

# **SUMMARY FINDINGS SURVEY OF COMMUNITY AND BUSINESS LEADERS IN THE GREATER YELLOWSTONE REGION: ATTITUDES TOWARDS GROWTH AND CHANGE**

## **INTRODUCTION**

In August and September 2005, representatives of the Yellowstone Business Partnership and the Nature Conservancy conducted personal interviews with 80 community leaders, business owners, elected officials and trade association representatives. This survey was designed to identify the attitudes of key community leaders to issues of growth and change in the Greater Yellowstone region. Interviews were conducted in person and ranged from forty-five minutes to over an hour in length. The survey was targeted to a broad cross section of business, civic and political leaders and contained both quantitative and qualitative questions in order to understand core ideas and attitudes. As an attitudinal survey, the process was designed to record not only what the respondents believed but also why and how strongly they felt about certain issues facing the region. In addition, the interviews were designed to discover areas of common ground and ways that diverse local groups might work together in the future to address issues of mutual concern. The survey was created by Conservation Partners, Inc. of Denver, Colorado who was also responsible for training the interviewers and preparing this summary of findings. The following section summarizes the key themes and findings from these interviews. This is followed by a review of answers to the questions asked by the survey and a more in-depth review of survey comments.

## **OVERARCHING THEMES**

The following sections identify key findings and themes that emerged from the survey findings. Individuals involved in the process identified all of the ideas identified in this section. However, the reviewer has assembled the main themes expressed in these ideas and put these together in order to advance the conversation within the Greater Yellowstone Regional community on issues of growth and change.

### **1. REGIONAL DEFINITION**

While no single term is used uniformly to identify the region, the terms Greater Yellowstone Area or Region along with Yellowstone Area are the most common. Yellowstone National Park is the “reference point” “core” or “epicenter” as defined by participants in the survey. For most, the region stands for a wide variety of attributes: “inspirational beauty”, mountains, open space, scenery, recreational opportunities, cultural outlets, international resource, “low density of population underlies everything”, natural-air, water, rivers, quality of people, cultural heritage, ranching, neighborliness, good schools and small, rural and safe communities. While many respondents used terms like “unique”, “complete complement of wildlife”, “nothing like it” to describe the area’s qualities others reflected the sentiments of one respondent, when he stated that while the

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area is unique, “we collectively undervalue [the] area—all of us.” Another said, it’s “so unique and we have a choice and responsibility to maintain the quality of life.” Unlike the rest of the country, “so much land is public we take [it] for granted, we are naïve to the importance of these lands.” One respondent noted he had resisted the term “... Greater Yellowstone ... so long but realize that there is an amalgam of economic and biological commonalities” that now justify its usage.

The term Yellowstone describes not only geography, but economics. Many survey respondents identified Yellowstone as driving the economy, “providing the basis on which growth in the region has taken place”. As a result, the Greater Yellowstone Region extends to the area where commercial enterprises depend on Yellowstone tourism and related activities.

Beyond the general terms for the region, people felt more comfortable defining the area in terms of where they live and work. They used terms to describe portions of states and counties or that related to geographic features such as rivers, basins and watersheds. As an Idaho respondent put it, “I use Yellowstone Park as a landmark, for my personal life it’s the Upper Snake Valley.” It is clear that the region is so large that most people prefer to use the smaller, more manageable and identifiable political or physical descriptions. As one respondent stated, their personal preference is for the term ‘watershed’ because it is at “a scale that is not overwhelming”.

One participant described the Greater Yellowstone Region as the “geographic connection, people connection and a cultural connection.” While slightly over 10% of the survey respondents used the term Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem, others pointed out that they don’t use the word ecosystem because it has negative connotations and are wary of the motives of those who do. It is clear that the use of certain terms can be controversial. One respondent stated that even the word “Greater” can be a flashpoint. A longer term resident summed up his attitude with the following comment, “...Greater Yellowstone Region, still [a] neat term even though it has had some negative connotations.”

A number of people pointed out that the county and state boundaries and jurisdictions work against the concept of a coherent region. “If the three states don’t look at as a region why should people?” Moreover there are fairly dramatic differences in tax systems between the states and the state legislatures apparently pay little attention to the three-state area as a region according to one respondent

## **2. GROWTH**

Growth is an issue that divides the region, in part reflecting societal divides. Frequently respondents used terms such as “controversial”, “split on growth”, and “discussion at extremes is not productive”. When participants were asked what the biggest threats to their quality of life were, the most frequent responses were population growth (44%) and the lack of adequate planning for that growth (17%). The impacts of growth are not uniform throughout the region and attitudes reflect where on the growth spectrum one lies.

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Many feel “ambivalent” or “conflicted” about growth because although they may not like certain aspects, growth “brings jobs and consumer opportunities”, “cultural opportunities”, “things to do, more people to do with”, and “not just scraping by”. While about 50% of respondents believe that growth is happening at about the right pace, 40% believe that it is occurring too fast. Moreover, people are about evenly split between those that think that others in the region share their attitude towards growth and those that think others disagree with their attitude towards growth. These split attitudes often reflect polarized attitudes as well as what are perceived as offsetting benefits and detriments of growth. Many felt that some aspects of quality of life improved (shopping, amenities, jobs) while others declined (increased traffic, more people, loss of open space).

The reality is that growth has brought benefits to the region but many are concerned about the pace, type and location of new growth. Most people want a “balanced strategy”, one where “we direct it rather than it happens to us.” In fast growing areas many people expressed concern that there was a “loss of control”, “not planning for infrastructure needs”, increasing traffic and “animal jams”, “destroying the open space” that defines the region, a lack of affordable housing, “galloping suburbanization”, “danger of becoming another high-end playground”, “loving the place to death, thousands of folks moving here”, “compromising competitive edge” and approving “development without understanding impacts”. As a result, some saw that people were being “left behind in poverty”, “loosing close-knit communities”, “a little less tolerance among people”, “margin between haves and have-nots increasing”, “old timers do not want growth, some still enjoy “poverty with a view”, and “new arrivals don’t seem to care about old habits or respect the neighborhood and its uses”.

Most people recognize that the region will grow. The question for many is where it should grow, how and how fast. Most believe that it is not too late to address growth in a meaningful manner, while expressing concerns over respect for private property rights and wondering if conservative decision-makers could deal with planning issues. Many would support greater incentives to do the right development in the right place, want models to look at where smart growth is working effectively, thirst for an appropriate strategy that would be effective “without tearing apart the social fabric” and want to engage in community discussions on growth issues. As one person put it “Will it be done by default or by conscious choice?”

### **3. REGION AT CROSSROADS**

There is clearly a heightened awareness of change and the speed at which it is occurring in the region. Many respondents believe that there “is still time to deal with these issues”, and that there is still a relatively “low population and reasonable cost of living in most places”, but time may be short. Over ninety percent of survey respondents believe that the region has a high or unique quality of life. They are however, almost evenly split into thirds on whether quality of life is improving (40%), staying the same (29%) or declining (31%). Many believe that the character of the region is changing, but “we still have [an] opportunity to do it right”. Some said, “we need an overarching vision/plan”,

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“plan now while ahead and can afford it”, that they don’t want “big box retail ... [that] looks like everywhere else”, “on the cusp between small rural and larger [area]”. People desire to change some aspects of growth but have not defined a new vision of where and how they would like to see growth. Because of congestion in the areas around Yellowstone National Park, some form of mass transit system is proposed. A number of survey respondents propose “more regional and cooperative solutions” as a way to address common issues throughout the region.

#### **4. MORE IN COMMON THAN GIVEN CREDIT FOR**

What is striking in reviewing survey responses is the degree to which there are shared values and aspirations. Virtually all respondents talked about their love or respect for the land (“widespread respect and reverence for our place”). Respondents have a strong and defining connection and relationship to the land that is uncommon in the modern world. Many stated that the reason they choose to live in the region is because of the land and the opportunities it provides. Among the qualities that were commonly identified are: “westerners and independent”, “common sense or horse sense”, “genuine people”, “a high quality of people”, “respect for property rights”, “integrity required”, “hard working”, “here for wildlife, views, access”, “connection to land and stewardship”, “conservative”, “impatient”, “parochial”, “like slower pace of life”, “neighborliness”, rural and urban both want to protect open space, “camaraderie of sharing harsh winter and environments together, long distance to schools”, “shared experiences and recreating”, like solitude, “rural with civilized parts”, good neighbors, easy to get to backcountry in 10 to 15 minutes, often take place for granted, dedication to family, access to hiking, camping, fishing, want small viable communities, don’t like government and regulations, and “don’t want to become anywhere USA”. As one respondent put it, “80-90% of people want the same thing” but often the attention is focused on the few issues that divide us.

