

CHAPTER 1

COMMUNITY VISION

Teton County's popularity as a gateway community and destination resort skyrocketed during the 1980's, bringing with it dramatic increases in population and development. The 1980's marked the second consecutive decade of above-average growth, and residents feared they were losing control over their future. Their quiet western community had mushroomed into a flourishing resort that threatened to leave residents' needs and values behind.

As the decade drew to a close, residents and community leaders of Teton County and the Town of Jackson recognized that the time to confront their concerns had come. Rapid growth was diminishing the small town values and western heritage cherished by so many. Housing had become so expensive and scarce that it was forcing some residents to leave the community. Development was beginning to disrupt open ranchlands and natural resources. Improvements in the valley's infrastructure--transportation, sanitary sewer, parking - lagged sharply behind population and visitation growth. Existing land development regulations were proving inadequate to deal with these pressures, and residents began to express the need for a system which would do a better job of managing the changes they were seeing in Teton County's character.

In 1989 and 1990, the Town and the County began independent but parallel information-gathering efforts to determine what residents envisioned for Teton County's future. The County initiated "small-area" meetings where planners met informally with residents of various areas of the county. Meanwhile, Town planners divided Jackson into seven neighborhood planning areas and conducted similar workshops of their own.

Citizens attending Teton County's Small Area Plan meetings and the Town's series of neighborhood meetings made it abundantly clear that they were not satisfied with the recent directions of the area's growth and development. Issues most often cited were increased traffic, commercial growth, and lack of affordable housing opportunities. They were articulated as issues of character: people felt their community was disappearing.

Both local governments recorded residents' comments with the intent of using that information to develop separate land use and development plans with implementing regulations. In considering what residents were telling them however, local officials realized that growth and development issues such as transportation, air and water quality, and wildlife habitat do not stop at jurisdictional boundaries. They saw that the character of Jackson was interdependent with that of Kelly, Moran, Wilson and Alta. Clearly, a major cooperative planning effort was needed. Neither jurisdiction could hope to solve community-wide problems without the help and support of the other.

What direction was growth taking? What would Jackson and Teton County look like at buildout under the regulations in effect at that time? Much of Teton County's ranchlands, with its pastures, hay meadows, and broad sweeping vistas, was zoned for development at one unit per three to six acres. Dividing a 1,000-acre ranch into three- to six-acre lots does not preserve rural character, and does not provide either affordable housing or open space.

Many residents felt the community was becoming out of balance, with resort and commercial development far outpacing the growth of employee units and other types of affordable housing. While "the market" was producing some affordable housing, it was not keeping up with the need. In the Town, affordable housing was often being built at the expense of established, mostly single-family neighborhoods which happened to be zoned MR-2 or MR-4, while existing affordable housing stock was continuing to be displaced by non-residential uses in Core Commercial and MR-4 zones.

The community and elected officials took action. Several community groups, state and federal agencies, consultants and residents contributed to a joint planning effort. Public forums were held to outline the most commonly voiced concerns. One such forum was the Successful Communities workshop, which drew more than 300 participants in March, 1990. During this workshop, participants identified Jackson Hole's natural and community assets as well as areas of concern, from which a vision statement was derived. Finally, specific actions to bring about the vision were identified, under the themes of (1) preservation of the high quality of the natural and built environment; (2) wildlife protection; (3) encourage economic and social diversity; (4) growth management; (5) preservation of Jackson Hole's quality of life; and (6) just compensation.

In response to the identified assets and concerns, a consulting team headed by Lane Kendig, Inc., was selected from a group of nationally recognized planners to produce a comprehensive plan and draft development regulations. During the information gathering or "Reconnaissance" phase of the planning process, the consultant team produced a series of five "Issues Papers" in which they evaluated economic development, natural resources, affordable housing, population and growth, and community character in Teton County. Public officials, local planning staffs, and the consultants met with the general public during a series of workshops to discuss the papers and possible strategies for addressing the issues which they raised.

