The Policy Frontier: Sustainability Planning in Teton County, Wyoming

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ABSTRACT
After two land use planning cycles over twenty years, Teton County, Wyoming, is still losing its distinctive natural and social amenities to development pressures. There is declining trust that local government can maintain the remaining community character and other values desired by locals. Sustainability planning offers a way to increase the effectiveness of current plans, but it requires substantial community participation to legitimize policy decisions. Our study reveals that the planning process to date has resulted in a drawing down of public trust and increasing frustration between the government and its community. Conflicts among values and a sense that decision making has not been properly inclusive have added to the sense of disaffection. We recommend an alternative policy process to reinvigorate and strengthen civic engagement to produce flexible, effective sustainability policies for the community.

The approximately 12,000 residents of the Town of Jackson and Teton County, Wyoming, are beginning to think publicly about sustainability. Current land use practices do not meet citizens’ expectations for maintaining community character and the valley’s unique environment. Although the precise number of citizens who share this view is unknown, evidence suggests it may be the majority. Although the town and county passed concurrent growth management plans in 1994, the joint planning process left many residents feeling that living and environmental conditions were deteriorating. Many were also disaffected and mistrustful of the public policy process, especially government’s ability to provide leadership for sustainability. Continuing pervasive resentment could become a significant obstacle to the future public involvement that is essential for clarifying and securing the common interest. The problem Teton County faces is how to produce a policy process that reinvigorates civic engagement to produce sustainable practices that are workable and adaptable.

Our paper describes historical value demands, appraises the decision-making process that produced the two plans, and suggests ways to strengthen civic engagement and problem solving so that future processes become genuinely sustainable. We seek to improve community capacity to formulate and realize appropriate policies reflecting broad public support.

Our analytic methods are those of the policy sciences (Lasswell and Kaplan 1950; Lasswell 1971; Lasswell and McDojual 1992). Primary research included interviews using eleven open-ended questions about the decision process and its outcomes. Seventeen people who were active in 1990-1992, including both supporters and opponents of the plans, were chosen from public meeting rosters. Additional data about citizen perspectives and the decision process
came from approximately 150 informal conversations from 1990 to 1997 with citizens, conservationists, business people, county commissioners, county and city planners, and activists. Data also came from local weekly newspapers since 1990. Chapters 1 and 2 of the 1994 Teton County Comprehensive Plan were reviewed (Teton County Board of Commissioners 1994). Histories of the 1978 plan and accounts of the 1990-1994 planning process and its consequences were also consulted (e.g., Read 1995). Recent materials from two 1997 public sustainability planning meetings were examined. This paper reflects the status of planning in 1997-1998. We have followed the planning process to date and it remains unchanged from our descriptions.

TETON COUNTY PLANNING AND THE VALUE PROCESS
Planning in Teton County is touched on daily in discussions among citizens. Concerns abound regarding community character, growth rates, business activities, tourist accommodations, housing starts, and the like. Fundamentally, though, planning is a value-balancing process about who gets what, when, and how (see Lasswell 1958). The creation and distribution of values (that is, the shaping and sharing of values) is the heart of any policy-making process. Planning in a culture that emphasizes individual rights and principles of the free market is a controversial undertaking in the best of circumstances. Planning has historically been a government response to externalities caused by the private sector, such as land use conflicts, pollution, and other inadequacies in living conditions that pose threats to the health, safety, and welfare of citizens (Hoch 1994). There is an inherent tension between allowing the market to be the mechanism that shapes and shares values and an understanding that government intervention is necessary to protect greater community values against the unbalanced distribution of values caused by market failure. It is important for the purposes of this appraisal to make the point that planning is an inherently controversial activity because of the competing ideals in our culture. It is also a complex value-balancing process since it implicitly and explicitly affects all community members. Before examining this value process, we describe Teton County and past and current challenges to planning.

CHALLENGES OF PLANNING
Teton County is located in the scenic mountains of northwestern Wyoming. It is part of the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem, which has Yellowstone National Park at its heart (Clark and Minta 1994). The county’s showcase center is the 301,291 acre Grand Teton National Park, just six miles south of Yellowstone National Park. A fifty-mile-long valley called Jackson Hole bisects the county from north to south. Less than three percent of the 643-square-mile county is privately owned although private lands contain critical habitat for many wildlife species. National forests and a national wildlife refuge make up the rest of the county.
For most of the valley’s settlement history—the earliest homestead was in 1883—ranching has dominated the economy of the area (Nelson 1994). Establishment of the two national parks shifted the economy toward tourism and resort development. Increasing popularity and accessibility, especially over the last two decades, has led to rapid growth and changes in the biophysical and built environment. These threaten many of the natural and social values important to both old and new residents (Teton County Board of Commissioners 1994). Growth from 1980 to 1990 was 19.4 percent according to U. S. Census figures. Updated U. S. Census figures indicate that the growth rate accelerated to 21.6 percent from 1990 to 1996, putting the area in the top five percent of the fastest growing counties in the nation (Teton County Board of Commissioners 1994; Hayden 1997a).