#### **5. COMMUNICATION CHALLENGING**

In such a large region, distances make communication challenging. But there are other issues that were pointed out in the survey that make communication problematic. The survey revealed comments such as, it’s “hard to listen to each other”, problems with “shutting up and getting sarcastic”, “people don’t listen well”, “polarization comes from poor communication”, “when we disagree we stop listening”, “we choose sides instead of being independent thinkers” and “we are unaccepting of different thinking”. In response to this tendency towards polarization and ineffective communication, people suggested that, we “need to recover our cultural heritage of democratic principles”, “listen more, demand less”, “try to be inclusive”, engage more “citizens without an agenda”, communicate more, “stay away from extremes on both ends”, “get more towards center on growth” and “keep talking ... talk leads to trust and sharing information,”. Many of the survey respondents indicated that they knew of or had personally participated in cooperative or collaborative problem solving projects that involved diverse stakeholders in the region. These experiences bode well for creating a better environment for respectful and effective communication. As one survey respondent stated, we need to “practice the three C’s [of] communication, consideration and cooperation.”

## **6. HOME GROWN ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND EXPANDING EXISTING BUSINESSES**

The survey responses point towards desirable future economic directions. Many see the future potential in the region in small, niche business areas that take advantage of the region's resources and talents in compatible ways. Many see opportunities for entrepreneurs and an economy, as one respondent stated, "not fueled by outside forces but internally generated using competitive advantages; an economy propelled less by outside demands and more by region specific production and enterprise." One respondent referred to the "tradition of 'self-created' jobs" as a model for new entrepreneurial enterprise creation. The region may be ripe for "great opportunities for entrepreneurial kids." Examples of compatible business opportunities that were cited included: agriculturally based fuels; wood trim, wall coverings and "environmentally friendly" building materials produced from tree thinning projects; green building practices and developments; "knowledge-based industries with low impact on environment"; decentralized meat processing through mobile processing plants; and natural or organic beef production and sales.

A number of suggestions were aimed at keeping ranches economically viable by increasing the number of enterprises on ranches and the commodities coming off ranches. These "untapped potentials" related to niche markets for beef and other animals, connections to tourism operations, value-added products, "specialty potatoes and wheat" and payments for development rights on conservation easements.

One respondent talked about a new "ecotourism that sustains local culture and natural heritage, integrating [the] knowledge base of multi-generational folks". Other comments were geared towards changing the way tourism is practiced. For example, one comment suggested that the challenge is "not how to get more people here but how to expose people better to a higher quality experience, challenge is to enhance experience and obtain greater economic benefit without increasing the numbers." Another added that what was needed was to "develop our own personality in terms of tourist destinations."

Many respondents felt that in addition to new entrepreneurial enterprises, an emphasis should be placed on helping existing small businesses expand "because they retain community values." Many of these businesses have already demonstrated their ability to succeed but could benefit from targeted assistance in improving operations and expanding. Many viewed supporting and maintaining "traditional businesses—agriculture, timber, outfitting, dude ranching and recreation" as desirable. Overall, survey respondents believe that diverse, "family-friendly" small businesses that relate to the region's competitive advantages are the best way to expand business and job opportunities in the future.

## **7. FORUM TO DEVELOP REGIONAL VISION**

An overwhelming majority of survey participants believe that it is time to develop a plan and implementation strategy that identifies a desirable vision for the region. When participants were asked for their vision for the region, a substantial majority of responses emphasized four inter-related issues: better planning, better development, managed growth and a healthy economy that preserves local quality of life. There is the sense that

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these issues have been bubbling up for a long time without effective dialog on ways to address them. Some were critical of the “standard planning and zoning process” for not creating an appropriate vision for new growth. Others said that planning hasn’t paid off, that plans go unimplemented and “government is inadequate for the task of managing growth.”

Survey respondents would welcome a “community wide dialogue about the future”. They would prefer that it be a “bottoms-up”, “collaborative process” that engages many “people who naturally stay in the background.” There is a “need to return to civility and compromise”, “confrontational approaches are counterproductive”. One respondent identified what might be a potential theme for a forum, “Growth with conservation”. Government’s role should be to “facilitate[s] not drive communities, and “citizens [need] to stand up” and “take responsibility”. Among the elements that were mentioned that the process needed to address were the following: “need to replace competitive instincts with cooperation”; “park has to work with surrounding areas”; “more players at table”; “cit[ies] and counties work together on regional planning and focus on shared values not divisions”; “interdependent region”; “need to make investment in planning”; and, “need for intergovernmental discourse.” A suggestion was made to create “a pot of money to facilitate the process.” Another suggested that there “needs [to be] a really good facilitator, neutral but strong.“

While collaboration and consensus building work well on a project level as demonstrated by the number of positive examples identified by participants, the question is whether it could be taken to a larger, regional scale. It might logically be undertaken at sub-regional scales initially before there was an effort to identify common elements in a regional plan. The collaborative model of focusing on shared interests first, in order to develop the trust necessary to begin to address the hard growth issues, was mentioned by a number of survey participants. Regardless of the approach, in order to be effective, such a process would need to identify “good and bad examples” of managing growth, “common sense land use”, a “system of thoughtful anticipation and planning”, incentives to “develop in towns”, multiple solutions (“no one solution”), address region’s “reluctance to manage growth”, engage “non-profit and non-political” groups, and explore ways to get the newcomers involved. One participant stated that such a process should explore the “devolution of authority to lower levels of government for resource decisions”, giving the region greater say in resource decisions.

Developing such a vision would be a challenging undertaking. Survey responses generally identify a desire to develop more compact areas in order to protect open space lands, the need to utilize “new development patterns”, “infill”, “cluster building”, “urban in nature” concept, and define “sound environmental development”. The implications of these strategies would be controversial because the nature of rural communities and towns would change, particularly those that might be identified as growth centers. The alternative of losing the qualities that define the region, however, is one that most people believe they should prevent.

## **8. NURTURE LEADERS**

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Addressing the problems of rapidly changing places is extremely challenging for governmental, nonprofit and private sector leaders. The surveys highlighted the “need [for] leaders and role models”; effective “leadership so shared visions can be achieved”. It has probably never been “tougher to negotiate between old and new” as well as deal with “personal apathy” and complacency. There is a great opportunity for those with vision and leadership capacity to step forward, but the challenges are daunting and will require a new level of community support.

### **9. SAVING LAND**

If there is one action that all can agree upon, it is the protection of open space lands, particularly ranch lands. When participants were asked how they would invest a pot of money to improve the regional quality of life, the largest percentage said they would invest to protect agricultural land and other open space. Some might disagree about methods, but all want to protect the remaining private open lands that buffer public lands, are productive working lands and provide critical habitat for many species. As a unifying concept both urban and rural people support the protection of open lands. To many, “ranch lands are the backbone of our way of life”, “ranching is the common denominator”, “agriculture holds off growth “ and ”private lands are [the] key to thwarting fragmentation of landscape”. Ranchers need to have a variety of options to protect their lands and many indicated that private property rights need to be respected when lands are protected. Most survey respondents like conservation easements and think they “help define a middle ground”. Several people noted that “denying public access on ranchlands” might limit public support for programs to save ranches. Some said that the public shouldn’t pay for easements unless there was public access, particularly if there had been historic use. Others said that there was a need to “incentivize land conservation”, encourage the states to assist protection efforts and increase funds available for conservation.

### **10. EDUCATION**

Throughout the three state area, there is great admiration of the state university systems and education in general. Comments about the role of education ranged from “education is power”, to “education leads to better resource protection and stewardship “ to a desire for an “educated community within an agricultural community”. The high quality of life that many residents enjoy is in part due to the presence of these institutions in the region and others that have a special relationship to natural resources such as the National Outdoor Leadership School (NOLS) in Lander as mentioned by one respondent. Others pointed out that the region is falling down in other areas that relate to the region’s future such as, “waffling in commitment to vocational training”; “don’t offer a petroleum engineering degree”, “don’t have a college of medicine”, need for “recreation degrees”, “[don’t produce local teachers] they come from out-of-state schools” and the need for “more technical training”. People identified ways that the university programs might be more integrated into the region. Suggestions ranged from business incubators for young entrepreneurs, tourism curricula at colleges, bringing people together for regional meetings, getting universities to do cooperative resource programs in three states and cross institutional environmental educational programs.

## **SUMMARY OF SURVEY FINDINGS**

### **I. HOW DO WE REFER TO THIS PLACE?**

The most common terms used the word Yellowstone, described portions of states and counties or were keyed to geographic features such as rivers and watersheds. Virtually all respondents referenced the area to “Yellowstone” even if they didn’t use the word in the term for the region. Most commonly, respondents referred first to their local area, county, part of a state or a watershed or basin and then to the larger Yellowstone Area or Region. Several interviewees explained that they think of a larger economic or environmental region and a smaller area within that region where they live and work. As an Idaho respondent put it, “I use Yellowstone Park as a landmark, for my personal life it’s the Upper Snake Valley.” It is clear that the region is so large that most people prefer to use the smaller, more manageable and identifiable political or physical descriptions. As one respondent stated, their preference is for the term watershed because it is at “a scale that is not overwhelming”.

