



# 2009 Jackson / Teton County Community Vision

***Preserve and protect the area's ecosystem and natural resources and meet the community's human needs in a sustainable and predictable manner.***

## The Community Vision and Sustainability Concept

The Jackson/Teton County community is integrally tied to the unique natural environment in which it is located. Yellowstone (the world's first National Park), Grand Teton National Park, Bridger Teton National Forest, and the National Elk Refuge, all of which are wholly or partially contained within Teton County, confirm the special ecology and international significance of our valley home. These roughly 2.6 million acres of federally protected and resource-rich land foster a strong ecosystem stewardship ethic in the residents of and visitors to Jackson and Teton County. With only 73,000 acres (or 3%) of land in our county available for private development, there are limited resources available to meet the demands of the many people who want to live in and visit the area. This intense pressure on the limited supply of land threatens the very environmental, social, and economic characteristics that define our community.

The 2009 Jackson/Teton County Community Vision Statement: "Preserve and protect the area's ecosystem and meet the community's human needs in a sustainable and predictable manner," expresses the public's desire to strike a balance between the complex and interrelated

ecological, social, and economic challenges of our community. The community desires to meet these challenges in a way that maintains and enhances our community in the context of our unique location.

### ***What Does "Sustainable" Mean in Jackson/Teton County?***

***"Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs."***

(1987 Brundtland Commission Report)

The concept of sustainability has been internationally adopted as a framework within which to understand and balance mounting concerns about the use of finite natural resources. In Jackson/Teton County, this concept is embedded in the community vision. Our location in the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem, coupled with the high demand for our limited private lands, magnifies the importance of instituting the principles of sustainable development in Jackson and Teton County.

The concept of sustainability within the context of the community’s vision delineates that:

- ✓ All decisions should be sensitive to the preservation and protection of the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem and the area’s natural resources;
- ✓ Ecosystem preservation does not preclude growth and development necessary to meet our community’s human needs; and,
- ✓ The impact of local decisions must be understood in a regional context because of the ecological significance of our surroundings.

Sustainability provides the framework within which we are able to realize the community’s top values:

1. *Promote Stewardship of Wildlife and Natural Resources;* and
2. *Manage Growth Responsibly.*

These two priorities are the first of the seven community themes outlined in this Comprehensive Plan. This Plan focuses on the balance and prioritization of the community’s values in a regional context. As a result, the community’s recommended policies along with the judgement of our success in achieving the community vision will include consideration of not only local impacts, but also the impacts to surrounding public lands and neighboring communities.

## Balancing Community Values

The Jackson/Teton County community vision for the future has remained fairly consistent throughout the history of comprehensive planning in our community. With this Plan, the community has refined the tools that it sees as the most effective way to implement our community vision.



**This Plan is about balancing community values. Steering Committee members provided a balanced mix of values. (Part of the committee represented in this image.)**

### Past comprehensive plans dealt with separate, unrelated elements

The community has traditionally addressed our goals and values in separate plan elements, with the hope of achieving them all. The 1994 Comprehensive Plan incorporated nine community issues into a vision chapter that addressed each issue, but focused more on the balancing and prioritizing within each individual chapter than the balancing and prioritization between the issues. This relationship is illustrated in the graphic below.



**Figure 2.1: 1994 Plan Vision illustrated as separate, unrelated elements.**

This Plan recognizes that displacing housing, transportation, and industry to neighboring communities may have a greater impact on the ecosystem than provision for those elements locally.

**This Plan balances and prioritizes the community values using the concept of sustainability**

This Plan builds on the work of the 1994 Plan and specifically considers the prioritization, interrelationship and balance of the community's values. The 2009 Community Vision is a comprehensive statement that serves as the guiding principle for all themes of this Comprehensive Plan. This Plan acknowledges the community's priorities and the interrelationships

inherent in the Vision statement and between the themes. It provides guidance and predictability to future decision-making by prioritizing the plan's themes at multiple levels of geographic specificity. The community, through This Plan, prioritizes two community values: (1) stewardship of wildlife and natural resources, and (2) responsible growth management. This plan acknowledges that wildlife and natural resource protection depends on both conservation and responsible and sustainable growth patterns. It recognizes that displacing housing, transportation, and industry to neighboring communities may have a greater impact on the regional ecosystem than if these human needs were provided at the local level. The graphic below represents the prioritization and interrelationship of this Plan's themes in the realization of the 2009 Community Vision.



Figure 2.2: This Plan and the 2009 Community Vision is set against the backdrop of our ecosystem and relates the seven themes to each other and balances and prioritizes among them.



