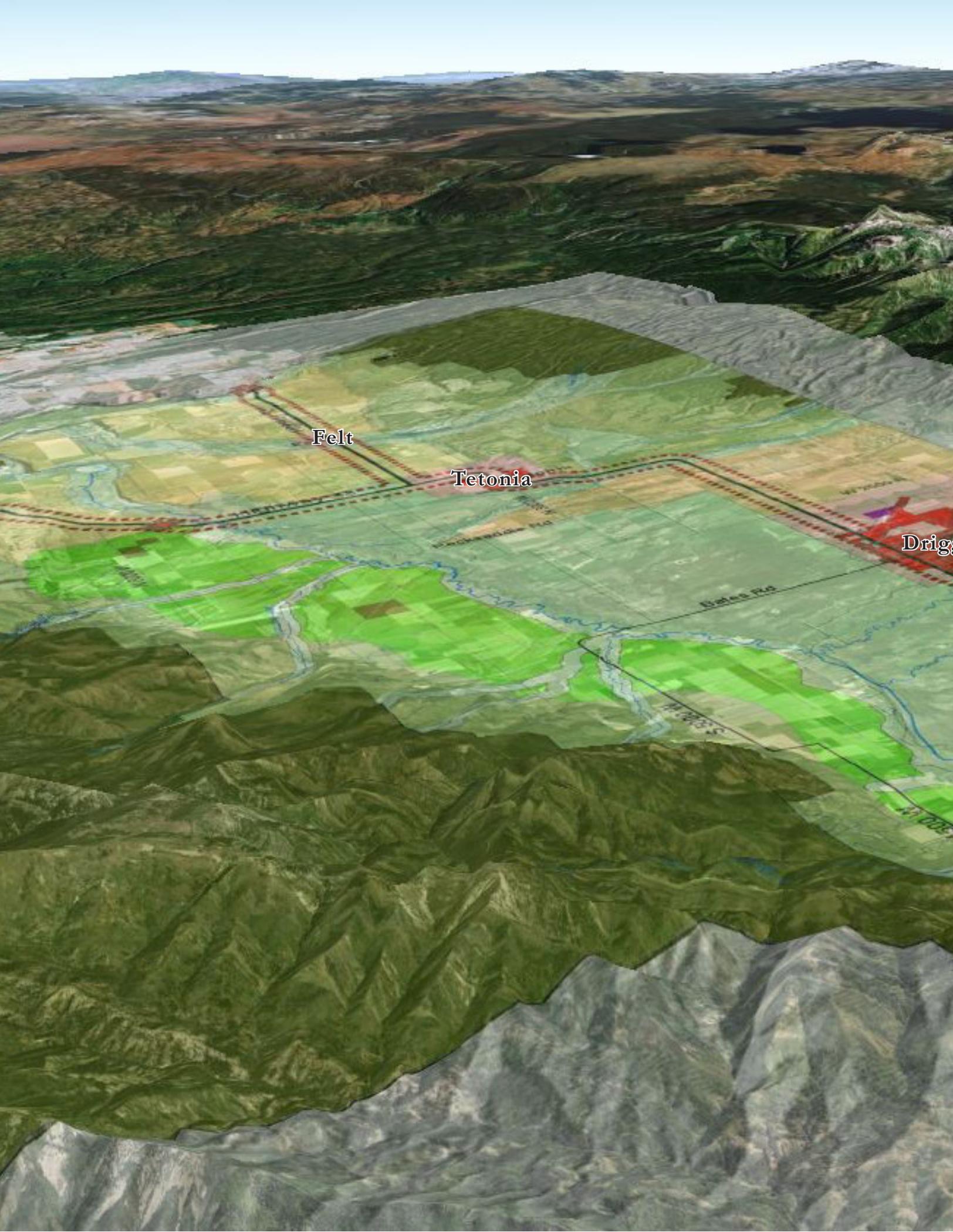
Chapter 1. Executive Summary



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 sandhill cranes 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 those 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 a new direction for the County - 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. Thousands of acres of private and vacant land, inexpensive homes, land speculation and few barriers led to sprawling and unoccupied development. 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.

In many ways, rural areas should receive as much planning as cities. This Comprehensive Plan process represents western, grassroots planning at its best and resulted in a landscape-based approach to development levels and incentives and an implementation framework aimed at creating actionable 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, and Teton County is fortunate to be able to do so.