Over 25% of those interviewed refer to the region as the Greater Yellowstone Area or Greater Yellowstone Region or Yellowstone Area or Teton-Yellowstone Area. Respondent’s interpretation of how large this area is varied widely. The definition of the area is often stated in a combination of economic and geographic terms that can be determined by ecological factors or extending to those areas where commercial enterprises depend on tourism related to Yellowstone National Park. Slightly over 10% of the respondents used the term Greater Yellowstone ecosystem. However, several interviewees pointed out that they don’t use the word ecosystem because it has negative connotations and are wary of the motives of those who do. One respondent stated that the word has been so “politicized to the point it’s meaningless.” It is clear that terms and the use of terms are very important. One respondent stated that even the word “Greater” can be a flashpoint.

### **II. DEFINING QUALITIES**

The qualities that best define and create identity for the region were the beauty of the land and the variety of outdoor activities that can be pursued in the area, which were both identified by over 25% of respondents. Other frequent responses identified by over 15% of respondents related to the land including: Yellowstone Park, the area’s rural character; wildlife; and mountains. Other land qualities identified by respondents included quality of natural resources, the wild, unspoiled character of the land, and the importance of agriculture. Respondents have a strong and defining connection and relationship to the land. Many stated that the reason they choose to live in the region is because of the land and the opportunities it provides.

Interviewees also emphasized the importance of people in defining the region. Over 15% of respondents cited positive qualities of local residents (honest, hard-working, friendly) as the defining characteristic of the area. Others said that the western lifestyle best defined the region.

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Notable responses are listed below.

**Scenic beauty;** aesthetic natural setting, natural beauty, majestic vistas, mountain scenery, geophysical setting, scenery, “unique natural beauty”, vistas, scenic qualities; beautiful sunsets; natural landscape; natural beauty, dramatic and unique topography; “physical beauty”; “world-class scenery”

**Outdoor recreation;** recreational opportunities; “All the stuff you can do here”; “hunt, camp, snowmobile”; “fishing, hunting”; “camping, hiking”; “premier trout fishing”

**Yellowstone National Park;** Yellowstone and Teton National Parks; national parks, “international recognition”; “national recognition”; geological/geothermal features [in parks]; geologic wonders; “uniqueness of Yellowstone Park”; “natural wonders”

**People;** great people; “in general, a high quality of people”; “hard-working, loyal”; “honest, hard-working”; “friends”; “quality of people attracted to [this land]”; “genuine people”; “general friendliness of people”; self-reliance, pioneering spirit; people with “personal responsibility

**Rural character;** lightly populated; low population, sparse population, “lack of people close by”; intimate; small communities, lack of population; openness and rural quality; “sense of place—history, demographics, sense of rural community”; “remoteness”

**Wildlife;** animals, wildlife diversity; wildlife populations and habitat; animal migration routes; migration corridors, elevation, habitat for certain species; endangered species and areas

**Mountains;** Teton Mountain Range, Rocky Mountains, mountains and streams; “geologically interesting”; mountains; geographic features; “mountains and key drainages that flow out of mountains”; mountains and forest and water; mountain ranges and wilderness areas; dramatic mountains; geography

**Quality of Natural Resources;** “fairly clean”; “unpolluted”, “cleanliness”; resources maintained as a result of historic land management, livestock; “quality of lakes and rivers”; “streams, mountains, air”; “clean air”; “generally pristine”; “environmental amenities”; “relatively intact ecosystems”

**Lifestyle,** “western life”; quality of life; culture of streams, mountains, and the people attracted to this place

**“Wild, unspoiled”;** largely undeveloped.; wilderness/public land, open space; “still enough open space [here] to enjoy it”; relatively undeveloped; wild spaces

**Agriculture;** changing agricultural economy, ranching lands, agricultural production

### III. QUALITY OF LIFE

The vast majority of those interviewed (90%) said that the quality of life in the region is high. This is remarkable given that there are great differences in economic activity throughout the region. In large part this relates to the fact that respondents expressed great affection and respect for the special place in which they live. They value the small, mostly rural communities in which they live that provide relatively easy access to open lands that they enjoy. Several interviewees stated that they could not say what the overall quality of life was because they assigned different ratings to different aspects of life in the area or because the quality of life was different for different groups of people. A Wyoming respondent explained that the quality of life in Jackson area is high “if you can afford to live here, but not if you don’t have money and are [making the long commute] from Idaho.”

The factors that determined quality of life for most interviewees related to the character of the land and the opportunity to enjoy it. The most common answer, cited by 40% of participants was access to outdoor recreation. Other answers related to the land included: access to wild spaces (25%); beautiful scenery (18%), low population density (16%), clean environment (20%) and the agricultural atmosphere (6%).

Over thirty percent of interviewees emphasized the importance of a healthy economy and the ability to earn a good living. As one participant explained, “If you can’t [meet your financial needs], you can’t enjoy the rest.”

Participants also stressed the importance of several other amenities and qualities including: the integrity and friendliness of local people; cultural arts; educational opportunities; access to health care and personal safety/low crime rates. Dynamic economy

Notable responses are listed below.

***Access to outdoor recreation***—skiing, fishing, hiking, biking; access to parks; access to public lands; outdoor activities, space to recreate, recreational opportunities; access to areas for hunting and fishing; hunting and fishing, camping; variety of activities to take part in; “hiking, fishing, skiing, golf, horses”

***Economic opportunity***; ability to make money; ability to meet financial needs—“if you can’t, you can’t enjoy the rest”; “economic wherewithal to take advantage of qualities around you”; good livelihood; adequate job opportunities; “economic vitality/security”; “economy that provides enough, don’t have to have Bill Gates assets or win the lottery to live here and be satisfied”; per capita income; job with an adequate wage; “economic foundation—the financial ability to enjoy the area’s amenities”; economics—job opportunities in sustainable economy not subject to boom or bust; ability to provide comfortably for myself and my family; ability to make a living although this is challenging for many; business opportunity

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**Access to wild spaces;** lack of people; freedom of movement, like a grizzly bear, don't see others; undisturbed space; space; open space; access to beautiful places; wilderness; accessible public open space; pristine natural areas; "only 10-15 minutes away from here [you reach a place where you] don't have to encounter another person"; accessibility of outdoors; ability to experience openness, ruralness, and naturalness of area; ability to find places to be alone; "space room to live"; rural character

**People;** integrity of the people; diversity of employees; quality of people who live in the region, people who live here respect wildlife; good neighbors; good people; "actual people with whom you live [including] new families who have bailed from intense, urban environment"; "in Bozeman, university [attracts] talented people"; "agricultural base attracts type of person who is solid 'pioneer' type"; diverse population; "neighbors and people in other counties too"; mixture of people here; diverse and interesting people; "population that respects its living environment; people with "commitment to natural surroundings"; "friendly people"; quality of people

**Beautiful scenery;** viewsheds; "When I look out my window, there's nothing I don't like", natural amenities; inspirational beauty; accessibility to so many wonderful places; natural beauty; scenic beauty; "God's wonderland for backyard"; environmental amenities, "for those who can afford it, Jackson is Mecca, beautiful"

**Low population;** "low density of population underlies everything"; no traffic, privacy, lack of crowds; solitude, serenity; relative lack of people; sparse population; "lack of traffic and people; "ideal population with supporting infrastructure"

**Clean environment;** clean air; clean water; non-polluted environment; quality of air and water; relatively little light and noise pollution; clean natural environment; cool, clean air; "high quality resources—water, air, soil, wildlife"; environmental qualities—undeveloped lands clean air, water, controlled growth

**Cultural arts** community, Buffalo Bill Historic Center programming; cultural opportunities, especially for an area this size; accessibility of cultural, social opportunities; great performing arts, great restaurants; cultural opportunities; cultural amenities in Jackson—art museums, symphony; variety of restaurants

**Educational opportunities;** exceptional education system, educational opportunities—MSU, school district benefits from education oriented; quality of school system; "educated community within an agricultural community—children can enjoy simple life while seeing the benefits of an education"

**Agricultural atmosphere,** "still some agricultural values contributing to the open space; economic impacts of agriculture; ability to make living in agriculture; availability of ranch land

**Health/health care;** health including access to exercise and medical support; access to good healthcare; medical facilities; good hospital

*Safety*; safe place to live, low crime rate

#### **IV. CHANGING QUALITY OF LIFE**

Although interview participants were nearly unanimous in declaring the quality of life in the area high, they were divided in their assessment of whether things have been getting better (40%), getting worse (29%) or staying the same (31%).

The reasons for their assessments varied widely. Several of those who said that regional quality of life was improving cited the growth of the local economy and the increasing work, shopping and cultural opportunities. Others cited changes in their own lives (such as job promotion or salary increase, moving to a better location) that were unrelated to the larger changes in the area.

Most of those who believe that the quality of life has stayed the same noted that some aspects of life have improved while others have declined. In their eyes, the changes have offset each other. Advantages (such as improved local shopping) are matched by disadvantages (such as increased traffic on roads and in favorite recreational areas). Others explained ways that they cope with the changes growth has brought, such as avoiding traffic on particular roads at particular times. By making these changes, they have been able to maintain their quality of life in the face of population growth and community change.

