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2008 *Fremont County Economic Development Strategy* 2014 Status Update

Background - A strategic plan for economic development was developed for Fremont County between 2006 and 2008 using grant support from USDA Rural Development. This was a community-based effort that involved 22 training- and community-input workshops and publication of a data analysis entitled *Community Economic Profile of Fremont County* in December 2006. The final result was a strategic plan that advanced a Fremont County Values Statement, three community Vision Statements, seven Goal statements, and 41 action strategies. The rationale for each goal statement was carefully made and supported with facts from the region.

The plan was written using dynamic action strategy forms that contained specific action steps that could be updated as progress was made or revised as situations evolved. Unfortunately, six months after completion of the plan, the economic development program was dropped by the county, and the Fremont Economic Action Commission was disbanded.

In 2014 Fremont County asked Dr. Richard Gardner, the consultant for the original work, to update the Community Economic Profile and provide a brief analysis of the status of the 41 original action strategies. What follows are status updates on each of the vision statements, and recommendations for going forward:

1. Accomplished; Monitor outcomes
2. Progress Made; Retain
3. Retain & Revise
4. Drop, Attempt not successful
5. Drop, No longer strategic or relevant

Details about each individual strategy can be read in the original plan that is available on [the Fremont County website](#).

Fremont County Values Statement – Retain – This is a clear statement of the values of Fremont County residents created with input from three workshops and validated by all who reviewed it. It speaks to things all residents hold dear and should be a way to unite county citizens. This statement should be explicitly adopted by the Fremont County Commission. It should then be enlarged into a poster and posted in the Commission room and made available in other public areas. The cities of Fremont County should also consider formal adoption if it resonates with them.

Fremont County Values Statement

Fremont County Stands For:

- Good Neighbors** – Our small communities are like extended families. Our appreciation and concern for others is demonstrated by being and having good neighbors.
- Independence** – As Americans, we value the freedom our country provides. As Westerners, we value freedom of choice, individuality, and self-sufficiency.
- Concerned, Engaged Citizenry** – We value active participation in our democracy, and we enjoy transparent government, with easy access to local officials.
- Appreciation of Open Spaces and Natural Places** – We value the clear air, water, and night sky of Fremont County, as well as the scenic vistas and recreation opportunities the outdoors provide.
- Relaxed Pace of Life** – We value the peace and quiet, and easy-going style of Fremont County.
- Sense of Place** – Fremont County delivers a strong sense of place to its residents, containing an appreciation of heritage and a feeling of spiritual sanctuary.
- Volunteerism** – We value having opportunities to make a difference as a volunteer, on causes about which we feel passionate.
- Hometown Pride** – Our community pride is evident in our support of community events and our attention to community appearance.
- Strong Spiritual Values** – We value the spiritual dimension of our lives, no matter how we define God.

St. Anthony Vision Statement – Retain – This has never been placed before the St. Anthony City Council to my knowledge.

City of St. Anthony Vision Statement

We see a St. Anthony:

- With a healthy downtown business district full of shops for locally crafted arts and restaurants featuring locally-grown foods
- Where entrepreneurs and local businesses can grow their dreams
- That provides information, services, and a friendly welcome to those recreating at our St Anthony Sand Dunes, as well as those passing to and from Yellowstone National Park
- Where regular community events and activities are enjoyed by residents and visitors alike
- With a quality transportation system that makes it easy to get around by foot, bicycle, ATV, automobile, or plane
- With a demonstrated record of investment in community infrastructure, and which is not afraid to make large public turnkey investments in our future
- That carefully nurtures the healthy and safe environment that makes our town a special place to live

Ashton Vision Statement – Retain & Revise – Unfortunately, because few people were made aware of its existence, the people of Ashton went through the Horizons leadership program, and 200 people took time to create a vision statement that looks remarkably similar to this one.

A Vision of Ashton

We envision Ashton with a vibrant downtown, full of thriving businesses and people meeting friends in shops and on the street. The happiness of its citizens is contagious and is expressed as a fun and friendly place. The neat, clean appearance of Ashton, its quality infrastructure, and the citizen turn-out for Ashton's numerous community events all demonstrate community pride. Its accessible leaders demonstrate transparent government. The town supports and is supported by the viable farms and ranches surrounding our community. Ashton is a partner in creating happy memories for the visitors it welcomes. Ashton is a community where young people will want to live and raise a family, and where our seniors can age with dignity.

