

Group Memory - Western Greater Yellowstone Consortium

Rexburg City Council Chambers – 35 N. 1st East – Rexburg, Idaho

November 20, 2014

The Western Greater Yellowstone Consortium met on November 20, 2014, at the Rexburg City Hall in Rexburg, ID. Consortium members in attendance included Jason Boal, (Teton County ID), Janice Brown and Tom Cluff (Fremont County), Heather Higinbotham (Yellowstone Business Partnership), Alex Norton (Jackson/Teton County), Jeff Patlovich (City of Island Park), Brittany Skelton (City of Victor), Sara Reinke and Sheryl Hill (Ashton Community Foundation), Patty Parkinson (City of St. Anthony), Natalie Powell (City of Rexburg), Ashley Koehler and Doug Self (City of Driggs, Doug via phone for his report only).

Consortium members not represented: City of Ashton, BLM, Caribou-Targhee National Forest, Bridger-Teton National Forest, and the Idaho Department of Lands

Consultants/Public: Wendy Lowe (P2 Solutions), Wanda Adams (Grant Administrator) Jerry Royster (HUD), Brian McDermott (Teton Valley Business Development Center), Bruce Meighen and Erin Bibeau (Logan Simpson), Pam Herdrich (High Country RC&D), Soren Newman (University of Idaho via phone), Dave Wortman (The Brendle Group), Richard Gardner (Bootstrap Solutions), Lee Einsweiler (Code Studio), Shawn Hill, Melanie Rees and Wendy Sullivan (Frontier Forward, Melanie via phone), Ted Hendricks (The Development Company), Garth Blanchard and Randy Johnson (Indicators Advisory Team members), Ron Moeller and Dave Hensel (Teton County P&Z), Judy Coy (Madison County P&Z), Brady Barkdull (Victor P&Z), Ken Watts (Fremont County citizen), and Heather Randall (Rexburg Standard Journal).

Meeting Objectives

- To discuss key findings and review final deliverables from several HUD Grant studies/projects
- To provide updates on remaining contracts and review their completion timelines
- To launch RPSD preparation by assisting consultants with prioritizing plan themes and strategies
- To set the stage for the final 6 months of grant activity including public response to the RPSD

Wendy Lowe opened the meeting and reviewed the meeting objectives and agenda. The agenda was shifted to accommodate delayed flights. All present introduced themselves. Wendy Lowe reviewed meeting ground rules:

- Strive for consensus
- Maintain a respectful space
- Keep an eye on the big picture
- Show up

CONSORTIUM BUSINESS

Jan Brown presented a report on the Transition to Implementation Oakland trip (see Power Point). The Consortium sent a group of seven (Arne Jorgenson, Jackson; Brittany Skelton, Victor; Jason Boal, Teton County ID; Heather Overholser, Teton County, WY Solid Waste and Recycling; Jan Brown, Fremont County; Natalie Powell, Rexburg; and Brian McDermott, Teton Valley Business Development Center). There was also a peer-exchange on jobs and economic development following the Transition to Implementation workshop attended by Brittany, Brian and Jan. Everyone in attendance shared insights, observations, and learnings.

Both workshops emphasized the importance of equity. There is a new national equity atlas available online at www.nationalequityatlas.org. The main takeaways were to think about equity in everything you are doing, and

make sure everyone, including the most underrepresented, is part of the dialogue. The idea of a citizen leadership academy came up and they discussed the possibility of working with BYU-I or E-Center students to build capacity.

The workforce development peer-exchange focused on bottom up development approaches and provided examples such as The Crucible in West Oakland. The Crucible is a fabrication laboratory emphasizing industrial arts applications that encourages youth to develop career skills as an alternative to gangs/drug dealing. The team felt the large spaces in the new Moran Center (the Ford garage) in Driggs could be used for similar “fab-lab” purposes.

The Oakland team recommended that projects could be grouped under three major initiatives, and that this also would be a logical way to organize the RPSD (see bullets on Power Point):

1. Productive Landscapes
2. Resilient Communities
3. Vital Connections

The team reported that this was a highly valuable learning experience. People who facilitated the sessions were educated professionals dedicated to solving problems and introducing techniques help people lift themselves up out of poverty and difficult life circumstances.