People who believe that quality of life is declining cite several factors. Several noted that increasing population density is changing the very qualities that make the area unique. A rancher in Belgrade said, “The frenetic pace and extreme growth in Bozeman has interfered with the ability to enjoy the wild spaces [that give the region its identity].” Several respondents say that sprawl is consuming valuable open and agricultural lands. Others worry about the influx of big box and national chain stores that will overwhelm main street merchants and destroy local character. Others expressed concern that good decisions have not been made in the face of growth and they do not believe that local decision-making will improve in the future. As a farmer, Idaho said, “[There has been] growth without thought. People have not gotten together to deal with it.” A developer in Bozeman said that there has been “inadequate planning” to deal with local growth. Some participants said that locals feel “a loss of control” in the face of the fast-paced growth.

Several interviewees believe that increasing polarization (of political and social beliefs and of economic class) has damaged the regional quality of life. An Idaho respondent expressed frustration that there seems to be “no middle ground between extreme growth advocates and environmental extremes”. A Wyoming respondent noted the “vast difference between the haves and have-nots” in the area.

In response to the many changes taking place in the region, many believe that the region is at a crossroads or on the “cusp” of destroying the qualities of the area that make it special or changing from the small rural towns they remember. There is a desire to

manage the change before it overwhelms communities without preparation. As one respondent noted, “It’s hard to plan with the growth freight train coming at you.”

## V. THREATS TO QUALITY OF LIFE

Participants were asked what the biggest threats to their quality of life were. The most frequent responses were population growth (44%) and the lack of adequate planning for that growth (17%). Other growth-related answers included: schism between haves and have-nots as wealthy people continue to be attracted to the area; loss of agriculture as real estate prices increase and agricultural earnings lag (10%); the area becoming a playground for the rich (8%); newcomers who do not understand local culture (7%); congestion of public lands (6%); lack of affordable housing (6%); and increasing traffic (6%).

Interviewees also cited a number of concerns related to the land including concerns about the availability and quality of water (12%); environmental degradation (7%); and impacts of oil and gas development (7%). Five participants also expressed concerns about economic insecurity. Others expressed concern over “the threat of outside money”, “wealthy people who can afford anything” and “too much money in irresponsible hands”. Another characterized the threat as “enviro combatants and liberal judges”. Others expressed concerns about community change saying that “people are becoming more self-interested rather than being interested in the community”; “not looking beyond selfish assets to work at what is needed to sustain communities.” Others complained that, “newcomers want to remake place”, newcomers have “transplanted values from other places”, and “property values forced up by people from other places with lots of money—starting to run out of common folk.”

Notable responses are listed below.

***Population growth:*** unrestrained growth and development--eating up agricultural land for subdivisions, loss of heritage; growth [which puts] pressure on wild lands, water quality, roads, housing; exploding growth, “growth of population—every problem comes from that”; “unique sense of place” sacrificed to population growth;” too many people; more population [means] compromises; rapid growth of community [may cause] pollution problems; more people means “diminished air and water quality, increased traffic”; “loving the place to death, thousands of folks moving here; “becoming too popular”; overcrowding; “Looking at Teton Valley, don’t want it to happen here [Ashton, ID]”

***Inadequate planning:*** poor planning and zoning; unplanned growth, not planning for infrastructure needs; concerns about ability to control growth; infrastructure not keeping up with growth; need better planning of wells and septic systems; development without understanding of impacts; Political climate [that does not control growth], “politicians will do anything to attract business, make bad choices because they see tax dollars”; “lack of vision in planning—rest of state is not listening”; lack of coordination between city and county, “we have to communicate or pay the price of not communicating”; “developers don’t have a reasonable expectation over approval process—developers will

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deliberately break the law because the fine is less than the profit, we need certainty and fines that make breaking the law a harder decision;” “lack of thoughtful planning for water, resource usage and environmental protection;” “lack of long-term thinking”; “irresponsible [or non-existent] land-use planning

**Water**—finite resource, how it is managed will determine how this country looks; future direction of water management could threaten agricultural community and economy; shortage for all uses; “danger of surface and groundwater pollution due to sprawl”; “groundwater contamination” need to protect aquifer, “asset we take for granted”; “people don’t know how to keep water clean or what it takes, people should know how to care;” “destruction of water due to irrigation, western water law has to change

**Schism between haves and have-nots;** margin between haves and have-nots increasing, people needing to work more to meet needs; cost of living; “pressure of outside money”; “wealthy people moving here, people who can afford anything, drives property values up”; next generation will not have disposable income to enjoy recreational opportunities; stratification of communities over the last 30 years; increased cost of living with lower net income

**Loss of agriculture** [because of rising real estate values]; farmers now selling and subdividing rather than farming; “danger of shifting from ranch communities—land values problematic, conservation easements not helpful”; “fabulous old ranches and farms are being broken into ranchettes, I’m sick because the big open-space ranches are going, federal dollars for easements are drying up, farmers can’t make a living, property along water or with views has real estate signs”; “agricultural land being converted to subdivisions;” “galloping suburbanization;” “encroachment of subdivision;” “agricultural economy is in the tank, marginal ground, short season, everything in the Teton Valley is doomed to go out of business;” “increasingly, people with money are buying up agricultural properties and converting the land to non-producing”

**Playground for rich;** bedroom community for the rich—Meeteetse becoming bedroom community; wealthy, absentee ownership; “Jackson Hole encroachment is driving up land prices down land”; gentrification; “reduced cultural and socioeconomic diversity, danger of becoming another high-end playground like Boulder, Marin, etc.; “more people with money looking at this region to get away”

**Environmental degradation;** environmental degradation from adherence to traditional energy sources; “if we collectively do stupid things to harm the natural environment; effects of fossil fuels, forces outside region; man-made [threats to] environment; pollution; development impacts to air quality and viewsheds

**Newcomers:** People from other places bringing changes; “Newcomers who are not invested in community health, they are using the place but giving little if anything back;” “lack of understanding of the area and the agricultural and recreational base that maintains the area’s integrity;” “influx of people who don’t understand logic and lifestyle of what’s here; how water rights work, etc.”; “stated, unstated expectations of people

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moving here;” “fear that some [new] folks are trying to make Red Lodge a toy village around a Christmas tree”

***Oil and gas development***, further leasing of national forest lands for oil and gas; “oil hangover—dwelling on current oil issues causes real impacts without solving long-term problem;” “destruction of habitat through oil and gas development;” coal-bed methane drilling; new coal-bed methane drilling between Hudson and Riverton; “Mineral boom means loss of interest in diversification, economic diversification is key”

***Economic insecurity***: having enough money to retire; lack of high-paying jobs; economic stagnation; “fragile economic environment, people don’t appreciate how much the outside world dictates what we have”; concerns about “long-term viability of industry, if we can’t get cheap power, plants shut down;”

***Increasing congestion of public lands***; overuse of some recreation areas; overuse of outdoor recreation—motorized vehicles; “too many ATVS out in my forest is causing me trouble”; BYU-Idaho student population increase [means more] day recreation trips which increases western recreation issues”

***Lack of affordable housing***; “huge gaping hole in affordable housing”; escalating cost of housing combined with low salaries”; inability to find solution to housing problem [impacts recruitment of] school teachers

***Traffic***: Increased traffic; “transportation problems, traffic;” “traffic congestion”

## **VI. JOB PROSPECTS IN THE REGION**

Participants were asked whether they thought that local young people had good job prospects in the region. Again there was a wide variation in responses, with 46 % of respondents indicating that prospects were not good, 24% saying that they were good and 30% giving no answer. Several respondents pointed out that there were plenty of seasonal, low paying jobs but few year round jobs with good salaries and benefits.

Interviewees were then asked what could be done to improve job prospects in the region. Several people stressed the need to attract clean industry with high wages (7%) and good benefits (6 %). Others had concrete ideas about the way to do this—improve education so that it better meets the needs of business (16%), change tax policy (10%), and improve transportation (7%) and upgrade communications infrastructure (5%). One respondent stated that kids with a good education will have good job prospects; those without educational qualifications will receive minimal pay.

Five contrarians noted that it is not always good for kids to stay at home and said that a natural pattern of going away and eventually coming home with the knowledge gained is a good thing.

Some participants stressed the importance of expanding existing businesses, encouraging and teaching entrepreneurship and the need for venture capital. With the expertise and

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the wealth of experience that existing full and part-time residents of the area have, all of these issues could be addressed.

In answering other questions, many interviewees emphasized the role of ranching and agriculture in maintaining open space and the traditional western character of the area. Several interviewees had ideas for improving the profitability of this sector including production of ethanol and bio-diesel, growing organic products and responding to other new consumer demands and finding innovative uses for agriculture and timber waste products.

Notable responses are listed below.