Through the summer and early fall of 1991, hundreds of residents gathered and spoke at moderated, informal roundtable discussions at the Jackson Hole High School. They shared their concerns for Teton County's future, and told one another about personal likes and dislikes with respect to the Town's and County's development. Lane Kendig also gave the public some early thoughts on how their concerns might be addressed, and he personally led several question and answer sessions.

Visioning

From the comments and discussions at the workshops and mediated roundtables through the Reconnaissance phase, a vision for Teton County's future began to emerge. Residents expressed a strong desire to retain a rural western character and a sense of true community. They wished to maintain a socially and economically diverse population and to not become a resort where only the wealthy can afford to reside. They were committed to preserving open space, affordable housing, and wildlife, and to avoid making the mistakes they perceived had been made by other resort communities.

The vision includes:

- scenic vistas preservation;
- wildlife diversity and abundance;
- a continuation of ranching and other traditional agriculture;
- good quality air and water;
- a strong economy based upon visitation, offering unique visitor experiences in the outdoors;
- a balanced community not dominated by lodging and resorts;
- nodes and clusters of affordable homes; and
- good schools, parks, and other services to support community life.

In addition, the Town of Jackson focused on local and neighborhood concerns:

- safe, secure residential neighborhoods with quiet streets;
- a variety of housing types to support a diverse community;
- an efficient transportation system which is safe for pedestrians and cyclists as well as vehicles;

- a vital, pedestrian-oriented downtown area which welcomes both visitors and locals;
- major streets which are attractive and set a positive community image;
- protected and restored resources, such as the Town's hillside areas, and Cache and Flat Creeks; and
- residential and commercial buildings which reflect Jackson's heritage, character, and image.

Clearly, the results of this visioning process presented a very tall order for the officials and planners charged with formulating a comprehensive plan including land development regulations. On the surface, at least, some of the goals and desires expressed appeared to conflict or compete with others. For example, how could the integrity of single-family neighborhoods be preserved while still providing a variety of housing types and opportunities to support a diverse population? If open space and wildlife habitat were to be preserved, how could housing be truly affordable?

Embracing these conflicts, the visioning provided an umbrella guideline that would structure the entire planning process. A plan needed to be formulated which would identify the critical elements that define the character of the Town of Jackson and Teton County, and that the plan would recommend how community character could not only be preserved but actually enhanced through positive change.

Issues Mapping

A critical link between the visioning and the articulation of goals, objectives and strategies to realize the vision is "Issues Mapping." As the term implies, issues mapping is a graphic and geographic depiction of community planning issues and opportunities, and the spatial relationships among them. The issues map provides a framework for understanding the issues analyzed in the chapters which follow this Community Vision. It also provides a guideline against which proposed land development applications and public investments can be measured.

The Community Issues Map for the Town of Jackson is both vision and direction for future growth and development. It indicates areas where residents and officials find the present character desirable, and therefore, want it preserved. In other areas, an auto urban or suburban character should be preserved; at the same time it is recognized that some enhancement is needed. In practical terms, this means that new development in these areas should contribute to the existing character and not be allowed to start a shift or trend toward another more intense character type. Much of East Jackson, Upper Cache Creek, and the Sage Addition area are recommended for enhancement.

The Issues Map illustrates areas with significant environmental constraints and natural resources within the Town which must be considered and preserved, to the extent possible, when development is proposed. There are steep slopes in north Jackson, west of Flat Creek, on the north side of Snow King Mountain, and along the east side of South Highway 89. Some of these areas are not suitable for building, and any development needs to be clustered on the most suitable areas of each site. Parts of the butte side slopes in north Jackson are crucial winter range for mule deer, so development should be limited to allow the animals continued use and movement through the area. Forested areas on Snow King Mountain are used extensively by moose and deer. Although not designated as crucial winter range, these areas should also receive some degree of protection.

Jurisdictional wetlands along Flat Creek in the Karns Meadow and immediately north of High School Road are also designated for protection on the Issues Map. As the most prominent natural resource in all of Jackson, but one which has not been treated as the community amenity it could be, Flat Creek is also designated as a special restoration corridor. Details of the restoration plan for Flat Creek may be found in Chapter 4, Natural Resources.