Felt

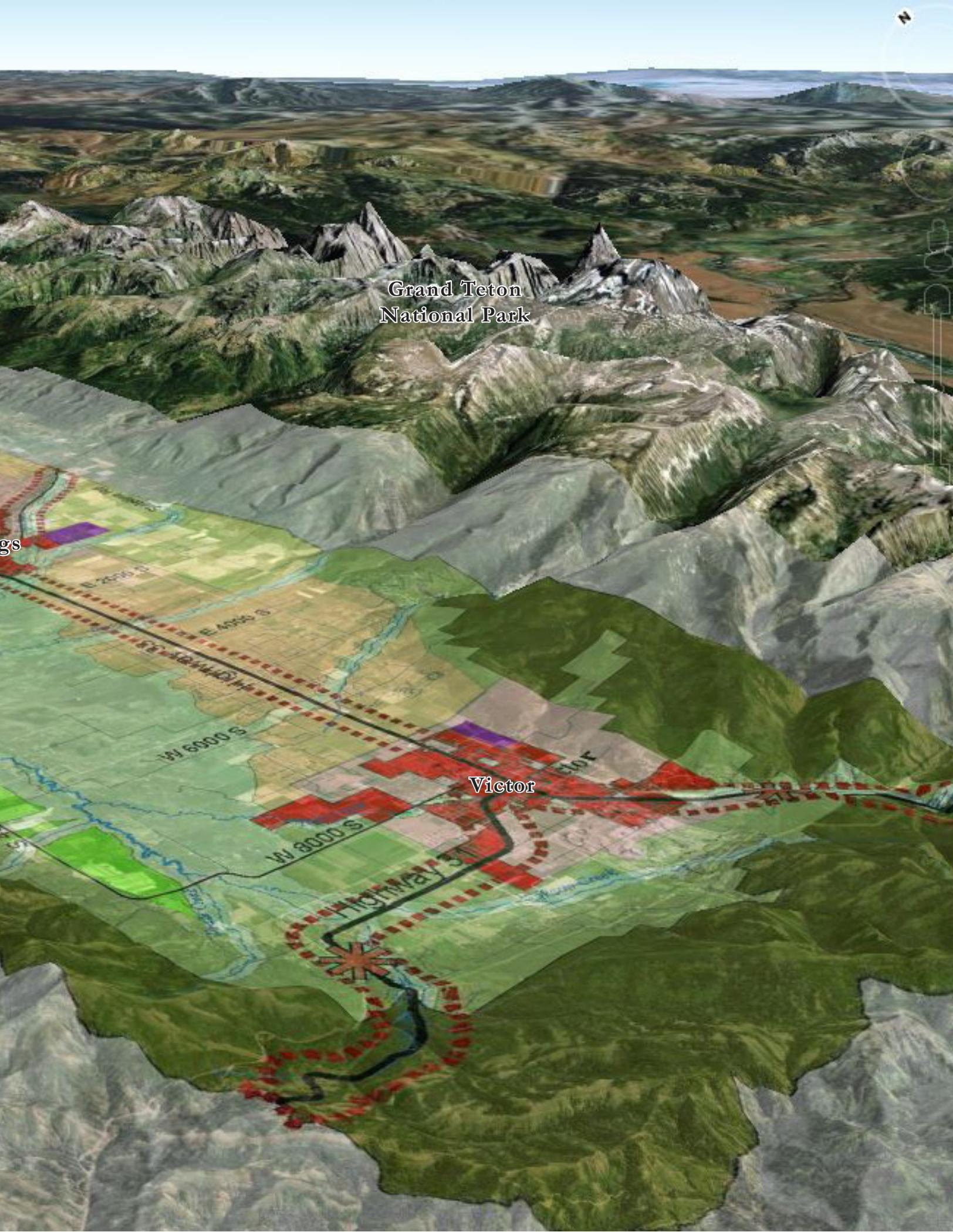
Tetonia

Driggs

Highway 20

Highway 20

Highway 20



Grand Teton
National Park

Victor

gs

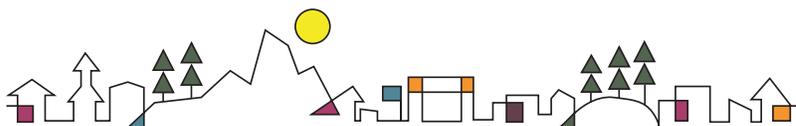
As a grassroots plan, community participation was the cornerstone to this Comprehensive Plan rewrite process. The Plan was created using a “bottom-up” approach and involved citizen committees with over 80 dedicated volunteers representing the breadth of community values. The initial planning committee, 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 a large portion of the 10,000 Teton County residents participated or gave input into the Comprehensive Plan with over 4,000 input occurrences.

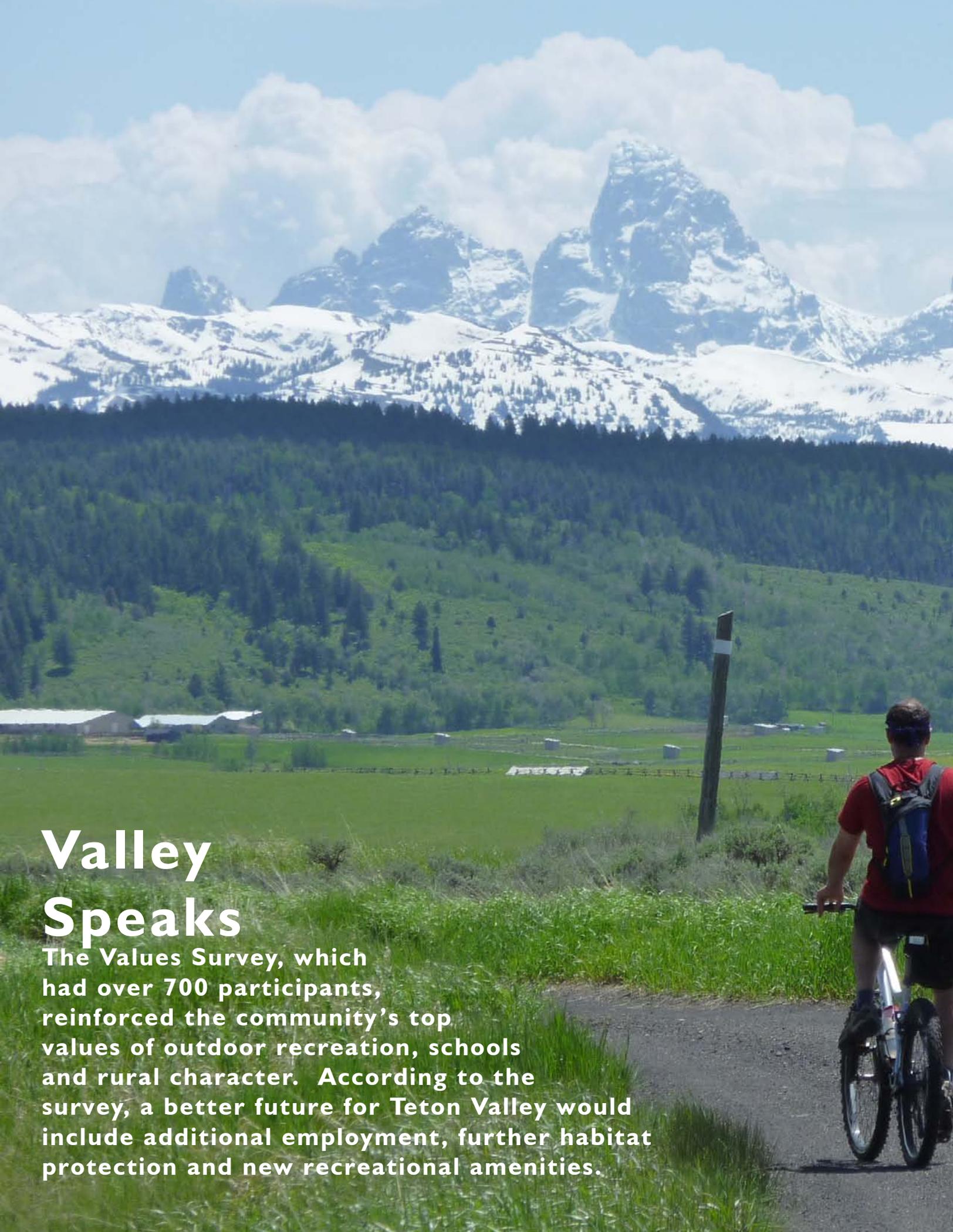
Although differences in philosophies were present in the community, many values were the same, including the need to protect the beautiful Valley.

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”.