**Education;** educated workforce; “if we has best educated high school and college grads, they would have plenty of opportunities”; “Are we educating for what is needed?; MSU could do a better job with training that is useful here, like recreation degrees, need a tech school in Montana; “What happened to ‘Schools to Career’ program?”, waffling in commitment to vocational training; Wyoming colleges and universities [don’t offer degrees needed locally], don’t offer a petroleum engineering degree, don’t have a college of medicine, [don’t produce local teachers] they come from out-of-state schools; “trying to start a restaurant training program in the Jackson high schools, training in a dominant industry; more technical training; expansion of Northwest Community College in Cody; lack of “skilled labor pool for light manufacturing,” skills will have to be taught to attract those industries; universities should be business incubators

**Tax policy:** Change tax structure to encourage investment, Montana has high capital gains rate, up to 11 percent, that keeps investment capital out of state, housing capital is here, but need serious investment dollars, CEOs need to see future here; Reduce state income tax and other corporate taxes; revise state income tax and replace with sales tax; create stable tax structure in Wyoming”; need statewide sales tax in Montana, with exemptions on grocery stores, medicine, professional fees, etc.; provide property tax break for people paying income tax to minimize impact on full-time residents; lack of balanced tax structure [in Montana needs to be addressed], need sales tax [to get money from] tourists and part-time residents; change tax structure [in Montana] to be friendly to job creation

**Clean industry:** Create light manufacturing opportunities; Attract clean industry; “Like most communities, we are looking for clean technology“; non-polluting industry; develop good jobs in a ‘smokeless industry’ that are compatible with character of region

**Entrepreneurship:** Development of local businesses and business leadership groups; teach entrepreneurship; create entrepreneurs and dynamic culture; put networks, relationships, systems in place to help start-ups; in a tourist/service economy prospects are poor unless you’re in business for yourself

**Raise wages and benefits** for all our jobs; Bring businesses and industry that are more than service providers; Attract industries that fit with our region and qualities of life, with

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pay above average; emphasize living wage jobs; start recruiting employers that pay a living wage with benefits, health care and retirement

***Staying is not always healthy for young people***, [it's good] to get out of here and see the rest of the world, hope they come back; part of kids leaving is natural, people filter back; pull to go elsewhere; “out-migration is good, then come back”; “[kids] should go”

***Transportation:*** Better transportation; improve roads, air travel, improve highways, airports for tourism, build light rail system in Yellowstone

***Communications infrastructure, internet is key;*** “working with computers is a good solution”; telecommunication

***Help existing businesses expand*** because they retain community values; expand businesses here; encourage growth of existing businesses; Red Lodge businesses like Sam's Brewery, Montana Legends, Sylvan Peak Clothing could expand to employ more people

***Information Technology:*** create information-based opportunities; technology, IT are possibilities [because of internet]; technology-based economy; high tech people are moving in—fancy stuff

***Mining, energy,*** as long as they're [done right]; develop natural resources; oil and gas are always going to need people

***Provide more stable policies for business,*** greater [policy] certainty is needed [in Montana]; state government a mess [in Montana]; greater certainty in water policy [in Idaho]

***Agriculture-based fuels*** (ethanol and bio-diesel), not sure that tax breaks are the solution; clean ethanol plant idea

***Create business technology park*** with infrastructure and [adequate] land in Bozeman;

***Growth*** leads to increased demands, automatically leads to more jobs, market forces at work; growth allows more opportunities—retail, investment, real estate

***Adapt agriculture*** to meet needs of consumers [by producing organic products and meeting other new consumer demands)

***Attract artisan companies*** to move to Wyoming but freight charges make costs high

***Innovative use of waste products from timber and agriculture;*** use of products of tree thinning; develop production of environmentally friendly building products

***Ranching industry*** is now the vehicle to protect the ruralness of the west, consequently society will have to figure out how to compensate ranchers, address estate tax issue

***“Venture capital*** needed to support great ideas”

## **VII. COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGES**

A majority of participants said that they believe the area possesses competitive advantages or business opportunities employing people and resources; only two participants answered no. Forty percent of participants did not answer the question, some because they believed advantages were counter balanced by other factors or for other reasons.

In identifying the business opportunities or competitive advantages that the region possesses, participants stressed that the beauty of the area (11%) and the quality of life (9%) that could attract many types of businesses and that communications infrastructure can support the types of businesses that can locate anywhere. However, other respondents identified problems with communications capacity to handle increased demands.

Participants also noted that, despite the focus on other attributes, natural resources (10% such as forestry, agriculture and mining remain an important source of employment in the region. Interviewees noted that recreation (10%) and tourism (9%) are non-polluting ways to utilize the natural features of the region. They explained that there are many niches within the tourism and recreation business that could be better developed including cultural and heritage tourism, eco-tourism and different types of commercial recreation. A number of respondents noted, however, that the traffic impacts of tourism are limiting its quality and affecting surrounding communities. One respondent noted the need to be more selective in targeting the tourist experience to those that are willing to pay for a quality experience. Several respondents proposed forms of mass transit as a way of alleviating traffic in the park, providing jobs in outlying communities and exposing tourists to other amenities of the region.

Participants also talked about the importance of agriculture (7%) and the high quality of the work force (9%) and strong work ethic that the region’s rural communities produce. They described ways to add value to local agricultural products and to enter new markets. Several participants stressed that local universities, hospitals and food markets should make a commitment to buy beef and other foods from local producers. When there’s a minerals boom we loose interest in diversification, environmental amenities creat competitive advantage, but don’t necessarily yield a sustainable economy, this economy is largely fueled by outside forces.

Six participants discussed ways to leverage the contribution of universities in the region.

Notable responses are listed below.

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***Beautiful place*** attracts retirees and “lone eagles” who add to the economy; “Our competitive advantage lies in our access to high quality, vast natural areas that are attractive [to employees], natural amenities are our advantage; “It’s more important what we don’t do than what we do, [don’t] make it look like many other places;” our county is defending our environment, tone is changing, easements used to be unheard of, now consider corridor standards, visual quality

***Natural resources*** [which need to be managed for] for sustainability; tremendous natural resources that could be developed in a responsible way; minerals, oil exploration; timber; phosphate mining, only place in western hemisphere that produces elemental phosphorous; “environmentalists won’t let even needed logging happen, loggers are capable of cleaning up fuel with causing damage and erosion;” “competitive advantages of agriculture are almost nil, energy production keeps us afloat”; in timber industry area could produce “small diameter timber products such as furniture;” “mining should use energy technology such as windmills that don’t massacre bats and night-migrating birds”

***Recreation:*** Increase commercial recreation, ‘we don’t want to be Moab but we can control our own destiny”; compete for out-of-state hunters; hunting and fishing; Outdoor Leadership School in Lander, WY is a great example; [need growth because] without the visitors there would be no need to have fishing guides and, thus, less work for locals; family-related recreational opportunities; “No one can move the Tetons to Kansas;” both viewing and hunting wildlife

***Quality of life,*** recreation, safe environment, low population density [attractive to employees], others find us—we don’t have money to market those advantages; great schools, great amenities; “in recruiting we mention hunting and fishing near our offices, the things that I love others love too”

***Quality of work force:*** “Young people that come off ranches are the best people that one can hire, they have a great work ethic”; work force that knows how to work hard, a good work ethic is instilled in rural communities; “this area can pull in high-quality folks for less money due to natural beauty however [escalating housing prices decrease ability to attract these people]; area attracts people who are willing to sacrifice salary for quality of life

***Tourism:*** Cultural and heritage tourism, boomer generation wants to learn when they travel, push for quality of experience brings in tourist dollars; eco-tourism; competitive advantages are in tourism, similar to Hawaii from turn of the century to the 1960 when tourism replaced agriculture; not yet catering to tourists in outlying areas like Ashton; preserve this renewable resource, [don’t do anything in] timber or oil drilling [to hurt tourism economy]; international recognition because of Yellowstone is cornerstone of tourism; tourism business; “don’t flood park with new people, do it right, use mass transit”

***Agriculture—niche products and vertical integration:*** Focus on agricultural niche products, process and finish beef, keep a larger share of production here; innovative

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agriculture; “institutional support for local food systems, regional hospitals could be doing this as could MSU”; Great hay in Wyoming can produce grass-fed, organic beef; could build feed lots and slaughter houses [for vertical integration], develop poultry farms; “We tried Wyoming lean, needs to be a feedback mechanism for quality, American consumers have idea of marbling, what good beef looks like, can’t build an industry on diet fads”; no USDA inspected meat processing facility in Wyoming, Cody Meats is trying; “Wheat Montana is the type of model we need to encourage [for value-added, processing], extension service needs to retool, we need to help people like Dr. Sands who had the right idea for new crops; specialty potatoes and wheat (6)

**Universities:** availability of university students for internships; BYU-Idaho, ISU; MSU; BYU-Idaho has many bilingual students [because of Mormon missions], university also promotes community service; MSU is an economic stimulant for the community, not just for direct jobs at MSU

**Western arts,** furniture building, foundries, manufacturing of indigenous products, wood, leather; arts and crafts niche businesses; furniture-making can use local small-diameter timber

**Transportation:** I-90 goes through but freight costs are high; I-90 and airport (3)

**Telecommunications:** up-to-date computer access is now starting; broadband technology allows us to leverage quality of life (2)

**Business climate** in Wyoming [tax policies, etc.] ranks very high; no state income tax, not state business tax; (2)

**Capital:** see Yellowstone Club, second home owners as investors

**Idaho National Laboratory** is an advantage with energy development

**Outdoor-oriented industries,** clothing, supplies, like Orvis

**Process more of our raw materials,** opportunities lie where transportation [is a smaller part] of the total cost of the product

**Retirement communities:** “We have been discovered by retirees from both coasts and they need services—construction, lawn care, health care, they want to pay for a range of services we do not yet provide

**Utility rates:** “Idaho Falls probably has among the lowest water, sewer, electrical rates anywhere;”

### **VIII. IMPORTANCE OF PUBLIC LANDS**

The overwhelming majority of participants rated public lands, National Parks, National Forests, and BLM lands, as very important to the region. For some people the adjective “very” was inadequate so they wrote in “hugely,” “extremely” and “super.”