Update on Economic Development Projects

Fremont County Economic Development Strategy and Community Economic Profile

Dick Gardner of Bootstrap Solutions presented an update on the Community Economic Profile and Economic Development Strategy for Fremont County (see Power Point). He is updating these two products based on past work with Fremont County from late 2006-Feb 2008. The key points from the studies thus far are:

- The population of senior citizens and young retirees is growing in Northern Fremont County
- The Hispanic population is continuing to grow, which is a long term trend going back to 1980
- At least 70% of households have at least one member commuting out of Fremont County to work
- Non-labor income (retirees and part time residents) is important and growing steadily
- Second home development increases the chances for conflict within the wildland-urban interface (area within ½ mile of public lands). Impacts wildlife migration corridors, other types of competing land uses
- Incomes are low (65% of national average when measured per capita). Poverty rates higher for female heads of household, children and the Hispanic population
- Part-year residents are a large and growing part of the county’s northern area. Seasonal residents in St. Anthony are less than 1%, while the Island Park area has 85.4% of its population in seasonal flux
- Seasonal fluctuations are also pronounced in tourism-related businesses and lodging sales
- Trends in retailing and tourism services show they are basing in West Yellowstone and Rexburg. This capital investment means high retail leakage out of the county

The Fremont County Economic Development Strategy was developed with 22 community workshops in 2006-08 and the program ended after little use of the plan. Dick Gardner was asked to revisit and update the plan and make new recommendations. The initial plan included a values statement to serve all of Fremont County that Gardner suggested might be considered for region-wide adoption:

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.

Other economic development goals in the plan that Gardner thought might better be approached regionally rather than county-by-county, include:

- Tourism
- Entrepreneurship Development – including a system of support
- Amenity In-Migrants: (retirees and loan eagles)—to build and grow the stream of mobile families who appreciate Fremont County as visitors and return as part-year and permanent residents
- Value-Added Agriculture—encourage diversification
- Community Improvements;
- Organizational Capacity
- Volunteers & Community Attitude

Potential new action strategies include:

- Encourage New Technologies for Winter Recreation
- Explore Hut-to-Hut Travel Potential
- Fremont County Historical Museum in Ashton
- Training of Frontline Service Employees on Tourism Attractions
- Elementary School in Island Park – (K-3 or K-5; could be a charter or non-traditional school)
- Building Positive Feelings
- Target Volunteer Recruitment from Part-Year Residents and Retirees

Next steps are to rank the action strategies by plausibility, feasibility, and community readiness (41 strategies under each goal, plus the few new ones). Mr. Gardner will return on December 10 to facilitate a ranking exercise with city and county officials. Recommendations will be incorporated into the RPSD and both documents will be published in Appendix IV along with other economic development studies.

Statewide Community Economic Development Strategy

Ted Hendricks with The Development Company presented an overview of the statewide community economic development strategy (SCEDS). The Development Company represents nine counties and 44 cities within those counties. The US Economic Development Administration contracts with The Development Company every year to do a CEDS (Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy). This effort has been happening regionally for 35 years. There are two efforts that have partnered together, the Idaho Pathways and Governor's Accelerate Idaho programs. The Idaho Pathways effort has three pillars:

- Empowered people
- Dynamic economies
- Vital communities

These parallel with the Governor's Accelerate Idaho pillars:

- Advance individuals
- Elevate industry
- Strengthen communities

The University of Idaho has determined that 70% of companies in Idaho have one or fewer employees. Idaho also leads the nation with the lowest income jobs. Idaho needs jobs that will help create a sustainable living condition for families. The Development Company's goal is to help the RPSD complement the statewide effort. Their hope is to find common ground to move forward with the CEDS and other economic development factors.

Local Agriculture—Economic Opportunity Assessment

Soren Newman from the University of Idaho (by teleconference) and Pam Herdrich provided an update on the Local Agriculture—Economic Opportunity Assessment. The High Country RC&D is a small regional technical assistance non-profit working with community groups. They were approached to work with U of I to do an agriculture assessment of opportunities for local growing/producing and local/regional marketing. High Country RC&D helped with study logistics and on the ground connections, and U of I conducted the interviews, focus groups and online survey (see Power Point).

There are three primary goals:

1. To characterize potential supply for local and regional agricultural markets
2. To understand and explore opportunities that might exist for local producers
3. To identify key barriers that prevent producers from selling locally and regionally

The research methods included surveys (buyers and producers), focus groups (producers), and interviews (buyers, producers and key informants). Next steps are to finalize the preliminary report and distribute for feedback. There was a question about whether development pressures or land use were addressed in meetings or interviews. Soren reported that producers did talk about the ability to access land, limited availability and challenges with affordability to buy or rent.