Property rights are often compared to a bundle of sticks where each stick represents a different right. Sticks within the landowner's property rights bundle most often include the right to occupy, sell, lease, mortgage, donate, grant easements, use and exclude. Rights that could be held by the owner or separated from the bundle include mineral rights, air rights, water rights or development rights. Communities also have a bundle of rights that include acquiring land for public benefit with just compensation, taxing land, regulating uses and protecting natural resources.

Under Idaho Code 67-6502, Teton County has an obligation to regulate land use in order to promote the health, safety and general welfare of the public. This Plan strives to provide a balance between private and public property rights.



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 Teton Valley would include additional employment, further habitat protection and new recreational amenities.

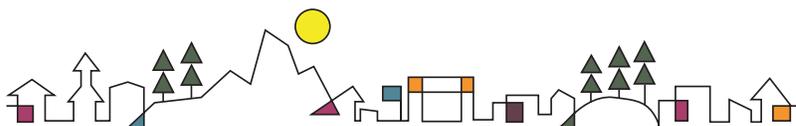


The Vision for Teton County is based on the values of the community. It is the community's vision that provides the foundation for the goals, policies, framework and implementation sections of the Plan. The Vision creates the structure and initial agreements necessary to tackle tough issues even when disagreement exists over property rights and funding priorities.

*O*ur 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 are 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.

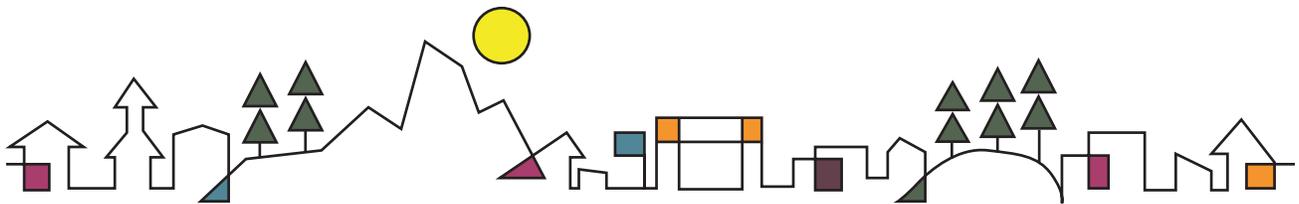


The Framework Plan sets the stage for realizing our Vision and includes a map that outlines desired future land uses and amenities combined with supporting goals and policies. The map depicts a valley surrounded by majestic Teton and Big Hole mountain ranges with the Teton River meandering through the center. The Valley's cultural and population centers of Driggs, Victor and Tetonian lie east of the River and the majority of future residents will live in high-quality neighborhoods on the east side of the Valley. The western slope, valley floor and northern plains have a rural character with an abundance of productive farms, lower density residential areas, rivers, forested foothills and wildlife. A variety of land use areas define logical growth patterns that direct development towards existing population centers and provide guidance and incentives for appropriate development.

Our future vision is for a Valley with a vibrant economy and high quality of life that depends on educational opportunities, recreation opportunities, cultural amenities, public land access, natural resources and scenic vistas. Therefore, the map also depicts a recreational trail system that rivals the best in the nation, scenic vista protection along the primary transportation routes, a valley-wide recreation center program and support for multi-modal transit. Providing a variety of high quality educational opportunities, diverse cultural amenities, well maintained transportation routes and public access to the surrounding forests and the Teton River are key aspects of the Framework's goals and policies.

Perhaps the most important piece of the Plan is an outline of steps needed to move the County towards our Vision. We are inspired to take action and 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 goal. Realizing that our future is ultimately uncertain, the Implementation Plan includes new actions and tools that are also flexible and adaptable and have the greatest beneficial impact on the Valley.