Island Park Vision Statement – Adopted – This statement was recently adopted by the City of Island Park and made part of its comprehensive plan.

Island Park Vision Statement

Island Park is becoming a community where quality natural resource managers sustain the thriving wildlife, aesthetic natural beauty, healthy environment, and visitor attractions of the caldera.

Island Park is becoming a viable community of successful businesses and year-round economy, where people can earn a healthy wage and raise their families.

Island Park is becoming a community that extends across the caldera and well beyond the city limits.

Island Park is becoming a full-service community, with a school, health clinic, and quality public facilities.

Island Park is becoming a community that part-year and full-time residents view as their spiritual home and sanctuary.

Island Park is becoming a community.

Island Park is becoming...

Tourism Goal: *Market a growing array of attractions and activities for visitors year-round.*

Summary: Fremont County has a rich year-round asset base for tourism and recreation, coupled with a stream of nearly 2.3 million vehicles annually traveling through the county on Highway 20. The county has high leakage in visitor spending both south to Rexburg and north to West Yellowstone, yet visitor spending has been growing steadily. Historically, the Island Park area provides one of the weekend playgrounds for residents of Idaho Falls, but these local visitors are blended with a strong contingent from neighboring states and a large international visitor stream making the grand tour of Western national parks. Continued limits on winter use of Yellowstone National Park create new opportunities within the caldera. All these factors sum to major potential to add value to the visitor experience and to capture more visitor spending within Fremont County.

Tourism Objectives

1. *To coordinate visitor information county-wide*
2. *To increase the linkage between the St. Anthony Sand Dunes and the community of St. Anthony, in order to capture an increasing amount of visitor spending within the county.*
3. *To increase the capacity of Fremont County to house visitors*
4. *To expand and promote the various land and water trail systems of Fremont County*

- T1 **Sand Dunes Business Network – Retain, progress made** - The Sand Dunes Resort expanded its operations and the County zoned some adjacent land commercial for potential development that has yet to occur. Some business concessions were permitted at the Egin Dunes campground. The County ED office worked on routes for a gravel trail from the dunes to downtown St Anthony, but changes in State law allowed street-legal ATVs to travel by road to town, negating the need for a trail. There have been no collaborative meetings of businesses serving the dunes visitors since 2008. However, it was noted that local businesses do offer the special fuel and parts needed for dune vehicles. Given the fact that much, if not most, shopping and expenditures by dunes users occurs in Madison County, this action strategy is still relevant.
- T2 **Group Tour and Guided Services Network – Retain & Revise** - The idea here was to create a centralized list or directory of the attractions and guided tours and services offered in northern Fremont County to visitors. The thought was that such a list would enable families to plan vacations in the area. This action strategy still resonates with community leaders. While no meetings have occurred to advance this action, progress may have been made through links on tourism websites. Still highly relevant.
- T3 **National Geographic Geotourism Initiative – Accomplished; Monitor Outcomes** – The Greater Yellowstone Geotourism MapGuide and an associated website were created. The Teton Geo-tourism Center just opened in Driggs that promotes Ashton and the Teton Scenic Drive along Highway 32. The Idaho Department of Commerce has a voting representative on the Greater Yellowstone Geotourism Stewardship Council that spans three states.
- T4 **Hess Museum – Drop** - This county asset has been lost. After the owner died, the siblings could not agree on the disposition of the buildings and collection. They were ultimately sold at auction, including items donated to the museum by county residents. This action strategy is obsolete and should be removed from the plan. However, a move to establish a county history museum in Ashton may be a new opportunity.
- T5 **Regional Visitor Fishing Licenses & Snowmobiling Permits – Drop, no longer strategic** – This issue has been examined by tourism partners in Fremont County and West Yellowstone. The institutional barriers to modifying regulations to sell regional licenses are judged too large, given the modest amount of benefits, which are largely a convenience to tourists. Regional snowmobile permits were analyzed by Fremont County, and the county may receive fewer snowmobile revenues under a regional system, given the large number of Idaho permits that specify Fremont County at present.
- T6 **Increase Public Access on Lower Henry's Fork – Accomplished; Monitor Outcomes** – Progress has been made on multiple fronts. Boat ramp facilities have been improved at the Fun Farm, Jump-Off Canyon, and Jim's Dock. Fishing access, including a boat ramp, restrooms, and parking lot, has been created at Salem Bridge. A number of St. Anthony Greenway improvements have been made, and negotiations are underway to allow pedestrian use of a railroad bridge that will create a loop walk. The county continues to approach BLM about gaining an R&PP lease on a section of BLM land near this bridge.
- T7 **Increase Wildlife Viewing Opportunities –Progress made; Retain** – In general, the county recreationist feels that scenic viewpoints are more important, with wildlife an unpredictable bonus at any location. However, a developer has added a scenic viewpoint on the Ashton Hill as a mitigation measure. The Flat Ranch Preserve facility owned by The Nature Conservancy is another new asset. Jump-Off Canyon and the fish at Warm Springs and Big Springs remain good candidates for improved signage. A grant has been submitted for cultural resource brochures for Harriman State Park, Mesa Falls, and the Johnny Sack Cabin at Big Springs.
- T8 **Enhance Tourism Websites – Progress made; Retain** – Websites have continued to develop individually, and the Yellowstone Teton Territory (www.yellowstoneteton.org) website provides a good regional focus. Electronic and relationship connections between Fremont and West Yellowstone could still be enhanced. The Idaho Department of Parks and Recreation has a good snowmobile trail section. Fremont County has six main tourism areas, including the dunes and bike routes. The Chambers have not been active in creating links to county tourism activities, though a few networks have independently evolved. This strategy could be merged with T2, the group network strategy.