Teton County and the Town of Jackson have undergone two planning exercises in the last twenty years. The county passed its first comprehensive plan in 1978, and the town and county each passed similar comprehensive plans in 1994 (Read 1995). Planning goals in both periods were to protect the unique natural and social character of the valley. One county commissioner who served in 1978 noted that the plan sought to regulate land uses, maintain ranching as an important economic and cultural element of the community, and preserve open space and environmentally sensitive lands such as river bottoms and wildlife habitat.

The process for creating the 1978 plan included public meetings throughout the valley, moderated by elected officials and a planning consultant. These were designed to solicit residents’ views on growth, the county’s future, and regulations. Passage of the 1978 plan by a 2-to-1 vote of the county commissioners was contentious and prompted a demonstration by builders and developers (Read 1995).

The 1980s brought rapid population growth and development, which exposed weaknesses in the first plan’s design. For example, if all private land were developed in the grid pattern allowed by the plan, all open ranch lands could be converted to a suburban landscape. The public gradually became aware that the character of the valley could not be preserved by the 1978 plan. A new round of planning began in 1990, which resulted in two comprehensive plans in 1994 at the town and county levels (Read 1995). Framed as “property rights vs. community rights,” the planning process was again highly contentious. Perceptions that decision makers chose solutions before allowing the public to indicate preferences may have diminished trust in local government’s ability to protect community interests (Simpson 1991a).

In this context, future public involvement in planning is not assured. Teton County’s civic infrastructure, formal and informal institutions, and the processes through which the social contract was written and rewritten have been eroded by past failures to protect public values (see Parr 1993). If another public process is carried out without learning and improvement on the part of all participants, further loss of trust and involvement is possible (Potapchuk 1995).
1991; Yankelovich 1991). Government effectiveness may decline because much time and energy could be spent managing unproductive conflict. Lack of trust and escalating conflict weakens government’s authority and power to set and achieve common interest goals (Gamson 1968).

The town and county have several alternatives. They can administer current plans without changes as best they can; amend the plans to enhance their abilities to meet stated goals; or adjust the land-use planning process and undertake a new planning effort that may better reflect citizens’ value expectations. Continuing to administer current plans without changes will not meet community goals. It can be inferred that the 1978 and 1994 plans and their implementation have not been sufficient to preserve unique community characteristics, nor have they been able to manage growth effectively or meet community needs such as affordable housing (Gregor 1997; Hayden 1997b, c; Schechter 1997). Yet, to hold a new public planning process similar to the 1990-1994 effort may result in further erosion of trust in government and little consensus.

If the county chooses this latter option, the reasonable focus of the next process would be to seek economic, social and environmental goals that are long-range, integrated, and community-based—in other words, sustainable (Kline and Goodman 1993; Potapchuk 1996). Sustainability planning is more contextual than other approaches. It suggests that, for the community’s future to be healthy and stable, policy decisions should be both environmentally and economically beneficial (Campbell 1996). High public participation is desirable (Kline 1995). Producing a plan that will reflect the community’s common expectations with wide endorsement requires a decision process that is smoothly run and informed by a rigorous and accurate understanding of problems and the social process (Lasswell 1971). Can Teton County meet this standard?

THE VALUE PROCESS AND PLANNING
Planning allocates values—that is, desired objects, ends, states, conditions, or processes that bring gratification. The outcomes of the planning process differentially “indulge” or “deprive” people with regard to different values. Public reaction to planning in Teton County since 1990 indicates that many people perceived that they were left worse off by planning decisions. The policy sciences recognize eight fundamental values that encompass all of people’s desires: power (support for decisions), enlightenment (information), wealth (material resources), well-being (the opportunity for safety, health, and comfort), skill (the opportunity to acquire and exercise excellence in a particular operation), affection (intimacy, friendship, and loyalty), respect (recognition), and rectitude (ethical conduct) (Lasswell 1971).