Chapter 2. Thinking about Our Future

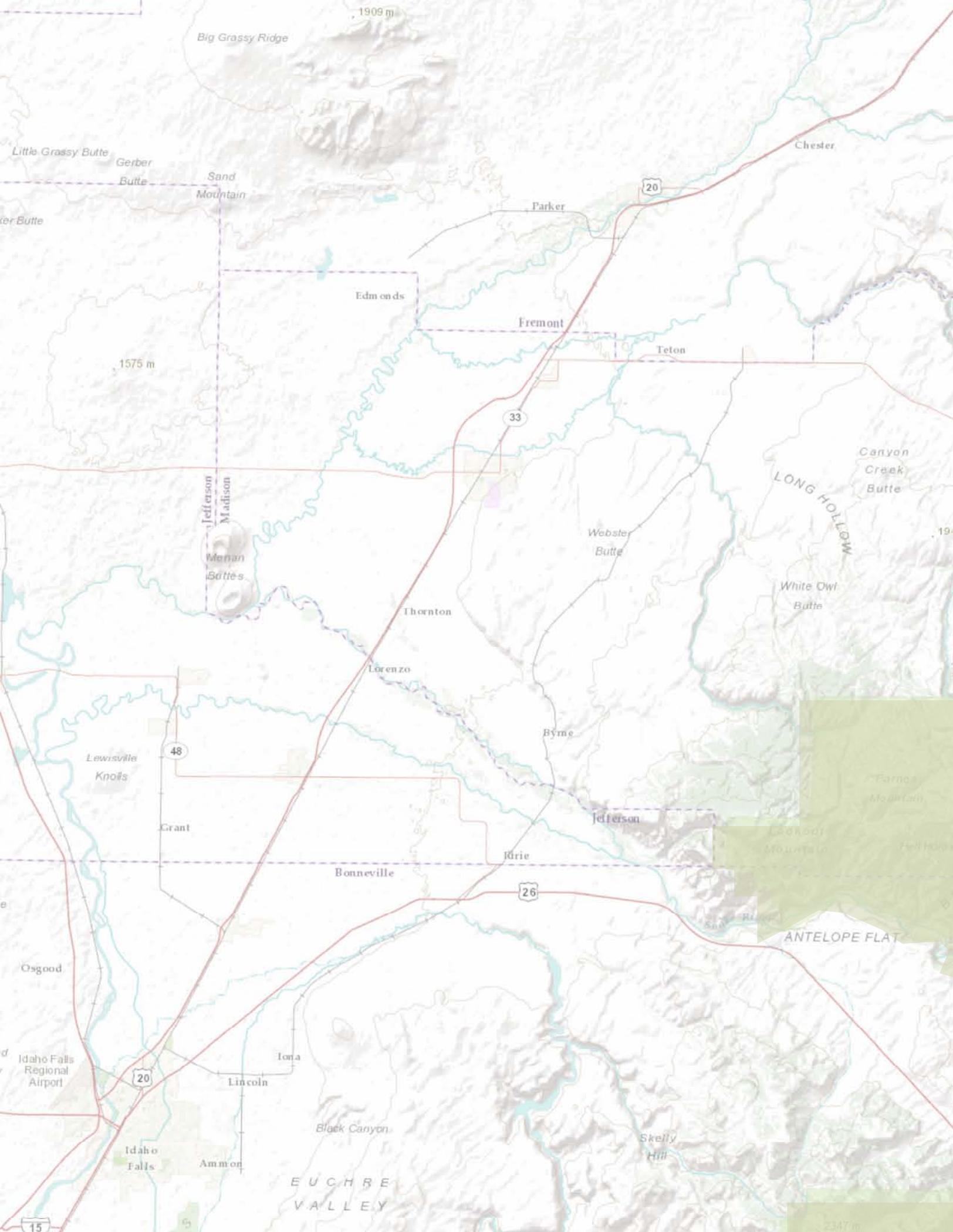


Teton County, Idaho is a rural community of approximately 10,000 people with an area of 450 square miles in Southeastern Idaho west of Grand Teton National Park and southwest of Yellowstone National Park. It has large areas of unincorporated County and three incorporated cities which are Teton, Victor, and Driggs (the County seat). Teton County is often called “Teton Valley” or “Teton Basin” since the majority of the land is located on the valley floor between the Teton Range to the east and the Big Hole Mountains to the west and includes the headwaters of the Teton River. During the early 1800’s, this area was referred to as Pierre’s Hole in honor of “le grand Pierre” Tivonitagon and was a hub of the northern Rocky Mountains fur trade. Beginning in the late 1800’s, the County became a small agricultural community settled by Mormon Pioneers, many descendants of whom still live in the community today.

In addition to families who have been in the Valley for generations, the population includes a mix of individuals and families who are part-time residents, transplants from other parts of the country and hispanic residents. Many common values exist between these diverse groups and these values are the basis for creating a clear path for the future.

Teton County, Idaho is closely tied in many ways to its neighbor Teton County, Wyoming. Physically, the two counties share a common border and view of the Teton Range, most notably the peaks of the Grand Teton, Mount Owen, Teewinot, Middle Teton and South Teton. Grand Targhee Resort, which lies in Wyoming, is one of the largest employers in the area and can only be accessed through Teton County,