Affordable housing nodes and other areas for higher density residential development are indicated, mainly in West Jackson where commercial services are available, transit is provided, and overall access service is

plentiful. The Issues Map recognizes the distinction between general community commercial needs in the shopping areas along W. Broadway and lodging and visitor services which should be focused primarily on the Jackson core area. The Issues Map illustrates that the area in and around Snow King Resort will continue to be the major center for resort-type uses in Town.

The Community Issues Map also depicts such non-regulatory issues as urban design and transportation. It indicates that special treatments are needed for the Town's three major gateways: north and south Highway 89, and at Highway 22 entrance to Town. Through a properly designed combination of monument signage and landscaping, a favorable first impression of the community and a clear sense of arrival will be created, with the message that the traveler is leaving one type of character and entering a distinctly different type.

The "transit nodes", which are major transfer points or other key facilities associated with the bus system, are also indicated. For this system to expand to meet community-wide service needs, a major terminal and park-and-ride facility is recommended for consideration at the intersection of Highways 89 and 22. The Map also designates major links of the pathway system, reflecting the importance given in the visioning process to the ability to travel about the Town and County on foot, by horseback, by cycling, or cross country skiing.

The Issues Map indicates the need for special design guides to preserve the unique pedestrian character of the Town Square. As well, the commercial areas along south Highway 89 are designated for design improvements to parking, access, internal circulation, signage and landscaping to enhance the existing character and mitigate the Highway's "strip commercial" appearance.

In Teton County, the major issues tend to be broader and were of necessity mapped at a much smaller scale. The County Issues Map primarily depicts three areas of concern. The first is "open space." These are lands on which ranching should continue, wildlife habitat preserved, and the visual qualities of scenic vistas protected.

Examples include the hay meadows of South Park, the Spring Gulch scenic area, ranchlands along the Teton Village road, Buffalo Valley and the western most entrance to Teton County from Alta. These lands also include the Snake, Hoback, Gros Ventre and Buffalo Fork river corridors and those hillsides and butte sides which are crucial winter range for ungulates. These areas should be kept free of development to the maximum extent possible to help preserve rural character, critical wildlife habitat and important image-setting scenic vistas and river corridors, and to encourage the continuation of ranching and other types of traditional agriculture as a vital part of the community's character. The County should encourage the preservation of the rural character, critical wildlife habitat and important image-setting scenic vistas and corridors, and encourage the continuation of ranching and other types of traditional agriculture as a vital part of the community character. Where possible, the County should be flexible with its development regulations as an encouragement to landowners to permanently protect these wildlife, scenic and agricultural areas. In addition, where nonregulatory options are available, these should be encouraged. For example, a land trust's resource analysis in preparation for a conservation easement, may be sufficient to replace the County's site analysis.

The second type of area identified on the County Issues Map are the "neighborhood conservation" areas. These are lands which are already subdivided, and which have been determined to generally constitute acceptable patterns of development within already established boundaries. These lands include the vast majority of the large-lot platted subdivisions in the County, as well as planned developments, such as Rafter J, Spring Creek Ranch, Boyles Hill (Indian Springs) and Teton Pines. In these areas development will be allowed to continue as it was originally approved, with very little (if any) change to be effected by the land development regulations adopted to implement this Plan.

The third type of area shown on the County Issues Map is how new development relates spatially to the community's overall vision. These are the areas seen as appropriate for future growth and include the

Teton Village and Grand Targhee Resorts. This third type also includes new limited commercial areas near the Aspens and in Wilson and Hoback Junction, intended to meet the basic service needs of residents.

In addition, perhaps the most important areas for future development are the housing "cluster targets". These are areas which, from the standpoint of access, ability to provide services and/or contiguity with existing development, are most appropriate for relatively high density housing. One such area is in the northwest part of South Park at the south side of High School Road across from Cottonwood Park. Smaller potential affordable housing nodes are designated in Wilson and Hoback Junction adjacent to existing communities. It is this clustering of development potential, with its required open space preservation, that allows rural character objectives, such as wildlife and scenic resource protection, to be achieved.