Participants said that public lands contribute to their quality of life (21%) because of the recreation opportunities (37%) they offer and the open, wild quality they preserve (21%).

Others stressed the economic value of the lands (19%) including mineral rights and grazing rights (7%). To ranchers, the ability to use public lands for grazing is often vital to their operations. Several respondents stated that grazing permits on public land are more difficult to obtain because of increasing restrictions.

The importance of public lands in preserving environmental quality and wildlife habitat was identified by 14% of the respondents and 11% said that they appreciated the control the public has over the development has over these lands.

Responses are summarized below.

***Recreation/tourism:*** Centerpiece of Cody tourism/recreation industry, “can’t exploit resources any more than we already have” without endangering tourism and recreation; “If you lose the land to recreate on, this becomes like every other place”; “People will pay to enjoy what I enjoy”; horseback riding, pack trips; hunting and fishing; camping; hiking; parks accessible to people of all incomes, don’t need to hire outfitters; “You don’t have to own a cabin to enjoy hunting, fishing, recreation;” “international tourists find vastness, beauty unique in the world;” “opinions vary on importance of tourism”

***Quality of life:*** Contribute to quality of life by not being available for development; sustains culture that defines our region; “I don’t use public lands as much as I’d like but knowing they’re there makes me feel better about my quality of life”

***Open, wild space:*** pristine character, roadless character; ability to “get away from people;” allows Americans who don’t own property to enjoy the feeling of open space on public lands; “that’s the place where I can find solitude;” “it’s important to have wilderness;” natural beauty; “they represent the last large pieces of untouched land in the West

***Economic value:*** economic capital; “the more restrictions placed on them, the less importance they have—it’s like keeping a Ferrari in a garage;” potential for quality development that retains quality of land, development like Red Rocks Amphitheater in Colorado; “multiple uses should continue—people who have mineral and surface rights can develop;” economic return from available resources is important; availability for many uses; most important factor “driving the economy;” diverse uses including recreation and mineral development; “should enable the wise use of resources but I have little trust in the ability of land management agencies, not because of individuals but because of political mess;” “Public lands like BLM with fewer restrictions are more

important to me than the national parks that are more regulated and attract more people;” resources, draw a distinction between park and other public lands

***Environmental/Wildlife quality:*** Intrinsic value for wildlife and ecosystem; essential for maintaining water quality and wildlife populations; these lands keep water and air clean, ecological impact; watershed; protection of wildlife; maintains air quality; “Public lands are the refuges for maintaining genetically viable populations of wildlife for the larger region

***Control over use and development of these lands:*** “Planning is required here, some local people think they belong to them, but they belong to all of us;” “need better management if this place is to have a chance to look like it did 100 years ago;” management for long-term benefit of public rather than the short-term benefit of private holders; healthy, well-stewarded lands; agencies [should] manage for sustainability and ecological health; preserves what is “the last best place;” preserve what we have left; “conflicts and crowding on these lands have reduced their value to me”

***Grazing:*** “In the old days, these lands were ‘worthless,’ today ranchers have made BLM land good lands, but now the public wants us off;” grazing rights important; integral to ranching operations, they were designed to be that way, in Wyoming, 90 percent of sheep spend some part of their life on public land; “need to acknowledge the custodial importance of agriculture’s stewardship of public lands”

## **IX. IMPORTANCE OF PRIVATE OPEN LANDS**

Over half the participants rated private open lands as very important; another 14% said they were somewhat important. Participants emphasized the appreciation they have for the open quality of these private lands (29%), the heritage and beauty of local agricultural lands (21%), and the ways that these lands add to their quality of life (6%). Agricultural lands are particularly important as they are productive, working lands although ranchers can hardly afford to purchase new land at its development value. Some respondents maintained that the private lands are more important than the public lands “because ultimately they will determine the quality of the resources. They are the key to thwarting fragmentation of the landscape.” Several respondents mentioned the western culture and history associated with these lands. According to respondents, rancher livelihoods are threatened by many variables: high energy prices, low commodity prices, neighbors who complain, advanced age and estate taxation. Several respondents stated that ranchers who often live in valleys depend on the higher federal grazing lands in the summer and that these form an agricultural unit with the valley lands. These public and private lands “maintain an economic unit called a ranch”.. Restrictions on grazing permits have put pressures on the viability of some of these operations. To one respondent, ranching “totally defines the West.”

Among the other qualities judged important in these lands, interviewees stressed the importance of private, open lands in preserving wildlife habitat and migration routes (16%) and the role that private lands play in preserving environmental quality (7%).

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Other interviewees talked about the access for hunting, fishing and water recreation that many private landowners have provided and how conflicts are threatening that access (11%). Several participants noted that landowners, particularly newer owners, are denying access across their properties to adjacent public lands. Several of the respondents that rated private lands as unimportant did so because they see that access is increasingly being denied to sportsmen. Five percent of participants stressed the freedom for commercial development provided by private lands, the economic advantages of not being subject to the restrictions on public land, affluent lock up resources, neighboring gone by wayside, danger of becoming another high end playground

Responses are listed below.

***Open spaces:*** totally define West; maintain rural life style, important to viewshed; new zoning laws are important; zoning to preserve quality, value of land important; “more important for visual than anything else—those who do a conservation easement should be compensated appropriately; “mosaic of large landowners makes this area unique;” “people have a right to develop but create incentives to keep as much open space as possible;” “ I have a problem with paying farmers to maintain private land as open ground, it dips into taxpayers pocket;” “very little open space is private land because there is just not that much private land in area [Lander]”

***Agriculture:*** Agriculture holds off growth, U.S. and Idaho need to produce food internally; provides jobs; “keeps economy diversified as we become more urban;” “ranches must be good stewards of the land and economically viable, otherwise a sale for subdivision is the easiest option;” “agricultural heritage and history;” provide income-earning opportunities; agriculture better for communities than subdivisions, “subdivisions are a drain on county;” “farms, ranches very important if productive;” “country needs to maintain agricultural independence but not through subsidies;” “Maintains traditional lifestyles and attitudes, agriculture critical to maintaining open space

***Wildlife habitat and migration routes:*** Private lands are the most important in many places for [wildlife] transition, migration, therefore, need to have incentives, like conservation easements to put land aside; often valley bottoms are riparian habitat; “some private landowners provide better game management than public agencies;” “private lands are key to thwarting fragmentation of landscape;” “wildlife winter habitat”

***Access for hunting, fishing, water recreation:*** “I believe in sharing open, private lands if public obeys rules;” ranch can generate [jobs and livestock] and still contribute to sportsmen; access is becoming an issue for ranchers, access to public land via private land; “lots of water here and the threat of closing off waters to recreation is real;” “landowners getting less tolerant of people using property”

***Environmental quality:*** recharges Snake River Aquifer; contribute to clean air and water; “individual landowners are stewards of the land;” “as long as major landowners, e.g. Ted Turner and Yellowstone Club, are good stewards of the land;” keep water healthy and clean

**Quality of life;** if people wanted density [they wouldn't live here] they'd live in the city; developments around private open space provide "good restaurants, ski areas, golf courses" which contribute to quality of life; "Quality of life is ranchers' way of life—they are the backbone of our way of life"

**Economic value:** private ownership of land allows for commercial access [which is not always the case with public land]; enables multiple uses, tourism and associated businesses, if there weren't private lands there would be a tendency to just look at lands as wilderness areas; important for tax base, entrepreneurial opportunities

**People attracted to them:** Attracts "lone eagle jobs and additional intellectual capital"

**Ranchettes:** "Keep development in the city, I hate 20-acre ranchettes"

## **X. REGION'S POPULATION GROWTH RATE**

When asked to characterize the region's growth rate, 36 % of respondents said it was too fast, 42% said that it was about right and 5% participants said that it was too slow. Sixteen percent of participants did not directly answer the question.

Participants who believe that growth has been too fast described a lack of planning (15%), inadequate infrastructure (7%), and economic polarization in the region (4%).

People who said that the growth level is about right stressed the inevitable nature of growth and the rights of others to enjoy the high quality of life that draws people to the region (7%). They also noted the economic benefits of growth (4%). Balance

The advocates for higher growth stressed the economic opportunities provided by growth.

Notable responses are listed below.