Big Grassy Ridge

1909 m

Little Grassy Butte

Gerber Butte

Sand Mountain

Chester

Parker

20

Edmonds

Fremont

Teton

1575 m

33

Jefferson
Madison

Wenan Buttes

LONG HOLLOW

Canyon Creek Butte

Webster Butte

White Owl Butte

Thornton

Lorenzo

Byrne

Lewisville Knolls

48

Grant

Jefferson

Bonneville

Jurie

26

ANTELOPE FLAT

Osgood

Idaho Falls Regional Airport

20

Iona

Lincoln

Black Canyon

Skelly Hill

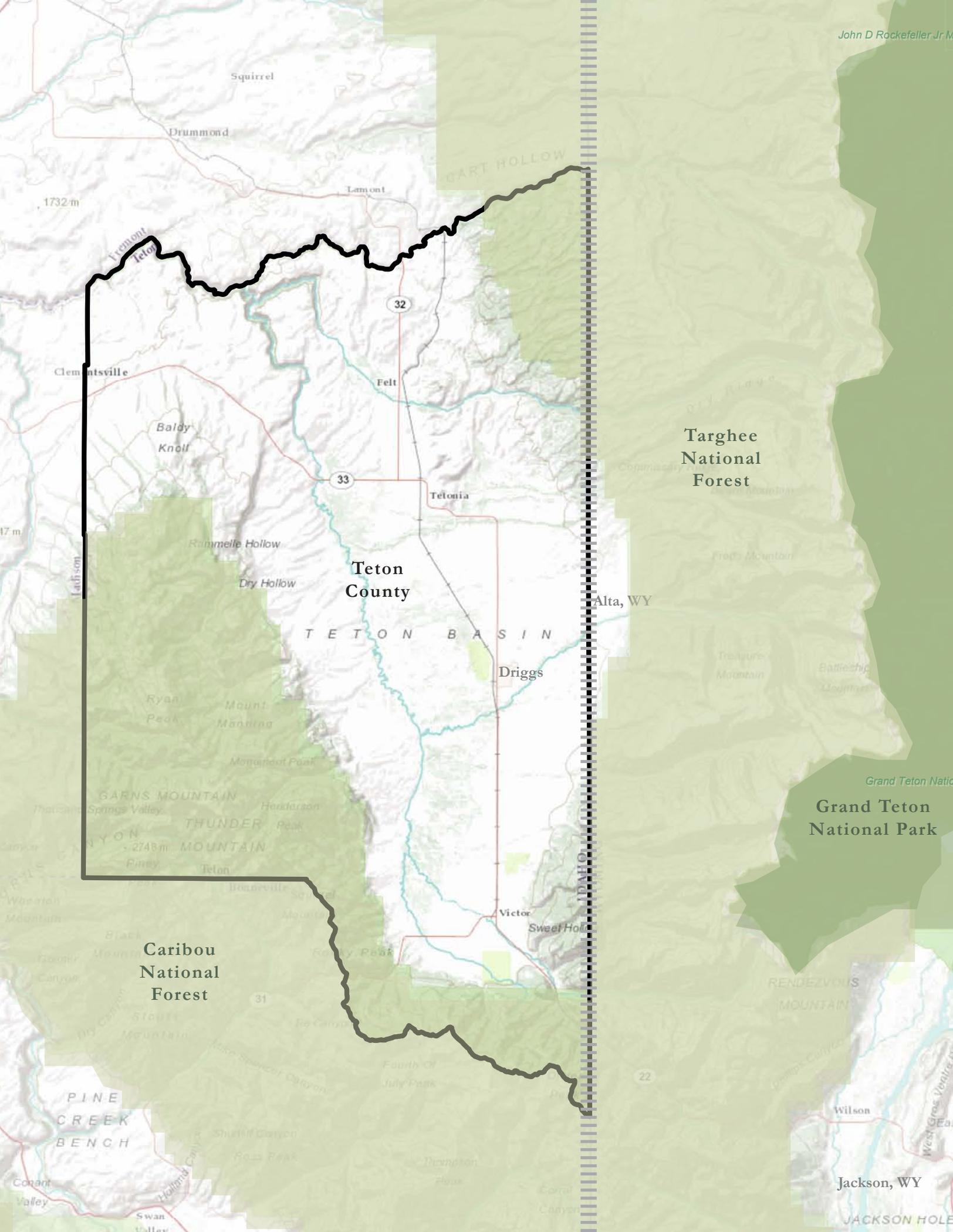
Idaho Falls

Ammon

EUCHRE VALLEY

15

2347 m



Squirrel

Drummond

1732 m

Lamont

CART HOLLOW

Tremont
Teton

32

Clemmetsville

Felt

Baldy
Knoll

Targhee
National
Forest

33

Tetonia

Ramselle Hollow

Dry Hollow

Teton
County

Alta, WY

T E T O N B A S I N

Driggs

Ryan
Peak

Mount
Manning

Monument Peak

GARNS MOUNTAIN

THUNDER
MOUNTAIN

Caribou
National
Forest

Grand Teton National
Park

31

Victor

Sweet Home

PINE
CREEK
BENCH

RENDEZVOUS
MOUNTAIN

22

Wilson

Jackson, WY

JACKSON HOLE

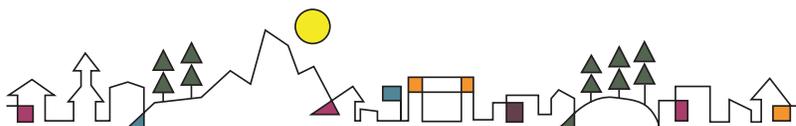
Idaho. Additionally, a large portion of the Teton County, Idaho population is supported economically by businesses in Teton County, Wyoming as many residents commute over the mountain pass to Jackson for employment.

The transition of a portion of Teton County's economy to outdoor recreation and tourism began in 1969 when over 900 local citizens worked together to establish Grand Targhee Resort and opened it to benefit the community and economy of the region. Over the last decade, Grand Targhee Resort has proven to be a key economic driver in the area and the Valley experienced significant activity in second-home and resort-based development.

As a result of its growing reputation as a mountain resort combined with the national real estate boom, Teton County was the second fastest growing rural county in the United States between 2000 and 2009 with the majority of the economic growth in the real estate and construction industries.

When the real estate bubble burst nationally in 2007, it hit Teton County hard in 2008 and resulted in high unemployment, plummeting property values and high foreclosure rates throughout the Valley.

Despite economic challenges, the community has continued to develop its appeal as a unique mountain lifestyle community due to its breathtaking scenery, clean water, fresh air, abundant wildlife, healthy forests and world class recreational opportunities that include skiing, snowmobiling, fishing, cycling, hunting and many others. It has a growing arts and cultural identity and has hosted nationally acclaimed performers. National Geographic chose the County seat as the future location for a Greater Yellowstone Geotourism Center.



Teton County, Idaho has been embroiled in a boom-bust growth cycle for most of the past century and the boom of the 2000s and the subsequent bust were the most extreme example of this historic cycle. The bust hit the economy of Teton Valley especially hard because a large portion of the economy was based on land development speculation which drove the construction industry and provided an abundance of jobs. The conditions in Teton Valley that included large amounts of relatively inexpensive, private land, a Teton County, Wyoming work force that needed affordable housing and a strong second home market created a perfect storm for speculative development.

As a result of these conditions and a somewhat flexible regulatory environment, thousands of lots were created in subdivisions that now lie empty. The overabundance of undeveloped, platted residential lots (over 7,000) make economic recovery even more difficult by saturating an already weak real estate market. There has been a decline in investment into our community and many storefronts lie empty. The County government is financially limited due to Idaho's tax cap and an abundance of entitled developments with no means for mitigating the fiscal impacts of the roads, schools, emergency services and weed management.

And so most residents of Teton Valley would agree that what we are doing now under the current 2004-2010 Comprehensive Plan has not worked and it is in the interest of the community to revise the Plan and set forth new guidelines for development.

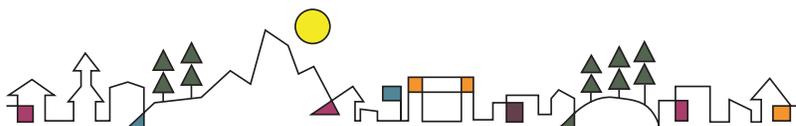
Almost everybody in the community agrees that additional, rampant subdividing of land will not help the Valley's economy or character. Unplanned growth is contributing to falling housing prices, the continuation of high foreclosure rates and unsustainable costs to taxpayers to maintain infrastructure. Most agree planning guidance is warranted. While few want to subdivide their property at this time, many land owners want the right to be able to subdivide if and when they choose to do so in the future. This guidance is intended not to impinge on future development but to protect it.

The goal of this Comprehensive Plan is to outline a vision and framework that considers all viewpoints, achieves a balance of effective land planning and private property rights, and finds common ground regarding the future of Teton Valley. It is impossible to fulfill the desires of everyone, however it is possible to find a viable plan that the vast majority of the community can accept and support. The intent of this Plan is to achieve this goal.

The current comprehensive plan, “Teton County Comprehensive Plan: A Guide for Development 2004-2010”, was laden with controversy from its adoption. The Plan has contradictions within itself and most would argue that while it might claim to protect the rural character of the valley, it has not been effective in doing so. The previous Plan was based on projections that took the Valley through 2010. While this date has passed, it can also be argued that the conditions on the ground have changed so drastically since the Plan’s adoption in 2004 that it is no longer a relevant document. This new Plan will be a living document that is able to be adapted and modified to fit changing circumstances while holding true to the community’s vision.

As in business, a community needs a plan for its future. Before a new business opens, it will create a business plan that identifies major sectors of the business and a plan of how the business will eventually make money. The business plan usually includes a mission statement and often has specific goals and objectives of how to accomplish that mission. Likewise, a community needs a vision for itself and a plan for how it will get there. That is the purpose of the Comprehensive Plan. It is a guiding document upon which all governmental community actions should be based. This is necessary to avoid decisions that negatively affect the entire community and individual properties.

Referenced by Idaho State Statute 67-6508, which mandates that every community adopt and regularly update a plan, “It shall be the duty of the planning or planning and zoning commission to conduct a comprehensive planning process designed to prepare, implement, and review and update a comprehensive plan, hereafter referred to as the plan.” The Local Land Use Policy Act (LLUPA) recognizes the importance of a visioning process to planning for a community’s future. Although this Plan does not follow the exact format or order shown in LLUPA, all required components are included.