Understanding this value shaping and sharing process is key to appreciating the responses of interviewees, comments in newspapers and informal conversations, and the dynamics of the policy process itself. A sample of comments provides insight into how values were shaped and shared in the Teton County
planning process. All eight values are evident in the following examples, and most comments reveal concern for more than one value. These examples illustrate the eight values at play and people’s perspectives based on them, including demands held by interviewees and others.

**Power:**

“Most of the old-time landowners refuse to even go to the meetings because they’ve gone to meetings over the years and were so totally outnumbered that they have a fatalist attitude about it.”

“The officials would not give the responsibility to the stakeholders and the community to make those decisions. I’ve read about this a lot: as is usually the case, though I can only judge from this community, there were people in power who felt they could make better decisions for the community than the interest groups and the stakeholders. As a result, various groups were excluded from the process in the final document.”

**Enlightenment:**

“[T]here should be more information for us in the paper about how it’s done in Carmel, or whatever. There’s some success that we need to know about and be able to say we could do that, too. Maybe the public is becoming educated, but I don’t think it ever hurts to do more.”

“I really think, again, being able to foresee the data you’re going to need and getting it way in advance so that you’ve got something to base your regulations on [is necessary]. You need to have that kind of information being disseminated in the media so that, when people finally hear the solution, or how we’re going to achieve a goal, it already makes sense to them. They don’t have to go, “Well, I’ve never understood why this is a problem,” because there’s been no information given to them.”

**Wealth:**

“I don’t really look at this plan as influencing the social element other than how it affects cost of living. To me, that drives everything else socially. It’s sort of a performance zoning plan, whatever that is. The social element of your community can be affected by what you do with planning simply because there isn’t enough of a developable land base with all kinds of mixing of housing types. You can have a very stratified community.”

“You don’t have people coming in and being able to build (expensive) houses like Rafter J [Development], raise their kids, and have them move here.”
Well-being:
“[I]n my own opinion, my own bias, by definition, very narrow, specific interests [dominated]. [It] hurts community values. The overall well-being with the community. And it doesn’t even matter if you’re narrow in another thing that wasn’t money. In just the definition by being narrow, it disallows for the full range of what the community needs to become healthy in—that’s sustainable, or whatever.”

“Hopefully, I was seeing a community that would have an awareness of what impacts of growth would occur and begin to accept the fact that we have a finite amount of growth we can actually take without really ruining our quality of life.”

Skill:

“Perhaps it betrays my academic nature, but I tend to regard expert consultants with a high degree of credibility.”

“One of the things I advocated in this process was to get an economist on board so that we could try and figure out what the economic ramifications were going to be.”

Affection:

“I think I primarily wanted to have some say as to the future of this place. I just feel a real love and caring for it. I think I have always hoped to help Jackson Hole to grow well, and in a healthy way.”

“I think a community is composed of people. My thought has always been that community character is its people. It is not in the scenic corridor, and it is not in the setbacks. It is not the regulatory environment which says we will preserve the rural environment. If you drive the ranchers out, the community loses that character. You can’t say “cattle free by 93” and take the cattle off the public lands, and out of the park, and expect there to still be ranching. And that is what gave this community a given character, but it’s going away.”

Respect:

“I wanted my input to be heard.”

“The old-time families who have held onto the land and preserved the open space really don’t get much of an audience with anybody around here. They are a little resentful of having done a real good job of stewardship, keeping beautiful open space, having taken care of their land, their ranches and not developing for the fast buck. They resent somebody coming in there and saying, “Now we’re going to tell you how to do it.”
Rectitude:

“I was hoping that an open dialogue might be created from all of the stakeholders and that the discussion around the table at those meetings would result in common goals and interests being established from all of the stakeholders. I hoped the final product would be a plan that would recognize all of the diverse interests which we obviously have here.”

“I guess I feel like even though I wish I was more knowledgeable about a lot of planning areas, I spoke for a huge percentage of people who weren’t represented at these meetings. I think there are a lot of people who are overworked and overstressed and can’t afford to be there. So I felt maybe I could represent that side of things.”

As seen in these examples, different people dramatically emphasized different value demands. Although all eight values were evident in interviewees’ comments, well-being and respect were the values most mentioned and power and wealth least mentioned. Power seemed to be a dominant value for three people, enlightenment for nine, wealth for two, well-being for twelve, skill for one, affection for seven, respect for eleven, and rectitude for seven. This same emphasis is evident in newspaper accounts, letters to editors, and in public meetings over this period.