T9 Visitor Information & Island Park Visitor Center – Retain, progress made – The Island Park area still lacks a visitor center to help orient folks to the many activities and sights of the region. The City feels this is still a relevant need and reports that visitors often stop by the City office to make information requests. The Forest Service is interested in closing its Island Park Ranger District, making it interested in an intergovernmental visitor center. This strategy is linked to the Community Improvements strategy for an Island Park Multi-Purpose Center, as a visitor center might be one of the purposes. Recently, a piece of land was donated for such a center near the junction of Yale-Kilgore Road and US Highway 20 (Elk Creek retail area). In addition, \$200,000 has been pledged for a museum to be constructed as part of the multi-purpose center. This is clearly compatible with a visitors' center. Further analysis is clearly needed, including the need for a mechanism to fund facility operations.

Goal: Entrepreneurship Development – *Develop a system of support for all entrepreneurs in Fremont County*

Summary - It is recommended that communities target their efforts and develop action strategies by focusing on the “policy sweet spot,” where available E-talent, economic development goals, and existing program capacity align. Objectives include:

- 1) To develop a community culture that appreciates and supports entrepreneurs
- 2) To work with existing businesses to assist them in their efforts to sustain & expand
- 3) To build bridges between existing business development support programs and Fremont County
- 4) To develop ways to fill the gaps in an Entrepreneurship Development System in Fremont County

The actions under this goal all flowed from a set of workshops on entrepreneurship support the author taught as part of the 2007 effort, using the *Energizing Entrepreneurs* curriculum of the Center for Rural Entrepreneurship (CRE). To my knowledge no progress has been made on these actions. However, they remain the basis for encouraging entrepreneurs and have a high probability of generating results by creating a fertile seedbed for business growth. Portions of an entrepreneur development system already exist in the region and are described in the current plan. CRE has a new curriculum available, called *E² University* that includes several self-assessment tools for communities. Note that there were several additional actions listed in the plan beyond this initial set.

ED1 Business Facilitation Program – Retain

ED2 Business Retention & Expansion Program – Retain & Revise – The biggest obstacle to this may be the capacity of the chambers of commerce to get things done. This is a basic economic development activity that every small town should pursue.

