



Counting our Blessings

The slowdown in development allows us to take land-use planning out of the emergency room – where decisions are made under pressure, piecemeal, project by project – and instead look at the big picture, the long-term, and use a little more imagination. We can get into the land-use-planning equivalent of a healthy diet and regular exercise. How do areas that have been developed parcel by parcel come together as a community, rather than a collection of isolated subdivisions? Rather than just looking at, for example, street design in yet another subdivision, the planning staff and decisionmakers (with your input!) can look at how it all connects. Can children safely take themselves from school to the local park to the trailhead to home to catch a bus to the ski area?

The boom was sometimes an excuse for poor decisions: “We have a backlog of applications, so we can’t ask a developer to spend the time and money to do this properly.” Let’s not allow the downturn to become a similar excuse: “These are hard times, so we can’t expect developers to take the time and spend the money to meet rigorous standards.” In these lean times we need to make every decision count, just as every county expenditure needs to count for the common good.

It isn’t easy to tear up asphalt and re-establish sagebrush. You can’t take back the money spent on a six-lane highway and invest it in pathways and public transportation instead. We have the advantage of making development decisions with our eyes wide open. We are not doomed to repeat our past missteps or make the same mistakes as other communities. Fossil fuels and the

automobile are not the way of the future – let’s not plan our cities around them. Natural areas are important to human health and the livability of any community, and they need to be planned for as much as roads, bridges and utilities. Wildlife matters and is one of the things that sets us apart from the urban jungle.

There’s a reason *National Geographic* considers this valley a geotourism site. The good news for Teton Valley is that environmental stewardship represents economic opportunity as well as ethical responsibility.

Teton Valley is a diverse community – sometimes an acrimonious one – but we all have in common a connection to the land. Whether your family has farmed the same ground for generations, you work for the Forest Service, or you are a transplant drawn to skiing untracked powder, the inescapable defining feature of this community is our landscape.

Here at VARD we recognize that the multiple interests and perspectives on the land, and human activity that shapes it, can be a source of strife. But they can also be a cause for celebration, shared positive experience and a sense of a shared future. We want YOUR STORY about a place in Teton Valley that is especially meaningful to you, or a specific transformational experience in the landscape that has fostered your connection to this place. See the back page of this newsletter for how to get us your submission by May 31.

—Sandy Mason, Executive Director



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County & City STATISTICS



We could soon have 20,223 lots recorded in Teton County.

	Recorded lots / units	Pending lots / units	Residential Structures
Rural County (excludes the cities)	9,129 units on 29,768 acres	6,381 units on 9,458 acres	2,454
Driggs	1640 units	853 units	640
Victor	676 units	1,544 units	676
TOTAL COUNTY-WIDE*	11,445	8,778	3,770

*Numbers of lots and units for Teton are unavailable

Total Recorded Lots (11,445) + Total Pending Lots (8,778) = We could soon have 20,223 LOTS recorded in our entire county.

Total Recorded Lots (11,445) - Total Residential Structures (3,770) = In our entire county, there are currently 7,675 RECORDED LOTS THAT DO NOT CURRENTLY HAVE HOMES ON THEM but could be built upon.

Total Potential Lots (20,223) – Total Residential Structures Already Built (3,770) = If all the lots pending in the entire county are also approved, then we could have 16,453 MORE HOMES added to our county when these lots are someday built upon.

Total Recorded Lots in the Rural County (9,129) – Residential Structures Already Built in the Rural County (2,454) = In our rural county, 6,675 RECORDED LOTS do not currently have homes built on them but may someday be built upon.

Total Potential Lots in the Rural County (9,129 + 6,381) – Residential Structures Already Built in the Rural County (2,454) = If all the lots pending in our rural countryside are also approved, then we could have 13,056 MORE HOMES added to our rural countryside when these lots are built upon.

CONCLUSION

As sales decrease and foreclosures rise, the market will eventually reveal what type of development works and what does not. Teton Valley has an opportunity to learn from the mistakes caused by rabid real estate speculation. There may even be a point at which the county considers incentivizing developers to re-plate flailing subdivisions with fewer lots and better designs.



Valley Advocates for Responsible Development

MISSION: To advocate for the private, public and civic actions that will result in the responsible development and sustainable use of natural resources (water, land, wildlife and air) in Teton Valley.

