

2008 Comprehensive Plan Community Vision and Guiding Principles

Revised Draft – January 23, 2008

Introduction

The Community Vision and Guiding Principles below were prepared by the planning team as a “working draft”, to be evaluated by the community over the coming months. They will ultimately serve as the basis for preparation and evaluation of alternative scenarios and concepts for the Town and County. The foundation for this working draft was the vision and guiding principles contained in the 1994 Plan, and the community input the planning team received from various events earlier this fall (Old Bills Run, community workshop, website comments, Town Council, County Commissioners, and Planning Commission meetings). We will continue to refine this vision as the planning process moves forward.

Community Vision

A vision is a statement of the kind of place that our citizens and leaders want the community to become in the future. Our vision is that Jackson and Teton County will have a land use pattern that preserves and balances our region’s natural environment, livability, and sense of community. By directing development to well-defined contiguous areas, growth can be organized in more efficient land use patterns; open lands and natural resources can be better protected; and public facilities and services can be delivered more effectively. With a finite supply of land, our community shall provide for the region’s growth in a long-term, sustainable manner that balances growth, conservation, and community well-being.

Themes and Guiding Principles

Six overarching themes have been identified to guide the development of the updated comprehensive plan. They include:

1. **Promote Stewardship of Wildlife Habitat and other Environmentally Sensitive Areas**
2. **Meet Our Community’s Diverse Housing Needs**
3. **Develop a Comprehensive, Integrated Transportation System**
4. **Manage Growth Responsibly**
5. **Maintain Jackson as “Heart of the Region”**
6. **Provide for a Diverse and Balanced Community**

A series of guiding principles follows each theme, providing direction on the range of topics that fall under each. The guiding principles highlight the region’s strengths, as well as those areas where a shift in policy direction will be needed to achieve the community’s vision. The guiding principles will be modified based on community feedback and will serve as a foundation for the creation of more detailed goals and policies during subsequent phases of the plan update process.

1. Promote Stewardship of Wildlife Habitat and other Environmentally Sensitive Areas

Teton County’s abundant wildlife and natural and scenic resources are a local and national treasure and the community recognizes a stewardship responsibility for their protection. Future development in Jackson and Teton County will take place in this context. The forested lands and meadows throughout the county are a precious resource that all agree must be preserved

and maintained. At the local scale, a compact development pattern can preserve land for open space within the town, as well as lead us towards a more sustainable and energy-efficient development pattern. The following guiding principles support these objectives:

- ***Wildlife habitat protection***
 - Abundant and diverse wildlife distinguishes the town and county from other regions and this distinction is to be preserved.
 - Minimize habitat fragmentation and guard against incremental degradation.
- ***Scenic resource protection***
 - Development is to be located to preserve the long views across meadows toward the mountains and buttes as seen from major roads and highways
- ***Open lands preservation***
 - Target areas of scenic and natural resources for open space preservation
 - Pursue multiple techniques and partnerships for open space preservation
- ***Air and water quality***
 - Protect the rivers, streams and other water bodies from the potential impacts of development
 - Protect ground water from the potential impacts of development
 - Minimize air pollutants from traffic and wood smoke
- ***Ecologically sensitive lands***
 - Protect wetlands and other significant habitat areas
- ***Protected Hillsides***
 - Maintain the visually quality of forested hillsides by minimizing the footprint of disturbance and adapting development to fit the topography rather than adapting the topography to accommodate development
 - Steer development away from hazardous areas and steep slopes
- ***Access to public lands***
 - Maximize access to federal lands and to the rivers
- ***Sustainable Use of Resources***
 - Use our region’s natural resources, including energy, in a manner that meets our present needs without endangering the welfare of future generations.

2. Meet Our Community’s Diverse Housing Needs

Teton County to its residents is a community first and a resort second. If it is to remain as such, then our community’s workforce must be able to live as well as work here. Social diversity defines our community, and the services and civic institutions to support our residents as well as sufficient housing that is affordable to our working middle class are essential to retain this sense of community. The following guiding principles support these objectives:

- ***Support a diverse social and economic population***
 - Ensure that adequate housing is available to sustain the needs of our resident workforce.
 - Locate housing where residents will have access to transit, services, and schools.
- ***Sustain the social structure needed to support healthy communities***
 - Community services focused in centers
 - Promote innovative techniques and approaches to foster civic involvement

- **Identify and preserve/enhance each community’s unique character**
 - Recognize each community’s unique sense of place, community institutions, physical characteristics and historic development patterns
 - Ensure that the physical form and design of development fits the scale and character of the community

3. Develop a Comprehensive, Integrated Transportation Strategy

Expansion of the transportation network with multiple transportation options is critical to addressing Teton County’s transportation challenges. Our region’s development pattern must support a diverse range of transportation choices for residents and visitors, including walking, bicycling, transit, and driving, in a manner that minimizes the reliance on the automobile. The public and private sectors will cooperate in the development of a transportation system that gives citizens a greater range of travel choices and modes for different purposes. The Plan identifies strategies to address the unprecedented traffic growth in Teton County, the community’s demand for increased transit service and declining transportation funds at the state and federal level. A set of strategic issues addresses integrated solutions and moves beyond traditional methods. The following guiding principles support these objectives:

