



# Valley Advocates for Responsible Development

**March 26, 2012**

**URGENT: Help Teton County Counter Sprawl**

The Teton Valley 2020 Comprehensive Plan effort is working to balance our community's stated goals of preserving our agricultural heritage and rural character while promoting vibrant cities. These plans are based on public feedback. We need you to speak up now as the community committees work to finalize the implementation tools that will become a part of the plan. Without your direct input on tools like new zoning, large-lot subdivisions, and community character protection guidelines, they might not make the final cut.

Lucky for you -- Teton County has posted **this survey** <https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/LandUseTools> to solicit specific feedback from YOU.

Please take this entire 5-min survey. Be sure to include your name and address at the end so you will definitely be counted. You can also forward this survey to your friends and neighbors. Survey deadline is April 6<sup>th</sup>!

## **Why this survey is so important:**

A meaningful new Comp Plan will prevent a repeat of the past 10 years of unplanned growth and rural sprawl. If we, the public, do not adamantly voice our support for responsible land use and effective planning tools, there is no guarantee that the new Comp Plan will be any better than the last one.

## **Quick Guide to the Survey Topics:**

- **Family lots splits have great potential.** This can be a valuable tool that enables farmers to easily pass property on to their children. But, the tool needs to be clear about the purpose – preserving family farms, to prevent the abuses of this sort of tool that have been seen in other communities.
- **Large lot subdivisions are good!** This tool creates incentives to preserve our rural landscape while also allowing for some development on large acreages.
- **Cluster developments have potential. The cluster development tool** is a great concept, but how big should the clusters be in rural areas? 10 homes? 500 homes? Tell the County what you think!
- **We need to consider conservation easements and open space bonds.** In many other beautiful, rural-recreation communities, **conservation bonds** pay for protecting the stunning landscape, which is a critical economic asset. What do you think?

- **Community character protection guidelines are good!** We have almost 8,000 vacant platted lots in just the rural county alone. Rural character guidelines *may be the only tool* that can mitigate the visual impacts of all these lots as homes are built on all of them. (i.e., reduce large hillside cuts for driveways and foundations in hillside subdivisions.)

- **Vacate obsolete subdivisions!** Teton County has already begun vacating “paper plat” subdivisions. As for the subdivisions that have expired with incomplete roads, fire protection systems, and other critical pieces of infrastructure, the County should vacate when possible.

- **Transfer of Development Rights (TDR’s) are nice in theory. . . .** The challenge with TDR’s is finding a willing seller and a willing receiving area. This tool could help direct growth into our cities where it belongs.

- **Last survey question: *What’s the one tool that makes all of the others more effective?***

- **Answer: New Zoning.** There are currently only two zoning designations in the rural county - Ag 20 and Ag 2.5. Most of the Ag 2.5 zoning is located in remote, critical habitat areas. For example, the foothills of the Big Hole Mountains, Horseshoe Canyon, Rammell Mountain Road, Bitch Creek, Badger Creek, both the Leigh Creeks, part of the Teton River wetlands, and all the northern foothills of the Teton Mountains are all 2.5-acre zoning. We need to protect these habitat areas with conservation zoning. In addition, the most remote agricultural areas that are far from public services should be extremely low-density zoning to preserve the agricultural use of these lands.

- Drafting a Comp Plan that contemplates more effective zoning districts will help us protect the meaningful open space and critical wildlife habitat that drives our economy. In conjunction with the additional tools of the Comp Plan like large lot subdivisions and family lot splits, more effective zoning will protect property values while also creating a more viable set of options for farmers looking towards the next generations.