However, these demands were largely unmet by the planning process and its outcomes. Many people perceived that planning favored wealth and power for people who already had relatively large amounts of these values, according to interview data, informal conversations, and newspaper articles. There was a large gap between people’s expectations about the planning process and its outcomes and what they perceived as the actual process and outcomes. This gap produced feelings of dismay, mistrust, and alienation, and blame was laid on local government for “betraying” them. Making appropriate future adjustments to the public process will require elected officials and planning staff to learn from past efforts.

APPRAISING THE 1990-1994 PLANNING PROCESS

The planning effort used community outreach techniques. There were meetings between citizens and planning department officials throughout the town and county as well as community-wide public meetings for citizen input at different stages of the process. The town and county contracted with a planning consultant who produced position papers based on public input, which were presented at public meetings. The consultant recommended planning regulations, and both officials and the public responded. With input from town and county planning departments and citizens, volunteer planning commissioners appointed by elected officials made preliminary reviews and revisions of the
consultant’s recommendations. The town council and board of county commissioners made the final review and were responsible for formal adoption of the plans (Read 1995).

This multi-year planning effort can be broken down into the seven interrelated activities of the decision process (Lasswell 1971). Values are shaped and shared through these interrelated activities. Each activity, collectively making up the overall process, has outcomes. Below we define each activity and specify criteria for adequate performance, summarize interviewees’ comments about each activity, and offer our own appraisal about how well each activity was carried out.

GATHERING, PROCESSING AND DISSEMINATING INFORMATION
The intelligence activity involves gathering, processing, and disseminating information about the planning problem at hand. The intelligence function is adequately carried out when information is reliable and when the process is creative, open, and comprehensive yet selective with regard to all relevant components of the perceived problem and its particular context.

Basic information was needed in Teton County planning. People interviewed indicated that, although information was presented, it was not comprehensive concerning relevant historic trends, conditions or factors which explained the movement of historic trends, and projections or assumptions about the future if trends and conditions did not change. People with less expertise in land use planning seemed more satisfied with the information availability than those who dealt with land use regulations as part of their professional or focal interest, or those involved in developing property. Developers were dissatisfied with the amount and type of data available as well as analysis of the appropriateness and potential effects of planning regulations. Among the comments from interviewees about the intelligence activity were the following:

“[T]here came to be some understanding that things which make the place unique are important.”

“They ended up writing the regulations before they generated the data to support them…I’m just guessing, but I would think you would sit down and say, “What information do we have, and what information do we need?”…You need to have that kind of information being disseminated in the media so that, when people finally hear the solution, or how we’re going to achieve a goal, it already makes sense to them. They don’t have to go, “Well, I’ve never understood why this is a problem.” Because there’s been no information given to them.”

Shortcomings in the intelligence activity can lead to problems throughout the rest of the decision process. Without comprehensive information, prob-
lems face the likelihood of being misidentified. It then becomes impossible to set relevant goals that will address problems and produce appropriate, substantive results. Critical to an adequate decision process is a realistic definition of the problem at hand, but adequate problem definition alone is not sufficient for effective decision making. Since every policy problem is imbedded in a context of social interactions, policy decisions must accommodate the social process involved in each activity.

Gathering and processing data is an expensive budget item, but more creative and comprehensive data gathering would have improved all phases of the Teton County land use planning process. Creativity is important for assessing what data sets do not exist but need to be created to provide comprehensiveness. This may have been a problem for Teton County. For example, in the early stages of the process, there were no socio-economic statistics for the county such as income levels or professions or their relation to housing prices; no reports on the costs of growth such as revenues needed to supply projected infrastructure; poorly organized information on wildlife populations and habitats; little understanding of the relationship of commercial development to the whole; no projection of transportation needs based on various development alternatives. There is a seeming contradiction between comprehensiveness and selectivity, but without comprehensiveness, there is the potential to define problems by what data are available, and without selectivity, there is the potential to assume that any and all data sets can be made relevant to decision making.

DEVELOPING OPTIONS

Next is the promotion activity, which is characterized by debate over alternative courses of action to remedy identified problems. Various actors’ value demands and expectations are clarified in promotion. Advocacy of different alternatives focuses decision-makers’ attention on the justifications for those proposals. A good promotion function occurs when decision makers give integrated, comprehensive consideration to people’s values through forums, pluralistic discussion, and recommendations.