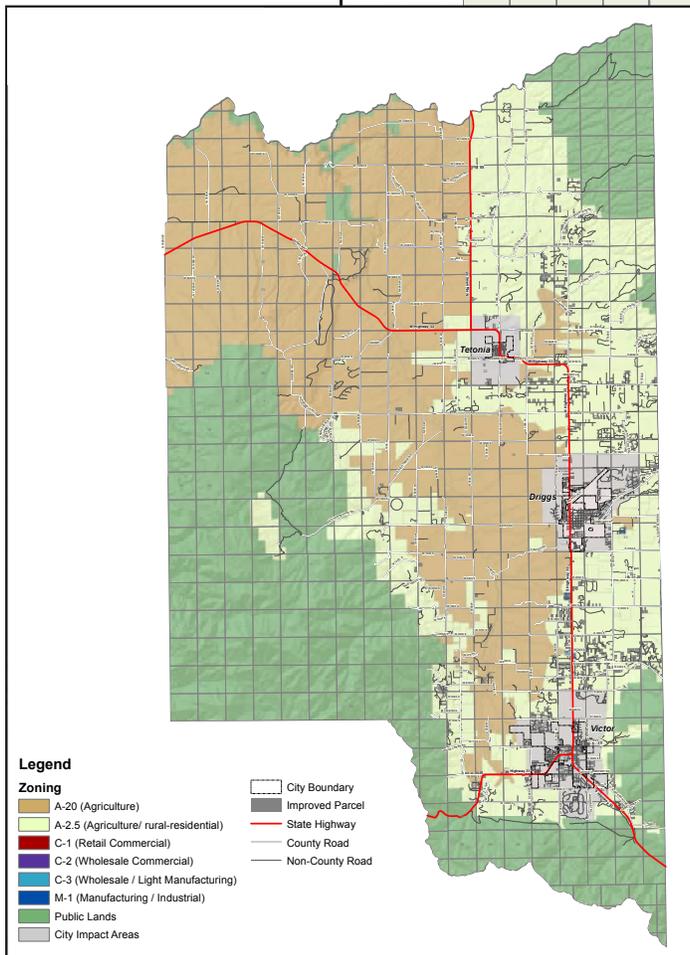
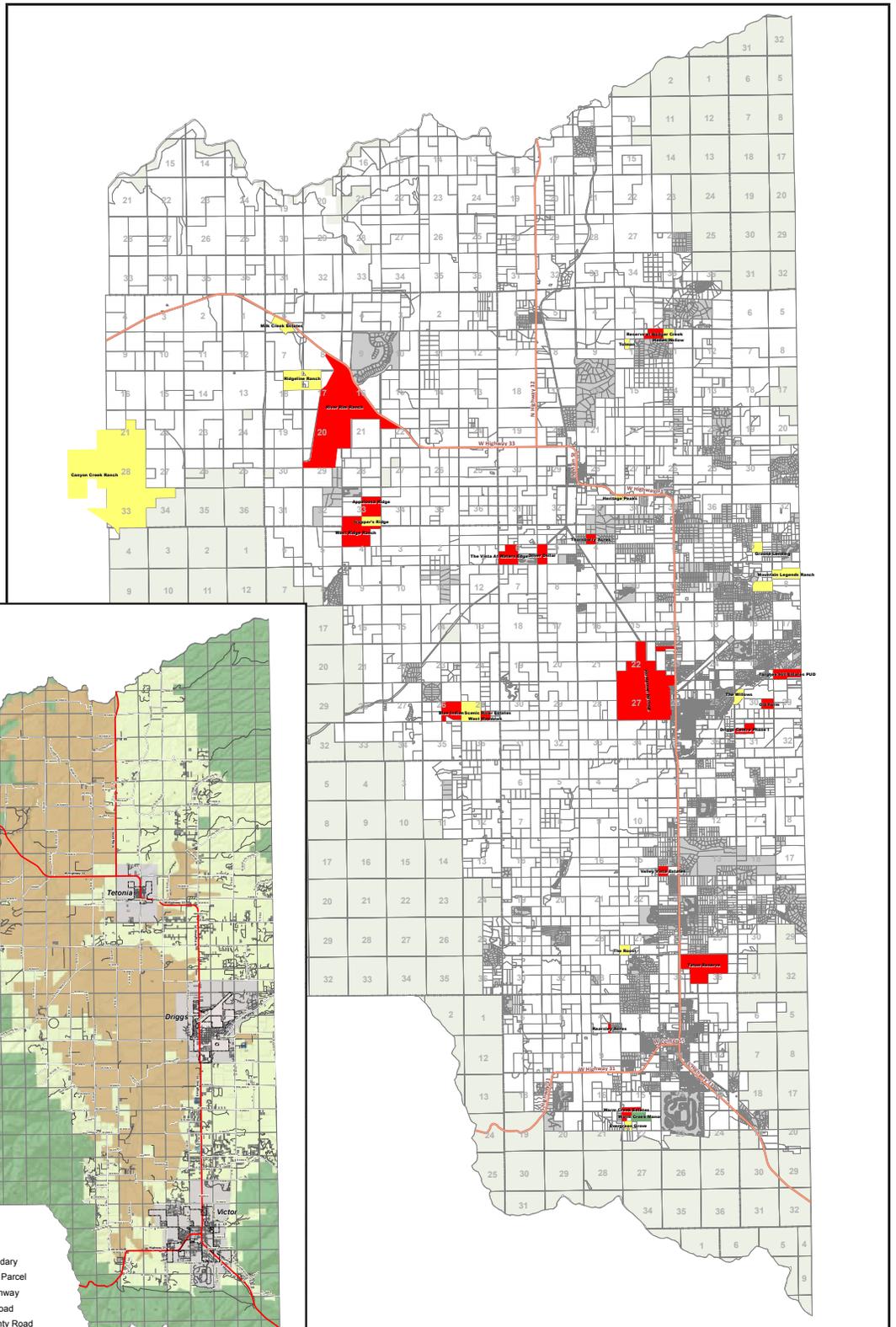


Figure 1b. Current Zoning Map.

Figure 1a. Distressed Subdivisions. Red areas illustrate distressed subdivisions with no infrastructure; Yellow areas illustrate distressed subdivisions with partial infrastructure

A B U N D L E O F P R O P E R T Y R I G H T S

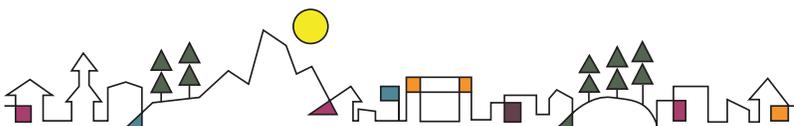
Communities also have a corresponding bundle of rights, i.e. - to acquire land for public benefit, to tax land, and regulate how land is used and developed.