OFFICE HOURS—
M-TR 9:00am-4:00pm
Friday by appointment
OFFICE ADDRESS—
355 North Main, Driggs, ID 83422
MAILING ADDRESS—
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208.354.1707 ph / 208.354.1709 fx
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VARD, PO Box 1164, Driggs, ID 83422



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No time like the Present to plan for the Future

The more complicated the project, the greater the importance of planning. This is something we all know to be true from our own lives, whether it is a home-improvement project, a trip, or launching a new business. While we pursue our busy lives it is often only when something goes wrong – the housing bubble bursts, the hospital is in financial crisis, or the school is failing to meet federal standards – that we stop and ask questions.

The best time to get involved in local land use is during the planning stages, before it becomes "the crisis next door." Fortunately, in a small community

like ours, it doesn't have to be intimidating. Meetings are usually small and you'll see familiar faces. The VARD website and email updates are a good way to keep current with what is going on.

Here is a sampling of the community planning efforts underway at the county. VARD believes that these are important pro-active steps for the county to take in order to make land-use decisions with a vision for the long-term. When the time comes for the county to hold public hearings on these topics, take the chance to go and learn more and put in your two cents.

Transportation Planning

Most people leave their house every day. You may walk, drive, cycle or ski. Your safety and the quality of your experience getting from point A to point B depends chiefly on the condition of the road or pathway and how crowded it is. One essential part of transportation planning is projecting the numbers of people using our roads now and in the future. These numbers are closely linked to changing land use and, in particular, what land is transferring from agricultural to residential use. How road improvements and maintenance will be paid for is another big question.

Movement onto and off of Highway 33 is a top priority, as anyone who has tried to make a left-hand turn onto the highway during commuter hours knows. The county will interface with the Idaho Department of Transportation to create a Transportation Access Plan for Highway 33. The city of Driggs already has one for the portion of the highway that passes through the city.



Do you care about safe roads? Can your kids walk to school or ride their bikes to the local park?

Teton Valley can make choices now that will encourage bike, pedestrian and public transportation. It just so happens that these choices will also positively impact the economic vibrancy of our downtown areas. Consider the advantage we have over other communities already built around the automobile, now trying to retro-fit safe bike and pedestrian pathways into their infrastructure. Last fall, Teton County adopted a pathways map to use in future planning for pathways across the valley.

PLUM The Projected Land Use Map

Why do we need another map?

This is one of those planning terms that has been bandied about a lot over the last few years. Basically, the Projected Land Use Map (also referred to as the Preferred Land Use Map or PLUM) is a forward-looking community planning map that Teton County is required to create and adopt pursuant to the Idaho Local Land Use Planning Act (LLUPA). The PLUM will serve as a guidance document, providing the long-term vision for the direction of future land-use development in our valley. The map reflects our community's current idea of how land uses might evolve in the future in light of the goals outlined in our county comprehensive plan.

It is important to remember that the PLUM is not a zoning map, but rather a state-mandated planning tool. A zoning map controls what types of developments may be constructed in a particular area, whereas the PLUM forecasts future development for the area. The PLUM will not affect your property's zoning classification and cannot be used to add or take away entitlements to your property.

One of the biggest benefits of the PLUM is that it engages our community and gets people thinking about what future land uses they would like to see in this valley and where they ought to be located.

Impact Area Agreements

What kinds of housing or businesses belong inside the cities? What about in the rural county? What about the grey area where city ends and country begins?

The issue of how the cities and rural county should interface raises lots of questions in terms of community character and how to plan for the future expansion of the cities. The cities are understandably concerned about maintaining their individual identities. They know that what the county does along their boundaries has a big impact on the city itself – in terms of traffic, the attractiveness of downtown to new business, and even in terms of water and air quality.

"Area of Impact" refers to a defined zone around a city's boundary into which the city could expand in the future. In order for the people who own land in this area to have fair representation and clear expectations for their land, it is imperative that the city and county have clear communication and agreement over the process for making land-use decisions for the impact area. The county is therefore pursuing updated "Impact Area Agreements" with the cities.



City, County... and where they meet.

Small Area Plans

Outside of the three incorporated cities, other areas of the valley such as the Felt and Clawson townsites have been focal points for relatively intense development activity. These places merit planning over the entire area, not just on a piecemeal basis as development applications, conditional-use permits and zone changes file in one after another. Over the next year, the community will be invited to provide input into several small-area plans throughout the valley, which will be adopted with our new 2010 comprehensive plan.