The Teton County planning process had a vigorous promotional function. However, most of the people interviewed perceived that the promotion phase was dominated by special interests. In addition, people thought that part of the difficulty in completing the planning process was the wrangling over demands. There was extensive comment by those interviewed on the promotion activities:

“I think it’s weighted inequitably toward the business interests, economic interests, and the professionals who deal with the business of land...because those are the people who directly, monetarily benefit from being at that meeting. And these guys have maps, they have consultants, they have cost-benefit analyses, and they have everything else. It’s intimidat-
ing as hell to me, and it’s even more intimidating to most people. They have something to say, but they’re not about to go up against the professional person. They’re just not.”

“There were people who should have been involved in a real dialogue getting mad and quitting the process. People like me... getting pissed off because somebody was being so bullheaded that it couldn’t go anywhere.”

“[The last two-and-a-half years] twenty or thirty people were making significant decisions about peoples’ livelihoods and their real property....It wasn’t right....At some point along the line, the people who originally went and made comments and were fired up to participate lost interest and said, ”You’re not going to listen to me anyway.”

And sure enough, they didn’t....There was a specific agenda with this last process, which was to stop growth and stop development.”

Again, those less familiar with planning seemed more satisfied with the overall process, but there was emphatic response—from people at polar opposites with respect to regulating land use—that the promotion phase was far from adequate. Only two of the seventeen people interviewed had only positive comments about promotional activities. In addition, there were complaints that promotion was neither open nor inclusive, and a sense that outcomes had been pre-selected (Simpson 1991a,b). Newspaper articles tended to confirm that perception. The cumulative effect was a perception that the public process was “hollow” and that the adopted plan did not reflect the greater community’s values.

Our assessment is that the inadequacy of the intelligence activity left gaps in information that made it difficult or impossible to develop a broad range of supportable alternatives. Participants tended to advance their own special interests. In addition, the consultant seemed determined to use a particular type of planning without open debate on other approaches that might have been equally desirable. The proposed method—performance zoning—would allow a greater range of uses in a given area than traditional zoning, so long as the proposed development conformed to the character of the existing environs by meeting neighborhood-specific design guidelines. The consultant’s publicly combative attitude toward those who did not agree with his proposed regulations probably added to suspicions that solutions did not try to integrate diverse values, but were nevertheless acceptable to elected officials (Read 1995). A more integrative approach by decision makers would have enjoyed general support.
SETTING THE PLAN’S RULES

Prescription entails crystallizing people’s demands and then enacting rules or guidelines to achieve common interests. A competent prescription activity will stabilize people’s expectations about lawful norms, contingencies, and sanctions for nonconformance through open and comprehensive communication.

The final and formal Teton County plan and associated regulations, along with many unwritten community norms of conduct, constitute the prescription. Interviews suggest that the prescription is supportable as far as broad goals are concerned, but the comments also reveal a belief that the regulations cannot achieve the stated goals of protecting local natural resources, social diversity, sense of community and small town feeling, and outdoor recreation opportunities. Moreover, the regulations are so complex that there is little chance the average citizen can understand them. Comments about prescription included:

“Coming up with a term like community character is a success which might be a direct result of the process.”

“If you look at the actual plan, it’s gobbledy-gook. There’s very little that actually determines character. There’s a ton of regulations. We have a five- or ten-pound document, but…to say what character is and how we protect it didn’t get done. The things that got put in are in tables such as floor area ratios and densities, which are easy to get variances because nobody was quite sure why it was the way it was to begin with.”

“The only people who understood the plan when it was passed would have to be people like Bill Resor [on the planning commission]. Those were people on the planning commissions. Maybe the head planner. The assistant planners still don’t understand the plan.”

Complaints about the burdensome and obtuse nature of the regulations were ubiquitous among professionals in land use planning as well as citizens.

The prescription activity was carried out in an open fashion since review and revision of recommended regulations were discussed at meetings open to the public. In addition, maps and supporting documentation were available in the planning offices of both the city and county. The two weekly local newspapers carried articles about proposed regulations. The prescription thus stabilized expectations to some degree (Read 1995). The most acrimonious charges and counter-charges about prescriptions were about perceived loss of property rights versus loss of community character from growth and development. Less divisive discussions in the promotional phase, however, might have produced more useable prescriptions. There might have been more in-depth discussion, emotions might not have run as high, and the process might have generated better overall support for decisions.
IMPLEMENTING THE PLAN

Invocation and application (sometimes combined under the rubric of implementation), include approval and enforcement of policies and regulations. Invocation and application should be both authoritative and controlling, and should reflect comprehensive, open, and principled consideration of all relevant proposals advanced during promotion. Formal adoption of regulations and guidelines and their implementation should therefore reflect the common interest.