ED3 Business Mentoring Program – Retain

ED4 Nurturing Business Networks – Retain – The Chambers in Fremont County seem much more oriented toward organizing annual events than organizing networks of businesses. However, I heard some desire for such networks in my interviews. Note how the first five action strategies all flow from business owners getting together and talking about how to cooperate to advance their community. City leaders then play a support role.

ED5 Nurture An Entrepreneurial Climate – Retain

ED6 Youth Entrepreneurship Program – Retain – There continues to be progress made on school-based entrepreneurship programs across Idaho. There may be progress in Fremont schools that I am not aware of.

Goal: Amenity In-Migrants (Retirees & Lone Eagles) – *To build and grow the stream of mobile families who appreciate Fremont County as visitors, and return as part-year and permanent residents.*

Summary - Research shows that people who move between states upon retirement are wealthier than average senior citizens, are more educated, and more likely to be married. These amenity migrants are diverse in their interests, but a significant portion seeks an active outdoor lifestyle and a climate with four seasons. They are drawn to 1) natural and cultural amenities, 2) a feeling of personal safety, 3) family and friends, 4) friendly, small-town communities with a variety of quality housing options, and 5) a low cost of living. Access to health care is an important consideration. Retirees are often looking for opportunities to volunteer, especially on issues about which they care deeply.

The rationale for this goal has not changed over the Great Recession. The natural amenities and location adjacent to Yellowstone continue to attract visitors, some of whom return, build a vacation home, and may eventually make it their primary residence. Word of mouth remains the way that these trickles of visitors become streams. In terms of median age and non-labor income, the importance of retirees continues to increase.

AIM1 Fremont Ambassadors – Retain – Turning resident snowbirds into proponents with a consistent, positive message about Fremont County remains a low cost economic development strategy.

AIM2 Explore Senior RV Park – Retain and Revise – The original rationale of backfilling housing options lost when BYU quit offering dorms to seniors in the summer may no longer be appropriate. However, private parks in the Island Park area do fill quickly, often because public campgrounds have a two-week limit for stays, so the demand may exist for more private spaces. Forty spaces have been added at Henry's Lake State Park, and Fremont County is seeking 26 acres from BLM on an R&PP lease on Henry's Lake for another boat ramp and additional camping. Strategy OC 4 seeks an RV park at the St Anthony's golf course. None of these public campgrounds are senior-only. A survey and inventory of RV parks is still a good first step.

AIM3 Guerilla Marketing Campaign Targeting Retirees – Retain – A good response package to retirement inquiries remains a clear and easily met need. Proactively seeking retirees is a low-cost economic development strategy.

Goal: Value-Added Agriculture – *Encourage diversification of local agriculture.*

Summary - The role of county economic development is not to become an expert on all forms of agriculture, but to create an on-going dialogue with local producers about the types of enterprises that may fit their situations and to keep an eye out for new opportunities. Strategies like farm/ranch recreation lay on the border with tourism, while a farmers market carries an aspect of community development. The point is that paying attention to agriculture is important not only for the local economy, but to maintain the rural lifestyle that residents value so highly.

In general, the action strategies in this goal are consistent with the survey of agricultural opportunities now being conducted in the Teton View Region as part of the HUD grant.

AG1 Organic Potatoes and/or Barley – Retain

AG2 Country Natural Beef Cooperative – Retain

AG3 Farmers' Market – Drop, attempted – A farmers' market was started in St Anthony, but was disbanded following a controversy over operations during Pioneer Day.

AG4 Alternative Energy Enterprises – Retain

AG5 Farm & Ranch Recreation Enterprises – Retain

AG6 Feasibility of Community Kitchen Incubator – Drop – This is a difficult strategy that requires several years to accomplish and an economic development group that is working together collaboratively. The feasibility would be difficult in the sparsely populated Upper Valley, though a similar strategy is being pursued in Teton County. It seems a better approach to explore expanded use of existing commercial kitchens.