Planning the neighborhood.

Incentives

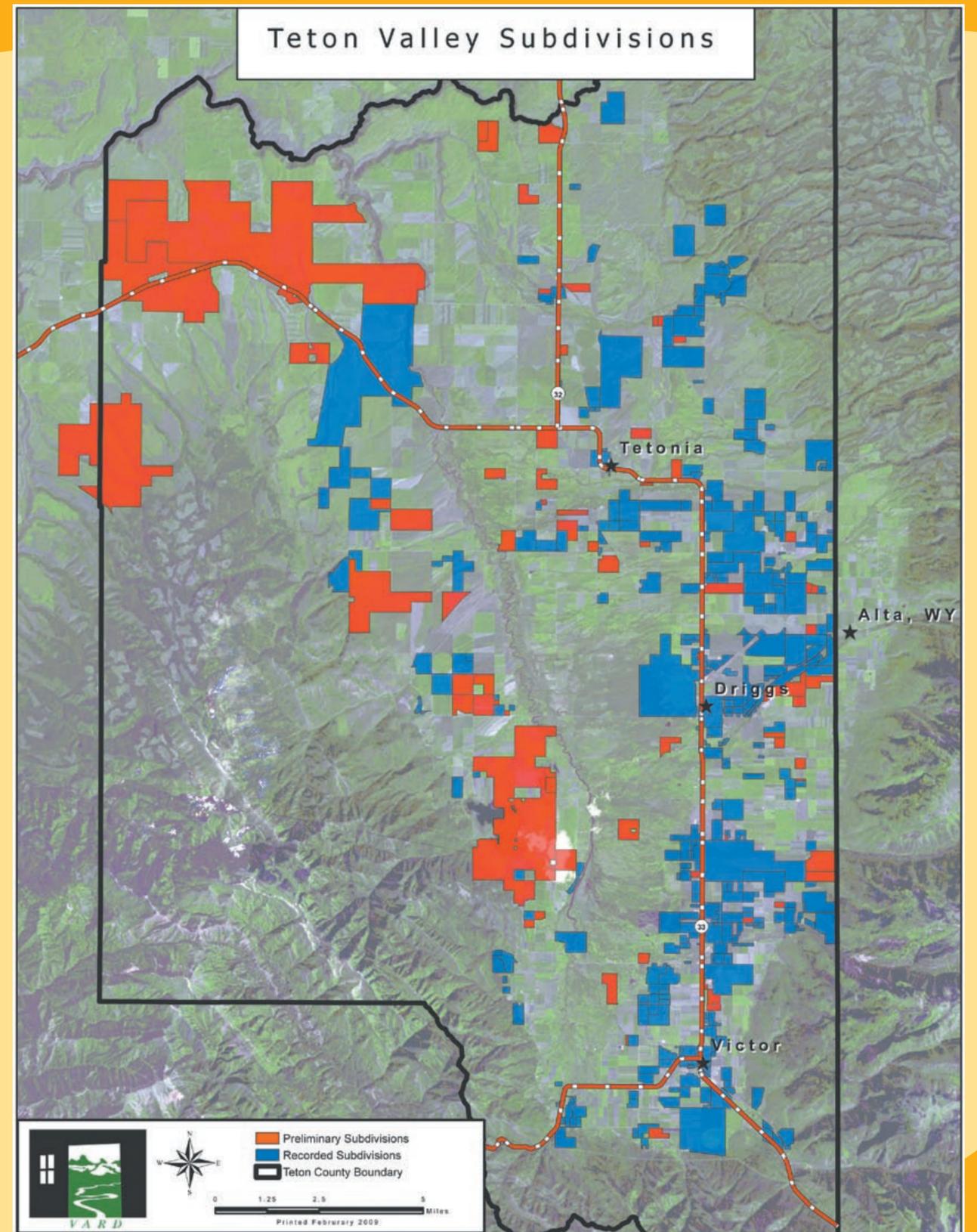
According to Planning Administrator Patrick Vaile, "Incentives refer to techniques or tools that may be used to achieve goals beyond the scope of existing regulation."

For example, shortsighted policies of the past helped create an oversupply of poorly designed subdivision lots in Teton Valley. There are currently about 11,445 parcels in recorded subdivisions in the entire county. Roughly one in four of these lots is built on. And there are many

Can we make gains as a community using the "carrot" over the "stick?"

subdivisions where what was promised in terms of infrastructure, community amenities and open-space management has gone unfulfilled. Putting in place incentives for developers to re-design distressed subdivisions with fewer lots and more environmentally sensitive designs can make Teton Valley more economically and environmentally sustainable.