Model Development Code—Progress in Teton Valley and Beyond

Lee Einsweiler with Code Studio presented an update on the Teton Valley code and model development code. The original goal was to create a tool to help willing communities earn credits and achieve certification under the GY-Framework. The model code language also will help communities implement their own comprehensive

plans through zoning and subdivision regulation, regardless if they choose to certify. There are major challenges in Teton County, Idaho, related to rural land entitlement, density and allocation of development rights that the model development code is not designed to address. The plan is to finish the two code ordinances for Driggs and Victor, assemble the model development code by January 22nd, and then address Teton County's needs.

Lee walked through the code elements produced to date for the cities of Victor and Driggs, which ultimately will resemble the model development code applicable to all jurisdictions. The code will include all components from the most rural to most urban areas that exist in all of our counties. Code Studio has learned that there is a high tolerance for lots of different building types in this area, but the challenge is to get away from a model that is just building single-family homes on larger lots. Jurisdictions need to enable multiple building types, (i.e. accessory dwelling units) and strive for mixed-use neighborhoods.

The final step will be developing the rural districts. This is a challenge—the rural districts we believe HUD and other communities would like to see are likely to be built on allocations of development rights that are different from those already allocated in Teton County. Teton County is working on solving that problem, but it's a very different problem from most rural counties given the extent of past subdivision approval and platting. In developing the model code, Code Studio is obligated to develop something that will not look like Teton County's existing rural districts.

On January 22nd, there will be a half-day model code preview workshop on the completed version of the model code (two 3 ½ hour duplicate sessions at the Fremont County annex: 1:30-5:00, food available 5:00-6:00, and 2nd session repeat from 6:00-9:30). This session is open to Consortium members, planning staff, planning & zoning commissioners, and other interested parties who wish to dig deeply into the contents of the model code. The model code will be available for people to borrow from, modify, and effectively apply to their communities.

Ultimately the model code provisions will be fully integrated into relevant chapters of the RPSD. The model code will also be published in its entirety in Appendix II along with the Greater Yellowstone Framework for Sustainable Development. The Jan 22nd session will be dedicated to explaining how the model code may be applied to city and county jurisdictions in our region. The public will have a chance to review the model development code during the RPSD public response period.

There was a question about how much input Victor and Driggs will have in in the remaining timeframe. Code Studio will turn the files over to the city jurisdictions, which can apply them as needed. The goal is to get the system in place, and then do an effective handoff so jurisdictions will then use the model code as they see fit.

Greater Yellowstone Framework for Sustainable Development - Local Government Requirements and Certification Update

Heather Higinbotham with the Yellowstone Business Partnership (YBP) presented an update on the GY-Framework local government requirements and certification process. YBP is dissolving by the end of 2014; as such, Heather's work with the consortium concludes on November 30, 2014.

Heather provided an overview of the work to date and summarized the major changes to the local government requirements (see Power Point). Points were assigned to each possible credit to encourage jurisdictions to:

- *Enable Sustainable Development*: Remove any barriers to achieving GYF credit strategies (fewest points)
- *Lead by Example*: Implement the GYF credit strategies on all local government-funded projects

- *Use a Carrot/Stick Approach:* Provide incentives to encourage the sustainable activity described in each GYF credit and/or disincentives that discourage unsustainable activity
- *Pass and Enforce Ordinances:* Adopt the GYF credit strategy as policy for all internal projects within jurisdiction, both public and private (most points)

Some major changes included new prerequisites and credits, delineation between town/city vs. county requirements, different weighting and/or allocation of points, combining credits, and shifting credits to a different category. New prerequisites included Future Land Use Element, Recreation Master Plan, Capital Improvement Plan, and Community/Affordable Housing Plan.

Heather reviewed the certification process and timeline for Teton County WY/Jackson’s documentation and certification review. Fremont County will be assuming the role of liaison between Teton County/Jackson and the independent certification team. Heather will submit the final document for local government requirements by Nov. 30. She asked Consortium members to provide her comments/feedback by close of business on Nov. 24th.

Update on Training and Technical Assistance Projects

Report on National Main Street Training Events

Patty Parkinson and Sara Reinke presented a report on the National Main Street Training events. There were 32 people at the Tuesday Nov. 18 evening session in St. Anthony, and it was very well received. There were 33 registered for the all-day training in Ashton on Nov. 19; more than 33 people showed up, including some P&Z representatives. It was a very professional presentation, and they reported that it was helpful to meet Jerry Miller from the Idaho Department of Commerce, who is a key person for many grants.

Ashton shared their challenges with having qualified people to advance a Main Street program but no paid staff, and the difficulties without the tourism base from which other communities in the region benefit.