Rights associated within private property have been compared to a bundle of sticks where each stick represents an individual right that can be separated from the bundle and reassembled. Some of these represented rights within the “bundle” are mineral resources, air rights, the ability to sell, lease, mortgage, donate, grant easements, use and exclude. Property rights are not absolute, however, and they do not allow uses that unreasonably interfere with the property rights of others or interfere with public health, safety, peace or welfare.

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 of the need to balance the rights that a property owner enjoys with their responsibility to their neighbor 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 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 other areas of agreement in 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.

In fact, the County has an obligation to regulate land use in order to promote the health, safety and general welfare of the public. Many oppose regulations or zone changes that could reduce the development potential of their property due to a perceived decrease in property value. However, the value of real property is largely due to factors external to the property lines. In fact, the popular cliché that the “three most important things in real estate are location, location and location” speaks to the fact that the context within which a piece of land exists is the most important aspect of value. It is this context that regulations that maintain view corridors, protect natural resources, preserve rural character or prohibit incompatible development protect.

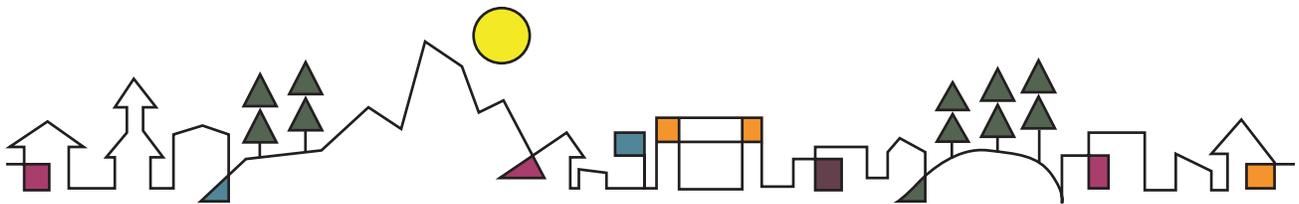


The table below breaks down some of the rights in the bundle associated with private property and the party that typically holds the right, although many rights can be transferred between parties.

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

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

Chapter 3. A Community Based Plan



In order for the Comprehensive Plan to represent the goals, aspirations, and desires of the community, it is essential for the community to be involved with its creation. Therefore, it was very important to the Teton County Board of County Commissioners from the outset that the Plan be created with a “bottom-up” approach, and that citizens with diverse voices had the opportunity to participate in the process. The resulting Plan process was truly a grassroots effort that strived to obtain broad-based public input. This was accomplished by creating an open and honest process, hearing all concerns, and addressing issues as much as possible within the Plan. Ideally, the Plan is broadly supported by the community, even if all elements are not entirely to the satisfaction of every member.

Outreach Methods include surveys, “Plan Van”, events, workshops, outreach meetings, “Workbooks-to-Go”, websites and committees.

EARLY OUTREACH

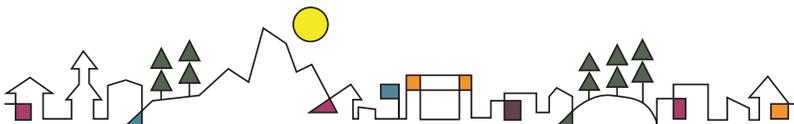
In the spring of 2010, a group of eight involved Teton County residents were appointed by the Board of County Commissioners (BOCC) to design the process by which a new Comprehensive Plan would be written. This group became known as the Plan for Planning committee or P4P and members were chosen to represent a diverse cross-section of viewpoints. The P4P committee met twice a month and had three main goals:

- Begin initial outreach to the community
- Develop the process to create the new Comprehensive Plan
- Make a recommendation to the BOCC for a consultant team

Initial outreach to the community by the P4P included several different activities and approaches. A kick-off event was held in Teton, Driggs and Victor with the purpose of raising awareness for the Comprehensive Plan and the process by which it would be created. A county-wide mailing and an online questionnaire asked questions about the values important to Teton County residents. This online questionnaire had approximately 740 people (7.4% of the population) respond.

The P4P categorized the public feedback into five major content areas: Economic Development, Transportation, Natural Resources and Outdoor Recreation, Community Events and Facilities, and Rural and Agricultural Heritage. They decided that the Comprehensive Plan should focus on each of these content areas, recognizing that property rights was an important part of all of these pieces and would be considered in all categories throughout the process.

The P4P decided that a separate committee should focus on each of the content areas defined in the outreach efforts, but was concerned about coordination and communication among the committees. For that reason, they decided the chair of each committee would also serve on a core coordination committee (the Core Committee) that would coordinate all pieces of the plan to ensure cohesion and consistency among the parts of the Plan. The P4P solicited for volunteers and brainstormed ideas of who should serve on each Sub-Committee, trying to ensure that



all stakeholder groups were represented. They also tried to balance each Sub-Committee with a broad spectrum of political and ideological viewpoints. Committee volunteers were chosen as representatives of the community and everyone who desired to volunteer was placed on a Sub-Committee; no one was turned away.

It was the responsibility of the committee members to not only attend regular meetings and discuss, debate, and work through the topics that are included in the Plan, but also to continually reach out to others in the community for input. The Comprehensive Plan rewrite process was branded “Teton Valley 2020” to reflect looking forward into the future with “20/20” vision.

COMMUNITY OUTREACH

In addition to involving a wide net of volunteers on committees, a variety of additional public outreach efforts were made throughout the process. This included public workshops, open houses, stakeholder interviews, a “plan van”, online surveys, newspaper articles and ads, and a dedicated website.

Three large Community Workshops were held at key points during the Comprehensive Plan process. The workshops included Vision Workshop #1 held on August 25, 2011; the “What If?/Framework” Workshop #2 held on December 6, 2011; and the Draft Plan Open House held on May 30, 2012. During these large community events, the work accomplished by the Sub-Committees and Core Committee was presented to the public for feedback.

Additional Community Meetings were held in Teton, Driggs, and Victor during the week of March 20-22, 2012. These meetings focused on land use tools that were being considered and an online survey was developed on the same topic so that those who could not attend the meetings could also give input.





Valley Speaks

The Goals Questionnaire stressed the need to work together to create access points to public land, connections to the Teton River, support local farming and food protection and promote density near our cities.