There are two easy things you can do to keep up to date on development and planning in Teton Valley. Watch the VARD website at www.tetonvalleyadvocates.org for news updates and information on when you can give your input. Or sign up for VARD email updates to get the information delivered straight to your inbox – just email info@tetonvalleyadvocates.org and ask to be put on the list.



Mad Hatter 2008

In November 2008, VARD hosted our sixth annual Mad Hatter event. It was a very successful night, thanks to everyone who came out, food and auction item donors, volunteers and the Milk Creek Grill. Teton Valley is home to some very creative Mad Hatters. We expect that these pictures will inspire your inner Mad Hatter for our 2009 event this fall!

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Jay Mazalweski's hat offers some possibilities for the future of downtown Driggs, and a plug for Harmony Design.



Rusty Cheney's "Special Delivery" hat points to one cause of population growth in Teton County.



Erica Rice models her hat depicting the new Teton County Courthouse – complete with landscaping made possible by a few corporate sponsors.

GIVE Now and DOUBLE Your Donation

These aren't easy economic times. Like you, we have tightened our belts and are getting by on less. But these are also important times of opportunity. More than ever, we need to work for a more sustainable local economy and relationship with the environment.

If you are a first-time donor, a generous donor has committed to matching your donation dollar for dollar up to a total of \$10,000!

In return, we will continue the work that you count on us to do: reporting to you on county land-use decisions and issues through our website, email updates, newsletters and educational events; reviewing and providing comment on development applications; offering research and grant-writing assistance to local government; and serving as a smart-growth resource to the development community, decisionmakers and citizens of Teton Valley.

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Why is Teton Valley Special to You?

Please tell us about a place in Teton Valley that is especially meaningful to you or an experience that cemented your connection to this place. We welcome submissions from children as well as adults; we particularly want to draw from across multiple generations. Written submissions must be 250 words or less. We welcome submissions in other media too: photos, drawings, etc. These personal testimonies about Teton Valley will be featured on our website and in our September newsletter.

Submissions are due May 31 and can be emailed to info@tetonvalleyadvocates.org, faxed to 208-354-1709, mailed to PO Box 1164, Driggs, Idaho 83422 or hand delivered to our office above Guadalajara restaurant at 355 N Main Street in Driggs. Please include your name and phone number with your submission. Feel free to call or email the VARD office with any questions.

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HOAs: The Good, The Bad and The Ugly

On the snowy evening of Thursday, February 26, 35 souls braved the weather and the stormy topic of Homeowners' Associations. The wide-ranging and animated discussion points to the fact that subdivision management is a hot topic, especially in subdivisions where only a fraction of the lots are built upon and many owners are absentee or in foreclosure. Many participants cited the difficulty of collecting dues and getting people to serve on the HOA board. Other questions had to do with whether there could be a greater role for the county in terms of road maintenance and other service provisions. Fire Marshal Bret Campbell offered to meet with any HOA to educate them about their fire-safety responsibilities. VARD plans to organize solution-oriented follow-up to this event and also suggest ways that many of the problems identified can be avoided in future subdivisions.

VARD would like to thank Kent Wagener, Bret Campbell, Doug Self, Jon Pinardi, Jim Kleine and Patricia Nickell-Zimmerman for serving as panelists and sharing their knowledge and experience. Thanks also to the Soil Conservation District and the Extension Service for the resources they made available on the windbreak program and noxious weed control.

VARD



VARD plans to gather and pursue solutions to the issues raised during the Homeowners' Association informational discussion held in Driggs this February.

Get Involved • Become a Member • TETON VALLEY NEEDS YOU!

name _____

address _____

city _____

state _____ zip _____

e-mail _____

MEMBERSHIP LEVELS

- Member..... \$25-\$49/year
- Supporter..... \$50-\$99/year
- Friend..... \$100-\$249/year
- Patron..... \$250-\$499/year
- Sponsor..... \$500-\$999/year
- Benefactor..... \$1000+/year

Members will receive meeting invitations, regular newsletters and e-mail updates.

PLEASE RETURN THIS FORM AND YOUR CHECK TO: **VARD** P.O. Box 1164, Driggs, ID 83422

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