2009 Community Vision balances growth management and community needs, such as housing, with stewardship of natural resources.

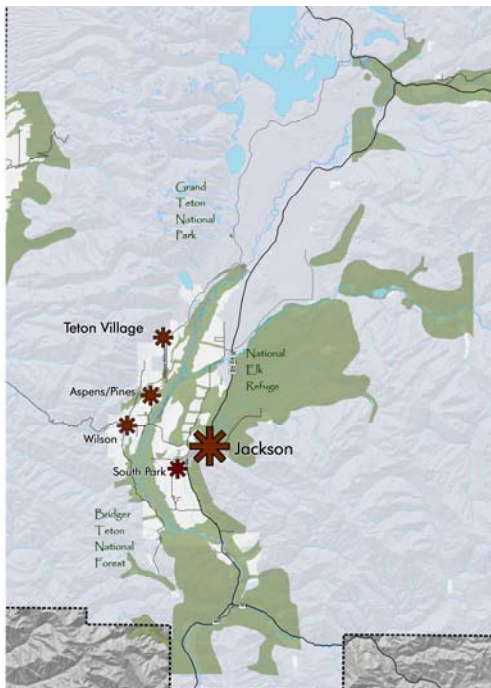


## Prioritizing Community Values

This Plan is organized around community values and seven themes discussed in the following sections. Each theme relates to the community vision and to the concept of sustainability. The themes are organized in order of community priority. Realizing the community vision within our regional context will require tradeoffs in certain geographic areas, as illustrated in the figure below. It illustrates priorities for natural resource stewardship and community areas.



Public meetings such as this one, allowed the community to discuss physical plans for the county and values.



This Plan prioritizes the natural resource protection areas (see Theme 1) and provides guidance on locations for community nodes (see Theme 2).

## Promote Stewardship of Wildlife and Natural Resources (Theme 1)

Jackson and Teton County are located within the largest generally intact ecosystem in the lower 48 states. Preservation and protection of the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem and the area’s natural resources is the top priority of our community. In addition, the community appreciates that all future public and private decisions will have local and regional ecological impacts and wants to minimize these impacts. All local decisions must be ecologically sensitive to preserve and protect the community’s important natural and scenic resources and to honor the community’s top priority of stewardship and protection of natural resources. Exporting impacts to neighboring communities divides the ecosystem with traffic, causes a leap frog development pattern connected by commuters, and increases energy consumption.

*“This Theme is the top priority of the community.”*

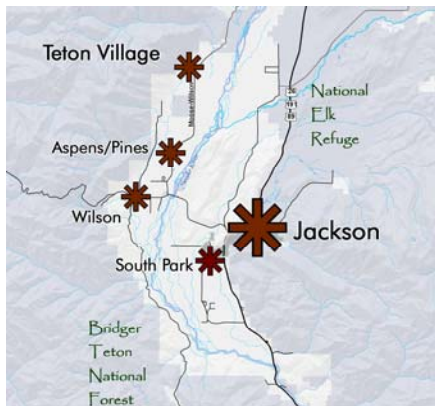


Protecting the natural environment and wildlife habitat is a priority

## Manage Growth Responsibly (Theme 2)

The community recognizes that growth must be managed in a responsible and sustainable manner in order to achieve the primary goal of Stewardship of Wildlife and Natural Resources. At the same time, the community recognizes that ecosystem preservation and protection does not preclude growth. Moreover, the community accepts a responsibility not to export our impacts to other jurisdictions within the ecosystem and to work with surrounding local, state, and federal jurisdictions to develop regional solutions to meet our shared challenges. In Jackson/Teton County, infill and redevelopment that is focused on the provision of workforce housing and locally serving commercial development, is the most sustainable type of growth. A nodal development pattern of town-level densities in Town, northern South Park, Teton Village, Wilson, and near the Aspens, allows for the provision of community needs while minimizing impacts to the local and regional ecosystem. The first two themes of this Plan define and explain the community's top priorities; the remaining five themes focus on a specific human need. To realize the community vision, each of these themes must be achieved consistent with the land use pattern described in Theme 2.