### **1. Why Growth Has Been Too Fast**

**Lack of planning and forethought:** Hard to plan with growth freight train coming at you; "good planning requires more thought and conceptual thinking rather than drawing lines on a map;" "growth is not the problem, management of that growth is a problems;" need planning and conservation easements now for next areas of rapid growth—"I think area west of Shotgun is going to explode someday, power now out to Sheridan Ranch, Clark County; "outpacing our ability to channel growth for our benefit;" "government is inadequate for the task of managing growth;" "We are not well-prepared, [need to] manage growth in way that is compatible with the region's qualities;" "Slower growth would give elected officials time to plan"

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***Inadequate infrastructure:*** Poor infrastructure because of frantic pace of development; overextended community infrastructure—water, sewer, roads, schools, “it’s crazy, government not able to keep up

***Polarization between rich and poor:*** Seeing end of era, entire cultural/social fabric being damaged, seeing end of era, West has always gone through booms and busts but not with such a discrepancy between rich and poor; “Not as concerned about rate as about kind of growth, it has become a playground for the affluent where worker bees can’t afford to live here;” “Young kids can’t afford to buy a starter home”

***Can’t assimilate [that much] new growth:*** Jackson Hole’s population went up 90 percent in 1990s; “new arrivals don’t seem to care about old habits, respect for neighborhood and its ways, want amenities that affect landscape, community and way of life, new arrivals don’t want to adjust

***Poor development patterns:*** Lots of raw land being spit up into 20-acre ranchettes instead of clustering, way development being done not good; rural subdivisions bad in the long run

***Being identified as a good place to live is scary:*** Thermopolis has just been identified as top five retirement community by AARP

***Environmental damage:*** Ecology is being harmed and fragmented

***Leadership is required to manage growth;*** local leadership in some communities is concerned about working with conservation groups, conservation groups need to bridge with local leadership

## ***2. Why Growth Rate Has Been About Right***

***“Some growth is essential to economy;”*** Right level of growth prevents stagnation, amount of growth here (in West Yellowstone) is about right, hope we never suffer through a boom like Bozeman or Jackson; (3)

***Some growth is natural and inevitable:*** “Emotional half of me wants it like it was 20 years ago, the realistic side realizes that it won’t be that way, people are coming, we all came from somewhere;” “I just think you can’t move in and close the door behind you, most newcomers are trying to fit in;” “We can understand why people are struck by the beauty and quality of life and want to move here;” “Other people have as much right to move here as I had;” “U.S. population is growing so attractive areas are too;” (6)

***Growth has provided more arts and culture***

## ***3. Why Growth Rate Has Been Too Slow***

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***Need more growth because growth creates job opportunities:*** “We need new construction, new faces, new businesses to maintain the economy, it will go the other way if we don’t have some growth

***Need more growth to rebuild infrastructure of small communities***

***Need more growth to support retail and facilities:*** Meeteetse needs growth to support grocery store

## **XI. SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES IN ATTITUDES TOWARD GROWTH**

Participants were asked whether they believed that most people in the region shared their opinions about growth. 44% of participants said they thought their neighbors agreed with them; 39% of participants thought their neighbors disagreed and 18% did not answer this question.

Participants had a variety of theories concerning their neighbors’ attitudes toward growth. These can be broken down predominantly into three categories:

***I think it’s growing too fast but other people don’t...*** These respondents stressed that people don’t mind fast growth because development brings jobs and consumer opportunities that improve quality of life. Often they point to the fact that new arrivals think the growth rate is about right, while those who have been around for a long time value more of the way things were in the past. Many people are worried that land prices and lifestyle are not sustainable. “People think that higher housing values and gentrification are a good thing, there’s no discussion about the need for sustainability.” We’re “like ostriches in the sand—in denial (that growth is occurring), believe it is an anomaly.” Others are concerned that no one seems concerned about the impacts to the environment.  
(10%)

***I think it’s growing too fast and other people agree with me...*** These respondents believe the region is growing too fast except for those that benefit most, “real estate industry, lawyers and builders who want it to continue growing rapidly.” They also think that many people share “a general sentiment that things are changing too fast.” The following comments come from the surveys: “sense of helplessness among many long-term residents; even businesses don’t want tremendous influx; long-time residents [are concerned about the pace of growth], not sure the affluent are; Long-time residents agree that growth is too fast, newcomers rave about life here and encourage more growth.”  
(10%)

***I think growth rate is about right but other people don’t ...*** These respondents state that they are content with the growth rate but claim that others are not. Attitudes expressed include: “(People say) Now that I’m here shut the doors; I am more willing to accept moderate growth than many, people want good jobs but not growth; a lot of people moving into the area don’t want to see any more development, their finances are in place,

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they don't want to see growth that would allow others to enjoy the area; a lot of people would rather see Wyoming stay the same, don't want to see change; Old timers do not want growth, some still enjoy "poverty with a view;" most people think growth is happening too fast, it scares them; people are threatened by growth, traffic, lines and wish for the good old days; At least half the people are anti-growth; Common for people to move into an area and then want to limit others (11%)

## **XII. WHAT WE HAVE IN COMMON**

Participants were asked what residents of the region have in common that can bring people from various viewpoints together to work on tough issues. The majority of respondents stated their love and respect for the land. Interviewees stressed the common appreciation for the beauty of the region (33%) with its open spaces and public lands (16%) where many residents enjoy fishing hunting and other types of outdoor recreation (15%). About 13% stated that they share the quality of life that drew diverse residents to the area.

Fourteen percent of participants talked about the desire to protect the natural resources in the region and six percent mentioned the common appreciation for clean air and water in the area. Eighteen percent of participants emphasized the common economy in which residents make their livings and provide for their families.

Notable responses are listed below.

### ***Appreciation for beauty of land, vistas***

***Common economy based on agriculture, energy, tourism and public employment;*** business, livelihoods; regional trade; the need to make a livelihood; desire to create job opportunities to keep children in the area; desire to provide a good living for our families

### ***Appreciation for open space, public lands***

***Quality of Life:*** Most chose to live here, came for quality of life; desire to maintain high quality of life

### ***Enjoy outdoor recreation—fishing, wildlife watching or hunting***

***Desire to protecting natural resources;*** stewards of wildlife and habitat (11)

### ***Appreciation for clean air, water***

***Grass-roots political opportunities, personal access;*** tradition of consensus building in Wyoming

***Common sense*** and respect for that; "We stay away from extremists"

### ***Family values, concern for children***

*Hard-working, industrious;* respect for ‘pioneer’ qualities

*Preserve concept of “The West”*

*Water issues*

### **XIII. DIVERSE GROUPS WORKING TOGETHER**

Participants were asked for examples of diverse groups working together to resolve a regional issue. Virtually all participants had examples of joint or collaborative efforts, many in which they had personally participated. The examples of diverse groups fell into two categories—government-mandated processes and locally initiated processes. Many federal and state government agencies require stakeholders to participate in policy formulation or to comment upon government decisions. A number of respondents discussed the beneficial relationships between people and groups formed in these government-mandated processes. In addition, respondents identified an even wider variety of locally initiated efforts to resolve land management conflicts, form land trusts and protect land, address a variety of wildlife issues and create cooperative management plans. The experiences and relationships formed in these collaborative efforts have the potential to lay the foundation for larger and more effective collaborations.

Examples provided by participants are summarized below.

#### ***1. Government-Mandated Public Processes***

*Federal Energy Regulatory Commission license request*--Island Park Hydro Plant Advisory Team worked together on this request, agreed on a new fish ladder

*Forest service road policy development*—Greater Yellowstone Coalition (GYC) worked on this with a wide cross-section of forest users

*Governor’s Brucellosis Task Force* in Wyoming brought together ranchers, wildlife biologists, veterinarians, hunters, conservationists determined that focus should be eliminating disease in wildlife

*Grizzly bear recovery*—Federal government brought together local stakeholders in Greater Yellowstone Committee to work on this issue

*Idaho Department of Fish and Game’s Access Yes!* program brings together sportsmen, environmentalists, ranchers and other landowners to work on access solutions

*Park County Land Use Plan (1998)* involved hundreds of local residents in public process

*State water plan for Big Hole Watershed*

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***State Water Plan for Henry's Fork Watershed***--Henry's Fork Watershed Council includes conservation districts (Fremont-Madison Irrigation District), other local residents, stakeholders (Henry's Fork Foundation), and federal agencies (BLM, Forest Service) working on water issues

***Wildlife and Natural Resource Funding Act*** in Wyoming established a wildlife trust--GYC, Wyoming Game and Fish and Draper Museum of Natural History worked together to support this legislation

***Wyoming Game and Fish's Absoraka Front Hunter Management Study***—GYC and Rocky Mountain Elk worked together on this

***Wyoming Game and Fish Coordinated Resource Management (CRM) programs*** bring together ranchers, environmentalists and other stakeholders to formulate wildlife habitat plans, examples of CRMs include Wyoming toad program and black-footed ferret program

## 2. ***Locally Initiated Efforts***

***Access to Stone property boat launch***—Henry's Fork Foundation worked with county, Orvis (which did fundraising), Idaho Department of Parks and Recreation, and heirs to ensure continued access to this boat launch

***Across the Great Divide: Explorations in Collaborative Conservation and the American West*** (Philip D. Brick, Editor): A participant recommended this book which has "lots of examples of collaborations in the West"

***Beartooth Front Community Forum***

***Friends of Park County History*** and other local residents worked together last year in Cody on the development of the Cody West strip

***Friends of Red Desert*** working with federal government, tribes, non-government organizations to protect the desert

***Gallatin Valley Land Trust*** is working with range of residents and landowners to protect open space in the valley

***Henry's Fork Watershed Council***—Created to address polarization that had developed over the State Water Plan. The Watershed Council is co-facilitated by the Henry's Fork Foundation and the Fremont-Madison Irrigation District and has been operating for 12 years. It was officially recognized and chartered by the Idaho State Legislature in 1994 to help encourage state agency participation in its collaborative approach to problem solving. Agencies that typically participate are Idaho DEQ, Fish and Game, Lands, Parks and Recreation and occasionally Water Resources.