In Teton County’s planning process these two activities were closely associated. Interviewees’ views were clear. Criticisms of how the plan and its regulations were implemented varied, but few people interviewed were dispassionate about the regulations’ failure to match the community vision as they saw it. Only one person interviewed was satisfied with the outcomes of the new plans. Invocation and application of the new plans, especially at the county level, continue to be a point of controversy.

“The plan was supposed to be character based. It was supposed to determine what the elements were that make for strong community character.”

“Some of the biggest driving forces were left till the last, and they’re still not complete. One of them was the transportation plan which, to me, drives the whole thing.”

“They have stuff all the time where they say, ‘Oh well, we really don’t know how we’re going to administer this yet.’ That makes the public angry. They want an answer. They go in to build a house, and want to put a fence here, and they’re told, ‘Well, we don’t know if we’re going to let you do that. Because we don’t know how to enforce our own plan.’ It’s not clear enough. It’s dangerous stuff. People like certainty in their lives.”

Comments since the plan’s adoption have been consistently derisive about its complexity and inherent contradictions. Application of the plan’s regulations relative to its community vision is considered weak by citizens who support growth management. It is viewed as draconian among those who wish to pursue development.

Invocation and application in the Teton County decision process have not been adequate. The plans should represent the common interest, the regulations should not cause severe deprivation of basic values to any individual or group, and citizens should be able to expect the regulations to be applied and enforced in a timely, fair, and nondiscriminatory manner. Interviews and numerous casual comments indicate that, despite the best intentions, the town
and county plans fail to meet these requirements for adequate invocation and application. Shortcomings include a lack of regulations to ensure that structures and siting will preserve community character, regulatory complexity at a level that citizens cannot understand as a basis for informed comment on proposed developments, and a professional planning staff who cannot apply regulations with uniformity.

EVALUATING THE PLAN

Appraisal is review of the successes and failures of the decision process with respect to goal achievement. A competent appraisal exercise assigns accountability for outcomes. It should include formal and informal, internal and external evaluations. Evaluations should disclose who has been affected by outcomes, both positive and negative, and who is responsible for those outcomes. Thorough evaluations must also account for the context in which outcomes are appraised.

In Teton County there is much informal but little formal appraisal. As with all other activities, there did not appear to be consensus on the success of the public process and the plans it produced:

“[I had hoped] that there would actually be a step in the process toward creating a system for good land use patterns and for building good community. Maybe a few of those things came about. But as an overall package, I don’t feel that the plan that came out is a great plan. It’s better than some; but it’s not nearly as good as what was hoped for. The more planning there’s been, the worse it’s gotten. And I’m a believer in planning.”

“A lot of the open space that we have in the valley would probably not be there [if we hadn’t had that process].”

“The power was removed from the people in this plan. It was removed by the process. In other words, if I can’t, as a member of the public, understand what this plan says, I can’t even come in and comment on projects that are coming along. I can’t do it, because I don’t understand the plan. But anyone who is proposing a project has probably reviewed it very diligently and probably knows what it says, and that person can then counteract almost anything a person who doesn’t understand it says. By making it complex with little black-and-white tables and a bunch of other rules, it says that nobody knows where a project is going to end up when it goes through the pipeline. I think that’s created a real problem. I suspect there will be less public input on future projects, partly because of that complexity.”

Both those people who supported planning and those who opposed it believe that, since the process was not inclusive from their standpoints, the plan does not reflect the aspirations of the community as a whole. Additional criticisms are that crucial factors affecting community character—such as transportation planning, affordable housing, and resort designation—were not part of the plan when it was adopted and that there is little relationship between the regulations and the stated goals of defining and maintaining community character.
believe that, since the process was not inclusive from their standpoints, the plan
does not reflect the aspirations of the community as a whole. Additional
criticisms are that crucial factors affecting community character—such as
transportation planning, affordable housing, and resort designation—were
not part of the plan when it was adopted and that there is little relationship
between the regulations and the stated goals of defining and maintaining
community character. In addition, there are complaints that the town and
county plans do not deal adequately with future commercial development,
which, under current regulations, would ultimately be triple the existing
amount. The impact of this level of development will be significant. Although
it was discussed during promotion, no solutions were included in the plan, nor
are its potential impacts currently a formal subject of discussion.