*"The community vision requires that [Themes 3 – 7] be achieved consistently with the land use pattern described in this Theme."*



**A land use pattern formed around existing “nodes” where housing and services will occur ensures managed growth.**

## Maintain Town as the “Heart of the Region” (Theme 3)

The policies suggested in Theme 3 build on the foundation of Theme 2: Manage Growth Responsibly. The policies define how to meet community needs through continued development of the Town of Jackson. The concentration of housing, commercial services, and civic and cultural centers in the Town of Jackson supports the community vision by removing growth pressure from crucial wildlife habitats and natural resource areas elsewhere in the ecosystem. The Town of Jackson has already developed the social, transit, and municipal infrastructure to allow for the provision of community needs with negligible ecological impact. Encouraging future growth within town limits maximizes the likelihood that residents will walk or bike to work or to shop. It also promotes a community that is environmentally, economically, and socially sustainable. Maintaining Town as the Heart of the region fulfills our community vision by lowering our dependence on neighboring communities to meet our housing needs.

*"Jackson already has the social, transit, and municipal infrastructure that will allow community needs to be met with minimum additional ecological impact."*



**Jackson is the social, cultural, and economic heart of the region.**  
Photo taken by K. Robertson

### Meet Our Community’s Housing Needs (Theme 4)

Providing for our basic housing need in a sustainable manner is complicated in our community by the high demand for private land. Much of this demand comes from individuals who make their income elsewhere in the country and can pay more for a home than someone employed in our community. Workers who cannot afford to live in the community commute from neighboring communities. Commuting has negative ecological, social, economic, and transportation impacts to our community and throughout the region; and transfers our housing affordability issues to neighboring communities. A local workforce is more likely to walk or bike to work, and more likely to invest their time, energy, and money in our community. Local provision of housing is the most sustainable way to address our housing needs.

*“Providing for the basic human need of housing in a manner responsible to ecosystem preservation and protection requires housing our workforce locally.”*



**Local housing allows the workforce to bike or walk to work and invest time in the community**

### Provide for a Diverse and Balanced Economy (Theme 5)

It has been a long standing principle in our community that we are a “community first, and a resort second.” Through this theme, the community acknowledges that the resort characteristics of our community provide for a strong economy and the provision of a number of community services that would be otherwise unattainable. However, the community also desires a variety of local employment opportunities, some of which are not resort-based. This Theme also acknowledges that the community desires to strike a balance between the marketing of our natural resources and their protection. Ensuring the local provision of workforce housing, commercial businesses that serve the local population and a variety of local employment opportunities are all crucial to the community vision of a sustainable future. Failure to provide for these community needs locally will result in the transfer of these demands to outlying areas and further complicate the ecological, economic, and social challenges of our region.

*“It has been a long standing principle of the community that we remain a community first and a resort second.”*



**Marketing and business A balance must be struck between natural resources and.**



### Develop a Multi-Modal Transportation Strategy (Theme 6)

Reliance on transportation by Single Occupancy Vehicles (SOVs) primarily results in negative ecological impacts of higher traffic volumes, increased carbon emissions, and wider roadways that are more dangerous for wildlife and human traffic. Many of the community’s major roadways are approaching capacity tipping points that will necessitate road widening and other traditional traffic solutions unless the policies of this Theme area implemented immediately. To limit transportation infrastructure expansions and their ecological impacts the community has to change the way it travels. The most sustainable way to provide for the community mobility is through alternate modes of transportation such as transit, walking, carpooling, and bicycling. Part of enabling this change is by placing people in closer proximity to services and by providing travel choices—through a nodal development pattern and increased funding for transit and other travel modes. A larger part is changing the way we think about transportation options.

*“To limit transportation infrastructure expansions and resulting ecological impacts the community has to change the way it travels.”*



**START is part of the multi-modal strategy.**

### Provide Quality Community Services, Facilities, and Infrastructure (Theme 7)

The policies of this Theme address the ways in which the community will ensure its health, safety and welfare. Fire protection, medical service, water, sewer, schools, arts and culture, and social services are all required by residents and guests of the town and county. Defining acceptable levels of service, providing the necessary facilities and infrastructure, and ensuring adequate funding is essential to realizing the community vision of adequately meeting its human needs. Appropriate service levels will help the community to better understand the ecological, economic, and social cost of development decisions and to ensure that development pays the costs that are attributable to growth.

*“The policies of this Theme address how the community will ensure our health, safety, and welfare.”*



**Community Services, Facilities, and Infrastructure are important to community health, safety, and wellbeing.**



**A Steering Committee provided a balanced set of views to help frame the plan.**

## **Relationship of the Themes to the Future Land Use Plan**

This Plan assumes that the realization of the community vision and all the themes in this Plan will require tradeoffs in different parts of the county and communities. The themes in the next seven chapters provide guidance to where development and conservation is appropriate. The Future Land Use Plan (following the themes in), provides additional discussion of the priorities in specific districts of the town and county.