Henry’s Fork Greenway—Pedestrian Bridge Design

Patty Parkinson provided an update on the Henry’s Fork Greenway Project and Pedestrian Bridge design. The City of St. Anthony has funding to work with J.U.B. Engineering on the design and to explore avenues by which to speak with Eastern Idaho Railroad. They have taken the city’s concerns about accessibility and liability to the railroad company that owns the bridge, and to date the company has not been interested in working with the City. One possibility is relocating the Fun Farm Bridge to this vicinity to serve as a pedestrian bridge. Currently J.U.B. is pricing out all the options. Although this will take a number of years, it is a very exciting opportunity given the past challenges in working with the railroad.

Greater Yellowstone Trail

Brittany Skelton provided an update on the Greater Yellowstone Recreational Trail and the technical assistance funding the City of Victor is administering for the concept and action plan. This project is an initiative that was recommended in the multi-modal transportation study that wrapped up earlier this year. Wyoming Pathways and Alta Planning and Design are developing the concept plan for a 135-mile trail in partnership with land management organizations, local governments, and other statewide and local trail organizations.

The study team traveled to each community this fall to learn what is in each community and how the current trail segments are used. There is an all partner meeting at Harriman State Park on Nov. 21 to provide an update on learnings from the tour, present a draft concept, and hold breakout sessions by state. The stakeholder meeting is a way to preview the draft recommendations. The conceptual design will be finalized by January 31st, and the action plan will outline how to complete 31 miles of missing links in the 135-mile regional trail.

[Notes from November 21: The trail route is proposed from Colter Bay in Grand Teton National Park south to Jackson, over Teton Pass, through Victor and Driggs, and connecting to the Ashton-Tetonia Rail Trail (currently an Idaho State Park). An exact route from Ashton to Warm River is yet to be determined, but from Warm River the trail would be routed through Island Park along the former rail bed that would remain as a mixed-use trail up to Reas Pass. Once into Montana and the Gallatin National Forest, the trail could remain on the rail bed if five new bridges could be constructed, which would allow for 8 miles of non-motorized trail into West Yellowstone.]

Driggs Wayfinding Project

Doug Self presented an update on the Driggs Wayfinding Project. LandWorks was hired by the City of Driggs to conduct phase 2. Phase 1 is complete, which included identifying key destinations directing traffic to and rough locations for signs. Phase 2 will include confirmation of sign location and content, design of the sign and production of construction documents. A mandate for LandWorks is to come up with a design that can be modified, customized, and implemented across the region. The sign design also must conform to the requirements for signs in the state highway right of way system. LandWorks has tremendous experience with working with ITD state highway departments and in designing signs and finding ways to customize signs and incorporate meaningful placemaking detail on signs. Doug asked the consortium to help him understand what kind of design elements and materials we want to use to define our sense of place or brand for our region. Each community will be able to put their own logo, name, tagline, and branding on the signs.

The stakeholder workshop went well but was sparsely attended. Doug will post a PDF on the consortium website and city website; all project materials are up there. He will post questions for people to respond in writing, and comments will be incorporated in the design process. Next steps are for LandWorks to develop 2-3 concept designs to send out for comment and revision. They will make a second trip out in February to finalize design and look at specific location issues

Housing Needs Assessment (HNA) and Regional Analysis of Impediments (RAI)

Shawn Hill, Melanie Rees (via phone), and Wendy Sullivan with Frontier Forward presented the final report on the Housing Needs Assessment (HNA) and Regional Analysis of Impediments (RAI). The purpose of the HNA was to identify what housing needs we have, create an inventory of housing stock, identify how housing needs are or are not being met, and provide recommendations on how to address the gap between what housing products exist and what is really needed.

Frontier Forward conducted a survey that targeted outreach to major employers, chambers, and public officials. There was an English version online and a Spanish intercept survey that was conducted at church services and PTA meetings. The team received more than 4,000 responses, plus key informant interviews supplemented their primary data collection.

One significant regional finding is that once utility and commuting costs are added into overall housing costs, affordability becomes a function of an individual's income. The study found that Teton County, Wyoming, and Madison County have a high percentage of renters, while homeownership in Fremont County and Teton County, Idaho is relatively high. They also discovered that all four counties could benefit from a rehabilitation and weatherization program for existing, substandard housing. The team provided an overview of observations by county (see Power Point for more details):

The team provided an overview of observations by county (see Power Point for more details):

Fremont County has remained remarkably stable in terms of job creation and housing costs. There is the least amount of variation in these two areas. However, Fremont County has an aging housing stock and its population is getting older. The median income is the lowest in region at \$40K per household. Half of the households have at least one commuter (most driving to Madison). Island Park is an anomalous community, with significant differences in terms of housing cost and part-time occupancy.