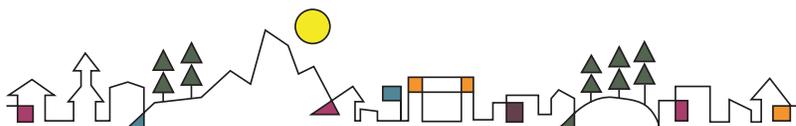
Photo by Sandy Mason

Stakeholder interviews were held early in the process with individuals from City and County departments, State and Federal agencies, local and regional non-profit organizations, citizen groups and clubs, key citizens and property owners, local business leaders, and others. Stakeholder interviews have the ability to provide information that no other outreach tool can. In particular, interviews are the best method to drill down to specific issues regarding a particular niche in the community, be it for a specific subarea, property owner or developer. Stakeholder interviews are better tailored to hear this perspective than a public workshop or broader outreach event.

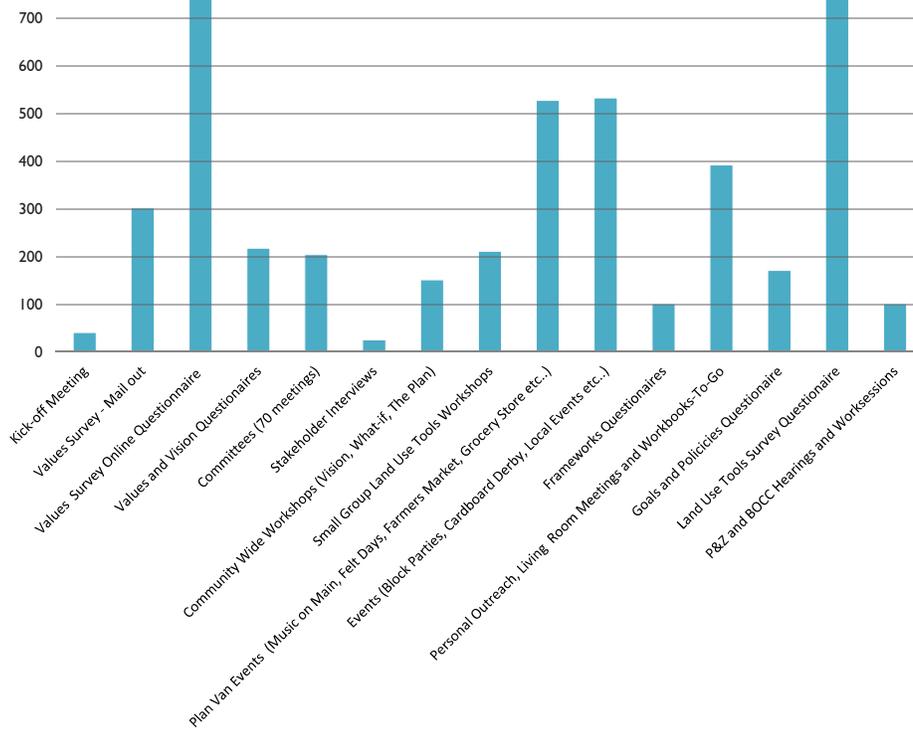
Committee volunteers helped create and mobilize a “plan van” that contained information about the Comprehensive Plan rewrite and traveled to different locations throughout the valley during the summer of 2011. The activities and materials from the Community Workshops were placed in the plan van which traveled to events including the Farmers Market, Music on Main, Felt Centennial Celebration, the local grocery store, and the Soil Conservation Service’s Rural Living Workshop.

Regular, ongoing briefings with decision-makers were held to ensure that the Comprehensive Plan adhered to the County’s regulatory requirements and was a reflection of the community’s expressed values. After each community workshop and at key milestones, a joint work session with the P&Z, BOCC and the Core Committee was held in order to keep the decision-makers informed of the Plan’s progress and to get approval before moving to the next step in the process.

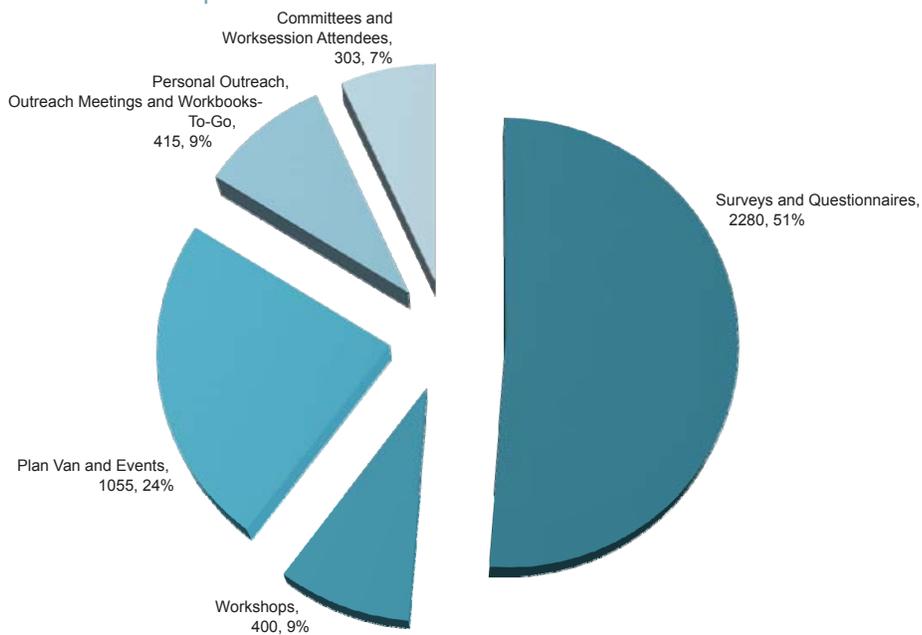
In addition to personal contact with the community through meetings, interviews, and “plan van” excursions, outreach was conducted through the web and print media. The Teton Valley 2020 website (www.tetonvalley2020.org) and the Teton County website (www.tetoncountyidaho.gov) publicized information about the Comprehensive Plan process and all committee, Planning and Zoning (P&Z) and Board of County Commissioners (BOCC) meetings were noticed a minimum of 5 days prior to the meeting date. Agendas, meeting minutes, survey data, workbook exercises and other information were also available on the Teton Valley 2020 website. Newspaper ads were placed in both the Teton Valley News and the Valley Citizen one and two weeks prior to each Community Workshop and Community Meeting. Teton Valley 2020 banners were displayed for several months above Highway 33 in Victor and in front of the Driggs City Center. Numerous newspaper articles and opinion pieces were written and radio features were aired as well.



Community Outreach Tools - People Reached



Community Outreach Methods - Input Occurrences





Valley Speaks

The youth Sub-Committees came up with two goal statements: “We want a teen-friendly community and environment”, and “We want a community that values its natural heritage, has a vibrant economy, diverse consumer options, and a teen-friendly environment”.



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