



# Introducing "Decoding the Code"

From 2010 through 2012, our valley engaged in huge community-wide process to write our Comprehensive Plan. Known as the "**Comp Plan,**" this document is required by state law so that all Idaho counties grow in a thoughtful, orderly way. In Teton County, we enshrined the values of outdoor recreation, agricultural heritage, quality public facilities, pristine natural resources, and a sustainable economy in our Comp Plan. However, state law stops short of actually requiring counties to follow their plan. Instead, it is up to each county to adopt a Land Use Code that mirrors the values put forth in its Comp Plan and gives it the force of law.

**This is why the Teton County Land Use Code is so important. It gives the values within the Comp Plan the regulatory “teeth” necessary to shape growth consistent with the plan’s intent.** Outdoor recreation, agricultural heritage, good public facilities, pristine natural resources, and a sustainable economy will not simply happen because these values are mentioned in our Comp Plan. Rather, these things will only be possible if we incorporate them into the Land Use Code and make them the law of the land.

**Teton County’s Comp Plan is visionary but vague.** Outdoor recreation, agricultural heritage, good public facilities, pristine natural resources, and a sustainable economy are all discussed at length, but the plan mentions few specifics. For example, the plan recommends increased protection of wildlife habitat, but does that mean we require environmental studies of all subdivisions? Or do we simply map where we think wildlife exists and put restrictions on development in those areas? Questions such as these are answered in an exercise we call “policy development.” Policy Development is taking the visionary but vague ideas in the Comp Plan and refining them so that they become specific enough to become law.

In 2001, VARD was created in response to a lax code that resulted in the creation of nearly 9,000 vacant lots haphazardly scattered across the valley. **For the last 14 years, we have been working toward the formulation of a sound Land Use Code that implements a visionary Comprehensive Plan.** The time is now to set the course for quality, sustainable development in Teton Valley’s future.

In the upcoming weeks, VARD will issue a 5-part series of communications we call "**Decoding the Code**". Each issue will contain specific Policy Development topics that are of interest to you, and we will explain how these topics relate to the Land Use Code. The forthcoming issues of Decoding the Code are as follows:

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- 1. Coding Character: Part One**
  - 2. Coding Character: Part Two**
  - 3. Mapping Our Future**
  - 4. Developing Sustainably**
  - 5. Proactively Planning for Housing, Transportation, and Recreation**
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Our hope is that "**Decoding the Code**" will give you information you need to get informed, get involved, and ensure that the Teton County Land Use Code will set the stage for a thriving, sustainable Teton Valley. In the next 2-3 months, we expect that Teton County will initiate a public review of its draft Land Use Code. Though the code writing process has technically been underway for several years, the good part is about to begin - your input! Together, we will Decode the Code and shape the future of Teton Valley.