



# Valley Advocates for Responsible Development

March 28, 2014

Teton County Planning & Zoning Commission  
150 Courthouse Drive  
Driggs, Idaho 83422

RE: Comments regarding the Community Report

Dear Commissioners:

We appreciate the time and energy you are all volunteering to this important task. Myself and the other VARD staff thank you for your efforts. The schedule outlined for this code writing work is very aggressive; it will be challenging to maintain it while making some complex and weighty decisions on the form and content of the new land use code. As you work through this process, if there are issues that warrant more time or consideration, we encourage you to feel free to depart from this schedule as needed to establish more time for data gathering and deliberation. Overall, we feel that the document as presented articulates key issues, but the essence and purpose of the Comprehensive Plan should be well integrated into the code writing process.

We realize this community report is intended to be general, based on the current status of these issues and the code writing process, so we will keep our comments brief:

- **Consistency with the Comprehensive Plan.** The actions of this Commission should reflect the goals and consensus as articulated in the unanimously adopted Teton County Comprehensive Plan. We encourage you to take an inclusive approach to the code writing process, but maintain focus on the overarching goals of the Comprehensive Plan in your efforts. This new code should reflect the Comprehensive Plan's clear mandate for recreation development, promotion of a lifestyle community, and habitat protection as intimately linked to Teton Valley's economic viability in the long term. This mandate is generally silent in the present draft of this community report.
- **Acknowledgement of the link between recreation development and economic development.** This report should acknowledge that recreational opportunities are not only important for the valley, they are also intimately linked to our economic viability as a lifestyle community. It is what draws people here, both long-term residents but also visitors who support our local businesses with significant dollars spent. The natural and unblemished intrinsic value of the valley creates and sustains our sublime quality of life. From guest ranches, bike shops, guides & outfitters, hotels, gear shops, and Grand Targhee - these businesses provide jobs and tourism infrastructure. Development of recreation opportunities is also a consistent theme in all four of the primary areas of focus in Teton County's Economic Development Strategic Plan.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *Economic Development Plan: Teton County, Idaho.* (May 2013). This plan has been unanimously adopted for implementation by the Driggs City Council, Victor City Council, Teton City Council,  
285 E Little Ave, PO Box 1164, Driggs, Idaho 83422



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- **Acknowledgement of the Agricultural Land Split Exemption:** In the section of the report which discusses land splits, it would be good to acknowledge the presently existing (although not well known by the general public) Agricultural Land Split Exemption. It is found in Teton County Code § 9-2-2.<sup>2</sup>
- **Wildlife Habitat Overlays and economic development.** In the section discussing the Wildlife Habitat Overlay, please include an acknowledgement of the relationship between preservation of habitat and cultivation of a lifestyle economy as outlined in both the Comprehensive Plan and the Economic Development Strategic Plan.
- **Code revisions to encourage recreation development.** The current land use code needs improvement in terms of encouraging and fostering rural recreational commercial uses such as guest ranches, nature retreats, research stations, hunting lodges, youth camps, outdoor schools like NOLS, etc. (We acknowledge there is a fine line between these uses and other commercial uses in the unincorporated county that will detract from our rural heritage and undermine our city centers.) This need to refine commercial uses to promote rural recreation development should be acknowledged in the zoning code analysis.
- **Establishment of additional lands zoned for commercial and manufacturing uses.** Please carefully and cautiously consider the need for any additional commercial or manufacturing zoning. The cities sent a clear message during the Comprehensive Plan process that they do not want to see further expansion of commercial uses outside of the cities and would like to focus on infill of existing lands zoned for manufacturing.<sup>3</sup> **Here is summary of the existing and commercial and manufacturing zoning in the unincorporated county:**
  - ❖ **Commercial zoning:** In the unincorporated county, there are approximately **112 acres** of undeveloped lands zoned for commercial uses. All of this land is located along Highway 33.
    - ❖ **40% (45 acres)** of this commercial zoning is located outside of the city areas of impact.<sup>4</sup>

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and the Teton County Board of County Commissioners. The plan includes four Focus Areas: #1 Business Recruitment and Development; #2 Physical Asset Development, #3 Tourism and Marketing, #4 Protect and Foster Lifestyle Community.

<sup>2</sup> Teton County Code § 9-2-2: Agricultural exemption: A bona fide division or partition of agricultural land of agricultural purposes, which is the division of land into lots/parcels, all of which are twenty (20) acres or larger and maintained as agricultural lands. This exemption does not apply to a division for residential purposes.

<sup>3</sup> Attachment A: City of Victor and City of Driggs comment letters submitted to Teton County during the comprehensive plan process. (2012).

<sup>4</sup> Source: Teton County GIS program. (2014).



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- ❖ Manufacturing zoning: In the unincorporated county, there are approximately **389 acres** of undeveloped lands zoned for manufacturing. They are located in 3 primary locations: along Highway 33, south of the Teton County transfer station, and north of the Driggs airport.
    - ❖ **18% (70 acres)** of this land that is zoned for manufacturing is located outside of the city areas of impact.
  - ❖ For scale and reference as to how much land this is, Broulim's, which is the largest commercial building in Teton County, is located on 5.3 acres, and that also includes the parking lot in front.<sup>5</sup>
  - ❖ Rather than consider whether additional lands need to be rezoned for commercial or manufacturing uses, we encourage this Commission to consider whether too many lands are already zoned for these uses and need to be re-zoned and/or relocated to better locations.
- **Establishment of allowed uses in commercial zones.** Please exercise caution when considering the establishment of allowed uses in the existing Commercial zones in the unincorporated county. Much of this land consists of large spot zones in unsuspecting locations that can accommodate stunningly large commercial development. For example, there are 25.38 acres of land zoned for commercial uses and 13.5 acres zoned for manufacturing uses at 5000S and Highway 33. In 2007, a large multiplex movie theatre, shopping mall, gas station, and 2 hotels were proposed on this property – which illustrates the vast size and scale of commercial development these large parcels can accommodate. Right now, commercial use of this land is limited to CUPs. If Teton County creates allowed uses in some of these historical spot zones, high impact commercial uses will quickly spring to fruition, drawing commercial industries away from the cities, and raising public ire.

That concludes our comments. Thank you for your time and attention in the service of this community.

Sincerely,

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Anna Trentadue  
Program Director/Staff Attorney  
Valley Advocates for Responsible Development

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<sup>5</sup> Source: Teton County GIS program. (2104).