Comments from various people in casual conversations indicate a belief
that the rest of the regulations for both plans will be almost meaningless if the
potential for commercial development is not reduced. The reasoning is simple.
Large-scale development exerts a circular form of pressure: more retail space
requires more tourists, which increases the need for more lodging, which calls
for more retail development to support it. In a service economy where wages
are low, the spillover effects on housing and social services requirements to
make up deficits between income and needs will be an increasing burden on
other residents. In addition, the physical space requirements of both business and
workers will require more lands to be developed. This is considered by people to
be an indulgence of business interests to the detriment of the greater community.

In short, the plan is too complex to invite meaningful discussion by average
citizens about its overall adequacy or about specific requirements. This fore-
closes equitable access to discussion and appraisal. Decision-making about
appropriate amendments or revisions is then largely limited to people who can
afford professional services to influence ongoing refinement or those who, by
virtue of their jobs, are required to know the regulations. The future of the plan
and its implementation will continue to be influenced by these limited interests.

MOVING ON
In the termination (or succession) activity past practices are discontinued. In
Teton County, for instance, the 1978 plan was terminated by the 1994 plan.
This activity is typically a response to an appraisal, which concludes either that
current practices have achieved the stated goals or that they are not achieving
them. A good termination function must account for those who will be harmed
by the cessation of current practices. It should be comprehensive, balanced,
ameliorative, and respectful of those affected.

Comments from those interviewed, while not in answer to specific ques-
tions regarding termination, indicate a need for local government to examine
possible termination of parts of the plans that do not meet the community’s
vision and to replace them with regulations with a better chance of securing the
community’s interests.
Our analysis of Teton County planning shows that the concurrent plans do not have explicit stipulations for termination. Like all plans, those for the town and county have indeterminate useful lifespans. The plans should specify conditions that will demonstrate that they are no longer meeting the needs of the community along with provisions for implementing alternatives better suited to planning goals.

There has been no authoritative discussion of whether sustainability planning will become a formal process that might terminate current plans, or whether it will be used to inform administration and be adopted through amendments to those plans. The 1997 Citizens Economic Summit public meeting materials, which are not authoritative documents, referred to sustainability decisions as a means to supplement the effectiveness of current plans. The town and county should produce documentation with qualitative and quantitative benchmarks for measuring the effectiveness of various regulations. It should be assumed that practices that do not achieve these standards without strongly defensible cause will be terminated and more effective alternatives instituted. The current plans do have provisions for major review, however, and there have been informal discussions among elected officials and planning staff about the need for review.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE PLANNING IN TETON COUNTY
Teton County might set a new goal for itself—one that reinvigorates civic engagement, creates an open and trustworthy public decision process, and leads to a substantive and practical plan for sustainability (see Brunner 1994). Leadership will be essential at many levels. As William Gamson (1968: 43) notes,

The effectiveness of political leadership…depends on the ability of authorities to claim the loyal cooperation of members of the system without having to specify in advance what such cooperation will entail. Within certain limits, effectiveness depends on a blank check. The importance of trust becomes apparent: the loss of trust is the loss of system power, the loss of a generalized capacity for authorities to commit resources to attain collective goals.

Despite the apparent contradiction, authorities will be able to commit appropriate resources to the common interest more readily by fostering genuine citizen involvement and sharing power in decision making (Bens 1994; Chrislip and Larson 1994; Pimbert and Pretty 1995; Fulton 1996). Public policy should seek to distribute all values widely. The trust and power sharing generated by such policies is essential for advancing democracy and creating “a commonwealth of human dignity” (Lasswell 1971; Lasswell and Mc Dougual 1992) fundamental to sustainable societies (Meadows et al. 1992; President’s Council on Sustainable Development 1996).
CLARIFYING AND SECURING THE COMMON INTEREST

People in Teton County should think, talk, and act in terms of integrative solutions to their problems—that is, in terms of their common interests. Teton County is a community of diverse individuals, and there may be a widespread temptation for people to promote their special interests and attempt to justify them as common interests. Clear thinking, commitment and hard work, self-restraint and self-awareness, and public involvement are all needed for the community to clarify what interests its diverse citizens have in common and to find ways to secure those interests.