Goal: Community Improvements – *Develop safe, healthy, vibrant, and walkable communities in Fremont County.*

Summary - Community economic development is a holistic subject, requiring systems thinking. The physical infrastructure underlying Fremont County's communities has much to do with the economic success and vitality of the community. Communities that have stewarded their resources frugally, but recognized emerging needs, invested in quality solutions, and spent the money needed for maintenance, tend to be more successful than towns that allow problems to fester into crises, whine about the cost of public projects, foolishly scrimp on maintenance, and expect solutions to come from outside. Too often problems that have been ignored become very expensive to solve, causing significant increases in tax burden and citizen revolts. Community objectives for Fremont County are:

1. To improve the downtowns of Fremont County, which serve as our "living rooms"
2. To improve the attractiveness of our communities to new and existing families.
3. To address key infrastructure needs that may limit the county's economic development

CI1 Develop an Active Main Street Program – Retain, progress made – Workshops are scheduled for Nov 18 & 19 in St Anthony and Ashton. The largest obstacle is likely to find a way to pay for the program.

CI2 Community Review for St Anthony – Retain – A community review is the ideal set-up for a Main Street program. Outside eyes can more easily observe community strengths and weaknesses and communicate them to city leaders.

CI3 Affordable Housing Development – Retain, progress made - A Fremont County resident left \$1.4 million to the Idaho Falls Affiliate of Habitat for Humanity to restore and improve affordable housing in Ashton, St Anthony and all of Fremont County (in this priority order). One new home has been built and several others improved. Could the proceeds of this endowment be used to leverage the weatherization and home improvement program that EICAP operates in the region? This approach might save administrative costs, as EICAP focuses on Fremont County, an area that has historically been underserved by them. In any case, this endowment provides core funding to make improvements to the housing stock. Improving existing housing is likely a higher priority than new housing in the short term.

CI4 Adaptive Re-use of Historic Buildings – Retain, progress made – Cathy Koon led a workshop at the Ashton Community Center that Sara Reinke credits with leading to the effort to get a grant to weatherize the building. The Stronks family is working on restoring a building in downtown Ashton into a fitness center. Several other buildings in the county have been improved in the past. However, there is still a great need for preservation and adaptive re-use of the beautiful historic buildings in downtown St Anthony. Would it be possible to use workers from the work camp to do basic preservation projects to keep buildings from further deterioration? They might serve as local match for other grants.

CI5 Community Store – Drop, attempted – This idea was for a community-owned store that would provide retail sales of goods not available otherwise. The idea was adopted from other, very isolated communities in the West and was ranked fairly low for its success in St. Anthony. The project was attempted but failed due to a number of contributing factors.

CI6 Island Park Multi-Purpose Community Building – Retain, progress made – This project has been studied for some 12 years by the Mayor's estimate. The good news is that recently a piece of land was

donated for such a center at Elk Creek near other commercial development. In addition, \$200,000 has been pledged for a museum to be constructed as part of the multi-purpose center. The Chamber of Commerce would seek an office in the new facility. Undercutting this progress was the construction of a new EMS building which contains a large room available for public meetings, which can hold over 100 people. To date the City of Island Park has not joined in support of a community center. The county-wide library board actually voted not to re-locate to a new site. Without City support, it will be difficult to leverage the pledged money and land with a Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) or a USDA-Rural Development Community Facilities loan and grant. The center needs to have other purposes pledged to it besides a museum and Chamber office. A senior center might be one option. A recreation center could be another. There needs to be a funding mechanism to support the operations of the community center. An auditorium district could be formed for that purpose, and it could have flexible boundaries that match the developed part of the Island Park area, rather than the much smaller city limits that a resort tax would follow. This is a project that must be led by the residents of the Island Park area; the County should only play a supporting role.

Goal: Organizational Capacity – *Expand the ability of public and non-profit organizations to get things done to the betterment of Fremont County.*

Summary - Organizational capacity refers to the assets an organization can bring to bear on the issues being addressed. Developing organizational capacity means adding to the supply of different types of capital the organization can muster. This could mean increasing the financial resources of the organization or diversifying its revenue streams for more stability over time. It could mean improving the effective use of staff and volunteer effort. It could mean building more social capital from the web of relationships between among the organization, board and staff, and community. Or it could mean using its political capital to affect public opinion and get things done.