Strategies:

- Create a housing authority, possibly as a joint effort with Madison
- Develop senior housing
- Rehabilitate existing housing
- Work with Habitat for Humanity
- Provide in-town land for multi-family housing
- Address housing needs for seasonal workers in Island Park

Madison County has relatively low homeownership (characteristic of college towns), which has dropped substantially in the last decade. Madison County's market is better able to meet housing needs—the stock is more aligned with household incomes. Rents are low, and there is a large concentration of low-income renters. There are 4500 married student households and this continues to grow. BYU is projected to hit enrollment of 20,000 students within a few years. Married students rely on community housing not university housing.

Strategies:

- Implement Rexburg/Madison comprehensive plans and provide housing for all stages of life
- Preserve and protect homeownership
- Diversify and stabilize the rental market
- Create housing authority, senior housing, and work with Habitat

Teton County, ID has a volatile housing market, and it has suffered most from boom and bust cycles. It has the fastest growing job rate, but a growing shortage of rental units. Home prices are out of reach for much of the workforce and prices are rising. More than 70% of households have at least one who commutes to Teton County, WY over Teton Pass.

Strategies:

- Re-establish the housing authority
- Encourage a variety of housing types
- Build apartments
- Reduce/eliminate tap fees for affordable housing
- Concentrate development in walkable/transit-service areas

Teton, Wyoming's overall number of housing units is increasing, but few are available to the workforce. The rental market is extremely tight (vacancies are <1%). Jobs are growing more quickly than workforce housing. Teton WY has the most housing problems in region.

Strategies:

- Establish dedicated funding source for housing
- Build more restricted units
- Create a housing preservation program
- Simplify/modify affordable housing policies and regulations

- Identify areas where increased density/scale are appropriate

Wendy Sullivan explained that the **RAI** fulfills HUD’s fair housing planning requirements as a condition of the receiving the planning grant: the RAI is legally binding. HUD’s Fair Housing goal is to make housing choice a reality regardless of race, color, religion, sex, familial, status, disability and national origin—these are HUD’s “protected classes”. The purpose of the RAI is to identify impediments to meeting the fair housing goal.

The primary focus in WGYC region was on:

- Hispanic/Latino (11%, 8,800 persons)
- Seniors
- Families
- Persons with disabilities

Frontier Forward identified 8 primary impediments (see Power Point)

- Local fair housing policies
- Discrimination
- Loan denial discrepancies (Fremont and Madison)
- Housing persons with disabilities
- Access to services
- Development code limitations
- Provision of affordable housing
- Rental Information

Next steps post RAI are to determine and adopt actions outlined in the regional plan, implement the actions, and maintain records on the actions taken.

Teton View Regional Plan for Sustainable Development – Themes and Strategies

Bruce Meighen with Logan Simpson provided an update on the development and process for the RPSD. The Logan Simpson team is responsible for integrating the findings and recommendations of all our studies into one regional plan. There are approximately 50 documents to analyze, including each jurisdiction’s existing comprehensive plan and agency management plans. The challenge is how to sum all into one regional plan that represents each community’s unique identities and highlights their commonalities. Bruce went through the plan outline and later incorporated feedback; the end result will be an integrated plan extracted from all our completed studies.

Productive Landscapes:

- Preserve our agricultural heritage
- Steward our wildlife and public lands
- Support four-season recreation

Resilient Communities:

- Enhance our large cities (Rexburg & Jackson)
- Strengthen our small cities

Vital Connections:

- Expand and integrate the region’s infrastructure

Under these chapter headings were 11 proposed themes, and 20 indicators per theme. The RPSD will also include call outs to highlight key community-specific best practices and special projects that are good examples of success. The structure is designed to be on a website in a toolbox format, including a set of appendices.

Revised Schedule for RPSD Compilation and Public Response Period – Wendy Lowe

Wendy went over the schedule of upcoming Consortium meetings and teleconferences. There was a discussion of how the Consortium would vote on the final plan. There are Consortium -adopted rules for voting. Mr. Cluff said that only those Consortium members who have signed the updated MOU would be allowed to vote.

The next Consortium Meeting – Teleconference is December 16 from 1:30 – 3:00 pm

The meeting adjourned at 5:00 p.m.