Like the Town map, the County Issues Map also reflects an increasing awareness of the need for alternatives to automobile transportation. Areas to be considered for new or expanded transit service are depicted, including Wilson and Hoback Junction. Major links in the proposed pathway system are also shown.

Vision Statement

In order to provide the finishing touches to the visioning process and to better translate the community vision into plans and regulations, a vision statement was drafted, based on stated values of the community.

It is the vision of the citizens, planners and elected officials, who have all contributed to this plan, to guide and manage change and development to:

- support and promote a diverse social and economic population that includes a resident work force;
- preserve the traditions and character of the Rocky Mountain West and Wyoming, including ranching and through architectural design;
- promote economic sustenance that does not depend on population growth;
- set aside, for generations to come, scenic vistas and wildlife habitat;
- maintain and enhance environmental quality, including air and water quality;
- maintain outdoor recreation and adventure opportunities; and
- offer a spectrum of housing types, especially for resident workers.

The vision also includes the intent that development on private lands in Teton County be compatible with surrounding public land values and uses, including Grand Teton National Park, Yellowstone National Park, and Bridger-Teton National Forest, because all towns, neighborhoods and resorts in Teton County are integral to the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem.

Fortunately, Teton County residents enjoy common values upon which they can build a future. This planning effort sought a "common ground" among several points of view. There is widespread commitment for protection of Teton County's natural resources, outdoor recreational opportunities, sense of community and small-town feeling and social diversity.

The Comprehensive Plan for Teton County needs to acknowledge and protect the benefits of growth while adopting reasonable limits. In an effort to create a "best-choice" future for our community and to design a regulatory system that serves this purpose, the benefits of growth must be balanced with the benefits of growth management.

The guiding principles shown below have been articulated to reconcile the benefits of growth with the benefits of growth management.

1. Teton County's wildlife and scenic resources are a local and national treasure, and, therefore, the community recognizes a stewardship responsibility for their protection. Future development in Teton County will take place in this context.
2. Teton County is a community first and a resort second. Social diversity is a defining characteristic of the community, and sufficient housing is seen as essential to retain that characteristic in the future. High-end residential and commercial development will not be permitted to dominate the community at the expense of affordable housing opportunities for permanent residents.
3. The intent of this Plan is to create conditions for a sustainable visitor-based economy not dependent upon growth, and an economy that reflects the unique small-town, Western commercial character of Jackson, and the outdoor recreational opportunities of Teton County as key components of the visitor experience.
4. As a community grounded in values of individualism, fairness and hospitality, the intent of this Plan is to provide property owners and local businesses with as much flexibility as possible in the use and development of their property. Local elected officials will be entrusted with discretionary decision-making power to protect public health, safety and welfare.

The Plan chapters which follow provide the means to achieve the vision and guiding principles through a detailed analysis of issues, establishment of goals and objectives, consideration of strategies and selection of appropriate actions. However, these chapters do not represent the culmination or end-point of the process. The term "planning process" defines the on-going or cyclical nature of planning. While certain aspects of the planning program have been formulated to the point that they are ready for implementation, others require continuing monitoring and analysis before they too are ripened.

The most significant areas in which the planning process will continue following adoption of this Plan are:

1. Definition of the fair share of affordable housing to be provided by new residential, commercial and resort development;
2. Specification of fees to address the impacts of development on parks and recreation, schools and roads;
3. Consideration of growth management techniques intended to insure balance among the residential, commercial and resort development sectors and to influence the rate of community change to avoid cycles of community "boom and bust";
4. Establishment of planning capacity guidelines, providing a range for each resort's ultimate development, within which each resort can develop its own master plan;
5. Formulation of historic preservation design guidelines;
6. Re-running the County's transportation model to determine the intermodal transportation improvements necessary to serve the vision expressed by this Comprehensive Plan.

This plan is intended to guide the inhabitants of Teton County, Wyoming, into the 21st century in a manner that honors Jackson Hole and Alta's heritage and setting, and endows future generations. The Plan also seeks to build on conditions existing in 1993.