Because the action strategies employed here build resources to address any community issue, this may be the most important goal in the plan. Objectives are:

1. To increase the financial capacity of community organizations.
2. To expand the pool of community leaders and to sharpen their skills in leading and managing group projects

OC1 St. Anthony Hydropower Turbine – Drop, attempted – The City of St. Anthony retained an engineer to analyze this opportunity and it was determined not to be feasible due to the cost of renovating the turbine. It is not clear if the analysis included the availability of low-cost loans from USDA-RD to public entities. In 2007 I estimated that project revenues could service a loan of up to \$4.5 million. The idea was that this project might provide an eventual funding stream to support an economic development or Main Street program. This may have been an opportunity lost by the attention county staff put into the community store. A private developer, St Anthony Hydro, LLC, has since purchased the site from Rocky Mountain Power and upgraded the turbine, so the project was feasible, even at higher, private interest rates.

OC2 County Manage St Anthony Sand Dunes – Drop, attempted – Fremont County used college interns to survey sand dune users about willingness to pay a fee to cover law enforcement, EMS, and Search & Rescue costs. A conversation with BLM ensued. The administrative cost of collecting the fees was an issue. However, what tipped the county commission against this strategy was the liability that the county would incur by taking over dune management. Awareness of liability was enhanced at that time by lawsuits flowing from a snowmobile fatality in Fremont County. The county decided not to pursue local management of the dunes.

OC3 Community Endowment – Retain – While the gift made recently by an Ashton man to Habitat for Humanity and to the Idaho Community Foundation are noteworthy, the gifts also show the opportunity that was lost by not having an endowment for Fremont County or for communities within Fremont County. It only requires \$25,000 to establish a directed fund within the Idaho Community Foundation. The earnings are then made available to a local committee of leaders to grant. The local committee might be called the Fremont County Community Foundation, but ICF would administer it and offer assurance to donors that their money would be professionally managed. This strategy still resonates with local leaders.

OC4 RV Park at St Anthony Golf Course – Retain, progress made – Fremont County has examined this issue. Because the golf course has a thin profit margin, an RV park would have to pay for itself. That did not appear to be the case at that time the strategy was conceived. In addition, there was some pushback by local golfers who did not want more use of the course. At the time of analysis, the Idaho Department of Parks & Recreation (IDPR) had pulled back on certain recreation grant programs due to its own funding issues. This strategy should be retained, because IDPR program changes might make state support for an RV park possible, which would change the economic feasibility of the project.

OC5 Resort Tax – Retain and Revise – A resort tax was discussed in the Island Park area, but an advisory vote was negative. One issue is that the narrow city limits of Island Park do not include the effective business community that would collect the tax. An auditorium district would be a mechanism to provide funding for something like a community multi-purpose building. However, it is a property tax, while the resort tax is a local tax on lodging, food/beverage and/or services which primarily impacts visitors.

OC6 Leadership Training – Retain and Revise – Citizens need a different set of skills when they come together to work collaboratively on community priorities. Because of volunteer burnout, the need for leadership training never ends. The available resources may have changed now, but the need remains. The regional HUD grant may offer opportunities to build capacity. This strategy could be moved to the VCA Goal.

OC7 Expand & Re-structure FEAC – Retain and Revise – The Fremont Economic Action Commission disbanded with the end of the county economic development program. There is still a need for a countywide coordination and collaboration mechanism. This strategy outlines some specific ways to structure a new county organization for economic development.

OC8 Increased Accountability – Retain – Should the county restore an economic development program, it is important that staff be directed on which projects to pursue. The recommended procedure of Board approval of projects added and removed from the staff work plan improves transparency and prevents willful staff from unilateral decisions about project selection and time allocation.

Goal: Volunteers & Community Attitude – *Engage more people in projects, programs, and organizations that better their community and unify the county.*

Summary - In rural communities, there are not enough resources or population to justify staff positions for many community organizations. Community services from fire departments to search and rescue, Meals-on-Wheels social programs, libraries, visitor centers, community events, and all manner of community betterment projects depend on community volunteers to make them happen.