The public decision process is the authoritative and controlling framework by which people clarify and secure the common interest, or at least a working specification of it. The common interest is understood as broad, shared concerns; fulfillment of the common interest tends to optimize opportunities for everyone to achieve their value goals. Special interests are those which, if indulged, are destructive of the common interest because a minority of people benefit at the expense of the majority (Lasswell 1971). The common interest is not a static thing to be discovered and standardized, situations and conditions under which people interact are not fixed and will both affect and be affected by decision processes in a continuing, dynamic manner. The common interest must be clarified and secured by living members of the community involved under current conditions, not by appeals to long dead personages or historic precedents. The concept of common interest assumes that there are overarching, reciprocal, and recurrent value demands that communities will manifest through informed deliberation about issues before them at any given time. For example, all people have a common interest in a healthy environment and in a democratic public policy process that can secure this goal. The pursuit of common interests, or widely shared values, over special interests depends on open, comprehensive deliberation about people’s value demands in actual contexts (Lasswell 1971; Mansbridge 1980; Dahl 1982; Dryzek 1990; Innes 1996). Conflict is to be expected in these processes as parochial identities and special interests clash. Collaborative processes should be used since they usually lead to an understanding that self interests are ultimately obtainable through support of the common interest (Bessette 1994; Chrislip and Larson 1994).

INCREASING KNOWLEDGE ABOUT THE SOCIAL PROCESS AND VALUE DEMANDS

People in Teton County should develop more reliable and comprehensive knowledge about the social process they are involved in as well as the values that are being shaped and shared through this process. The social process may be defined as interactions by which people seek to maximize values through institutions using resources. There are useful ways to “map” or analyze the participants involved, their perspectives and strategies, and to understand how decisions affect value distribution. For example, rather than assuming that
those people who show up at meetings approximate the actual mix of community values at stake, mapping value demands might indicate that certain perspectives are over- or under-represented and active solicitation of participation may be required to correct those imbalances. Working through planning scenarios and examining value outcomes could be invaluable in helping citizens to understand what values are at stake. Local government and the public could become more proficient in recognizing value demands and analyzing how they affect the policy process. Knowledge of the social process also helps guard against domination of public policy processes by special interests and would also compel various interests to become self-conscious of their own perspectives. The direct benefit of pursuing a strategy of inclusiveness is to strengthen the ability of the community to clarify and secure its common interest.

IMPROVING UNDERSTANDING AND SKILLS FOR PUBLIC POLICY-MAKING

Gaining civic trust and engagement is essential for good policy making. People in Teton County should enhance their knowledge, explicitly and systematically, about how the public policy process works, seek skills to participate productively in these processes, and devise methods to enhance the effectiveness of community-wide decision making. Numerous possibilities exist. Local government and civic groups could assume more leadership in a collaborative, power-sharing approach (Gates 1991; Bens 1994; Chrislip and Larson 1994; Mathews 1994). Trends in local politics suggest that citizens who choose to participate in the public sphere are becoming increasingly demanding about meaningful participation in decision making (Potapchuk 1991; Lewis 1994). Local governments may not understand what constitutes collaborative process. This may have been a problem for Teton County in the past if government officials assumed that holding public workshops and getting input qualified as effective collaboration (Bens 1994). Opportunities for learning the activities of decision making and the criteria for adequacy should be made available to both government and citizens to facilitate collaborative decision making. The process of accumulating successes while working on problems will be reinforced by increasing levels of self- and group-awareness and sophistication in understanding the necessary framework and criteria for good decision making.

CONCLUSION

The uncommon characteristics of Jackson Hole—exquisite beauty, abundant wildlife, an outdoor-oriented, hardy, and friendly population with a passionate sense of place and commitment to the ideals of small-town life—have been the focus of preservation efforts through community planning for over twenty years. Planning is inherently a difficult task since it is a policy process of balancing American cultural and legal primacy of individual and property rights against the societal and legal necessity of securing the well-being of the
community. Extraordinarily rapid growth and change in Teton County have intensified these deep-seated conflicts. In the current environment, increasing government effectiveness is necessary to deal with heightened demands for both protection and opportunity to share in the benefits the valley offers.

Government efforts in the 1990-1994 policy process produced plans that do not appear capable of meeting community expectations for protection of common values and therefore appear to have reduced trust in local government. The increasing complexity of issues that accompany current growth pressures represent an opportunity to restore citizens’ faith in government’s abilities and to produce effective sustainability policies to help protect and enhance community amenities.

A policy process that integrates social process, problem orientation, and decision-making—and includes genuine power sharing by citizens and government—can help in clarifying and securing the common interest and producing flexible, effective policies to sustain a thriving community.

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