- **Establish a transportation funding program in Teton County based on multimodal travel standards and bi-annual travel behavior monitoring**
 - Establish dedicated funding sources for transit services.
 - Redefine transportation funding criteria based on multi-modal travel objectives
 - Monitor travel behavior after investing in the multi-modal transportation system
- **Identify a Regional Transportation Authority structure that addresses roadway and transit needs in Teton County and beyond**
 - To adequately address the transportation needs identified by the community, a multi-county cross-state RTA may be required to plan, fund, construct, and address regional travel needs
- **Prepare smart growth transportation criteria to evaluate impacts associated with development in Teton County**
 - Correlate information from the travel behavior studies to future development
 - Establish multimodal accommodations as a condition of development

4. Manage Growth Responsibly

The Plan is based on the principles and vision of a compact land use pattern in communities that shapes growth in a manner that preserves our region’s natural environment, livability, and sense of community. By directing growth to well-defined areas, growth can be efficiently accommodated while still preserving open lands and natural resources; and public facilities and services can be delivered more effectively. With a finite supply of developable land, our vision ensures that the region’s growth can be managed to balance growth and conservation.

The cornerstone of the Plan is intergovernmental cooperation. The Town of Jackson and Teton County, through this plan update process, have made a strong commitment to continue working together to achieve regional objectives. The success of the Plan depends on this cooperative approach continuing. They know that better coordination is needed to address critical growth issues such as transportation, development patterns, open space and resource protection, and efficient provision of needed facilities and services.

Each of the communities in the region has their own sense of place and community character based on natural and built characteristics. Social components of community, such as arts and culture, social services, and community spirit through shared events and activities, are recognized as also recognized as equally important aspects of “community character”. Future growth and change in these communities should build on and reinforce these unique attributes. The following guiding principles support these objectives:

- ***Establish and define the “end state” for development of the town and county and implement it through regulatory and programmatic approaches***
 - Recognize the need for flexibility over time and accommodate necessary changes while preserving the defined build-out
 - Establish techniques and policies to maintain density neutrality as future changes are made
- ***Preserve and enhance “sense of place” through the physical design and scale of development***
 - Preserve neighborhood patterns
 - Use scale, materials and design to fit the development to its context
 - Development designed to fit the community rather than the community changing to fit the development
 - Preservation of historically-significant structures and sites
- ***Recognize the importance of social components to building and maintaining a sense of community***
 - Support and reinforce the social aspects of community-building, such as community services and facilities, gathering places, and other non-physical features.
- ***Infill and redevelopment will be encouraged in appropriate locations***
 - Redevelopment shall contribute to the desired character of downtown areas
- ***Fully Address the Cost of Growth***
 - Future growth will pay for itself and avoid increasing the tax burden on the community

5. Maintain Jackson as “Heart of the Region”

As stated in the Town Council’s Statement of Strategic Intent, Jackson is the community hub for the region, where people live, work and play. The concept of Jackson as the “heart” of the region refers to the concentration of development within the Town of Jackson and immediately around the town, but is also an emotional, cultural, and values-driven concept that refers to the role that the town plays as the region’s center. The following guiding principles support these objectives:

- ***Continue to promote downtown Jackson as the civic/cultural/retail heart of the region***
 - Sustain its unique and identifiable image
- ***Strong retail/mixed-use core with areas for visitors and residents***
 - Promote higher-intensity residential and mixed-use development in appropriate locations
- ***Foster healthy downtown neighborhoods***
 - Ensure that future infill and redevelopment enhances neighborhood vitality
 - Create public gathering places

- **Enhanced transportation network**
 - Fully develop a safe and integrated pedestrian system.
- **Promote Quality Design**
 - Emphasis shall be placed on quality design both in the public realm—streets, civic buildings, and other public spaces—as well as the private realm—commercial buildings, work places, and housing.

6. Provide for a Diverse and Balanced Community

The intent of this Plan is to create conditions for a sustainable community that reflects the unique small-town, Western commercial character of Jackson, the wildlife and natural resource values of our residents and visitors, and the outdoor recreational opportunities of Teton County. Outdoor-based recreation and tourism will remain an important part of the community’s economy, but the community’s economy has shifted away from a reliance on tourism as its primary economic “backbone”. Future actions will recognize the changing trends in the local, regional, national, and global economy that are affecting the west and the lifestyle choices of its current and future residents. The following guiding principles support these objectives:

- **Balance of growth among residential, commercial, and resort development uses**
 - Work to ensure that no one sector of our community over-dominates.
- **Support maintenance and expansion of locally-owned businesses**
 - Take steps to enhance the vitality of businesses that are unique to Jackson, that enhance our sense of community and identity and maintain a local economic base.
- **Strike a balance between our environment, workforce housing needs, transportation systems, community vitality, and growth**
 - Develop and implement better indicators of sustainability for decision-making at the community level that balances attention to economy, the environment, and community.