While communities in Fremont County have always had difficulty acting in a unified manner, the county-wide social climate seems very divisive at present. Building the capacity for constructive conversations among differing perspectives remains a critical challenge for Fremont County. Anything the county can do to build positive attitudes and demonstrate the value of the public sector would be a step in the right direction.

VCA1 FEAC & County ED as Model of Volunteerism – Drop, no longer relevant – FEAC has disbanded and cannot model good volunteer practices until it is re-started.

VCA2 County Volunteer Week – Retain – Increased volunteerism can begin with relatively simple activities to express appreciation for the role volunteers play in the community.

VCA3 Fremont County "Paint the Town" Event – Retain – This idea resonated with several of the leaders I talked to. It's a positive, give-back, activity that benefits the appearance of the entire community, as well as helping those residents who are unable to maintain their homes.

Potential New Action Strategies

From conversations with community leaders several ideas for new action strategies emerged:

- T10 Encourage New Technologies for Winter Recreation** – The development of UTVs, track conversions for ATVs, and fat tire bikes create new ways to enjoy the winter. However, some of these technologies may create new challenges for compatible trail use. The winter trail system may need to be modified to allow certain uses on certain trails. For example fat tire bikes may be allowed on snowmobile trails, but not on Nordic cross country ski trails that depend on a sharply defined track. Bikes are not now required to buy a permit like snowmobiles do or a parking pass like Nordic skiers do. UTVs may require a separate or parallel trail system. Proactive planning would allow Fremont County to get ahead of these technologies and market opportunities for them ahead of other competing regions.
- T11 Explore Hut-to-Hut Travel Potential** – Europe’s hut-to-hut trails in the Alps are extremely popular. Their model has a person tending a primitive hut with bunk beds, a wood stove, and providing a simple, but filling communal meal. Fremont County and the Teton View Region may have the makings of their own hut-to-hut model with the IDPR’s yurt system. Could additional yurts be stationed in Harriman along the back trails, along certain snowmobile trails, or along the Yellowstone Trail to provide for fat tire bikers, snowshoers, or Nordic skiers in the winter, and hikers in the summer? Could this be a unique niche to market in Fremont County? Can we think outside the box to get to new recreation products?
- T12 Fremont County History Museum in Ashton** – A committee in Ashton led by Tom Howell is exploring the potential of a county history museum. The old city building might be designated for this purpose. This project seems a response to the loss of the Hess Museum. It raises questions of operating funds, but may be eligible for a number of museum grant programs. How great a tourism draw is a history museum? What is the vision of the Ashton group?
- T13 Training of Frontline Service Employees on Tourism Attractions** – In addition to better tourism web sites and a visitor center near the Henry’s Lake entrance to the county, the industry might aid visitors through old-school training of service employees. These are the people tourists often ask for information. What are the attractions? What are the hours of operation, fees, and special consideration? Where can one rent a bike or find a guided tour? Much of this material used to be covered by the ID Dept of Commerce’s *Idahost* training, but this version would be Fremont-specific.
- CI7 Elementary School in Island Park** – Traveling from Island Park to school in Ashton is particularly difficult for young children in early elementary grades. Residents have been discussing the need for a school for years. A charter school in Idaho Falls has discussed expanding into a charter school in Island Park. The closure of the Forest Service Ranger District may create an opportunity to adapt its building to a school purpose. How can the stakeholders best support the development of a new school of any sort?
- VCA4 Building Positive Feelings** – Local government might help build more positive feelings about communities and the role of government by 1) posting the county values statement, 2) posting the community vision statements, and 3) creating and posting agency and program mission statements in public places. This increases transparency and allows public discussion of things held in common. It helps citizens identify the common interest and see how government is trying to serve the community in specific ways. The City of Jerome, under the management of Travis Rothweiler, posted agency mission and vision statements at the entrances to each office to help both citizen customers and staff stay focused.
- VCA5 Target Volunteer Recruitment from Part-Year Residents and Retirees** – A hidden reservoir of volunteers may reside among the many part-year residents living in northern Fremont County, and among the retirees there. Clear volunteer job descriptions, with provisions for flexible seasonal service, could aid in gaining new volunteers.