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***Madison Valley Ranch Group***

***Natural Resources Policy Center*** and locals worked together to create Good Neighbor Agreement with Northern Plains Stillwater Mine for water quality monitoring

***Predator Conservation Alliance*** is working with ranchers in a constructive way

***South Fork Flathead Watershed*** and local residents worked to stave off closure of archery hunt in Star Valley

***Targhee Creek Culvert***—Private right of ways were provided, diverse groups cooperated including GYC, HLF, HFF, NRCS, Idaho Department of Transportation and Idaho Fish and Game

***Teton Regional Land Trust***, landowners and citizens working on Open Space Protection in Teton Valley and across region in seven counties

***Trappers Point in Pinedale***—stakeholders worked together to protect migration corridors; oil and gas leases were exchanged, land will still be developed and profits generated but corridors have been protected

***Wildlife/Livestock Summit Conference***--Wyoming Stock Growers Association and Wyoming Wildlife Federation sponsored this meeting five years ago; “follow up has not been all it should be”

***Wolf reintroduction***—groups working together to resolve issues surrounding reintroduction; have not reached solutions yet but still working

***Wyoming Stock Growers Agricultural Land Trust (WSGALT)*** formed by citizens and cattlemen in Wyoming to work on open space

***Yellowstone Business Partnership*** is educating people, building skills; working with university system on Wyoming community colleges

***Yellowstone-Grand Teton Clean Cities Coalition*** promotes the use of alternative fuels and alternative fuel vehicles to reduce pollution and conserve gasoline

#### **XIV. VISION FOR THE REGION**

Participants were asked what they hoped to see in the Yellowstone-Teton region in the year 2020 in terms of the land, their communities and new development.

The most frequent responses emphasized four inter-related issues: better planning, (23%) better development (20%), managed growth (20%) and a healthy economy that preserves the local quality of life (20%).

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The next set of responses center around open space and the benefits that it provides for wildlife habitat and migration. Fifteen percent of respondents stressed the importance of viable agriculture (and the preservation of open agricultural land) in the region. Eleven percent discussed the maintenance of wildlife habitat. Participants also talked about the maintenance of open space (10%) and public lands (9%). Six percent noted the importance of conservation easements in preserving private open land.

About 7% of interviewees envision a public transportation system in the region, primarily to manage the seasonal tourist volumes of traffic. Six percent of participants stressed the importance of water quality and water supply and 5% of participants want to see the development of more affordable housing.

Notable responses are listed below.

**Better planning:** Planning that allows for development and conservation; more thoughtful planning; zoning regulations that work; “thoughtful solutions that preserve our unique sense of place;” maintain quality of what we have; “We learn from our mistakes;” “People are coming so [we] need to plan so as to have as little impact as possible on quality of life; planning and execution; long-term land use plan; 2020 Plan effectively enforced; responsible planning and zoning that recognizes the value of openness and ruralness; “communities like St. Anthony working on comprehensive plans [that will] manage growth;” work by three states to identify sensitive areas [in which to restrict development; “thoughtful anticipation and planning;” significant land-use planning

**Better development:** More responsible development; development concentrated near cities, new development designed with attention to wildlife migration; “development done in an orderly way would hate to see the hundreds of subdivisions in Treasure Valley happen here;” careful development; “New development limited to cluster building, if necessary legislate to eliminate sprawl but better year find incentives that work;” “Public consensus and constraints on private land development;” infill in cities; minimize sprawl but still have population growth; “thoughtful development of communities in harmony with the environment;” less sprawl; “inevitable growth concentrated in communities so that open landscapes are maintained;” clustered commercial, residential development; “developing communities that don’t require people to use cars all the time;” less reliance on cars, neighborhood commercial; residential development clustered with access to open space; “Eagle is a good [model], no fences, not landscaped, permits wildlife movement”

**Managed growth:** Slow, managed growth; more bridled growth; smart growth; planned growth; towns with growth [maintain] amenities and physical structure that is attractive; “controlled growth, opportunities for landowners to have good return on land but still keep open spaces;” “grow in an organized fashion, avoid sprawl;” reasonable new development avoiding stagnation; “can’t stop growth but can guide it;” population control

**Healthy economy:** Broad economy; thriving economy; processed products in Montana, local need to vertically integrate; transition from resource-based economy to technology-

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based economy; “more opportunity for small business, those unique mom-and-pop operations like B&Bs and shops;” bring in more good businesses like Cody Labs; development of more good-paying jobs in industries compatible with this place; maintaining traditional businesses—agriculture, timber, outfitting, dude ranching, recreation; “maintain charm and quality of life yet provide economic opportunities for young, start-ups;” “economy fuelled less by outside demands and more by region-specific production;” knowledge-based industries with low impact on environment; more clean industry; create good transportation to increase business; “economic collaboration, shared chamber of commerce;” new industries that will complement what exists, using ecosystem products; well-paying jobs

**Agriculture:** Agriculture as a viable activity; organic market increasing by 20 percent a year; stable agricultural economy; preserve best agricultural land, steer development to agriculturally marginal land; preserve agricultural land; agricultural economy that is valued and respected in the area; keep agricultural land in agriculture; “create incentives to keep agriculture;” agricultural lands growing specialty crops to support local economy; incentives to support progressive agriculture; vibrant, locally marketed, more diverse agriculture; attract value-added strategies for agricultural base

**Wildlife:** Minimal impact on wildlife; maintain or improve functionality of ecosystem, migration corridors, eliminate brucellosis; regulations to protect rivers, wildlife corridors; maintain diverse wildlife population; “more emphasis on wildlife management and less on livestock;” traffic management plan to benefit wildlife; “enforce local carrying capacity of ecosystem for people and regional wildlife”

**Preservation of open space;** “save open space for future generations;” “private lands need to stay rural, not turn into amusement parks;”

**Public lands:** Keep public lands public; maintain and improve public lands; eliminate in-holdings where possible; protect and preserve access to public forests; “public land, I hope won’t be changed too much;” “Yellowstone Park and Teton Park remain pristine”

**Public transportation:** Mass transportation using alternative fuels; public transportation; reduce auto dependence; “public transportation in the park and throughout the state”

**Conservation easements;** purchases of open land to be undeveloped forever, more money to buy farms to keep them operating; larger use of conservation easements, builds middle ground; “Enthusiasm and appreciation growing for Jackson Hole Land Trust and land protection work in general;”

**Water:** water guidelines, priorities established; “Why aren’t we plumbing new homes to capture gray water;” protect our water—Gallatin, Yellowstone and groundwater; “need a reassessment of traditional water rights usage and control;” “river corridors are pretty critical”

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**Affordable housing;** “If outsiders want services in a restaurant, then they need housing for workers;” “acceleration in prices of housing stops—afford to live here as retired people”

**Increased diversity** of demographics; “a little more diverse with time;” cultural and socioeconomic diversity

**“Increased sensitivity to the protection of natural assets;”** “more people who are concerned about the resources we have and managing them for all people;” “emerging consensus on what is needed to maintain high quality of life and sustainability while preserving ecosystem”

**Ranches survive,** even if [under] outside ownership, maintain as open space; ranching families still ranching; “nod toward western ranch lifestyle”

**Better infrastructure,** schools, jail, wastewater/stormwater treatment; roads, schools

**Better management by federal agencies:** Yellowstone snowmobile issue “not well thought-out, allowed snowmobile industry to develop over years and then said no, it’s irresponsible;” long-range vision for Yellowstone that stays out of the political arena

**Communities retain individual identities;** “Continue to be authentic to our heritage and history, foundation, sense of place”

**Partnerships:** “Partnering of diverse groups to protect environment;” “partnerships, shared vision, commitment, YBP concept offers a terrific model”

**Reasonable predator control plan;** state management of large predators

**Safe communities;** work to keep community safe

**Wilderness:** More roadless areas; more wilderness designated areas

## **XV. GUIDELINES TO ACHIEVE THE VISION**

In answer to what guidelines or advice participants would offer to the region and their communities on how to achieve their vision respondents identified consensus building, communication and planning as the most important ways. Twenty-eight percent of participants talked about the need for a “community conversation.” In addition, 6 percent stressed the need for residents to get involved and assume responsibility another 6 % of interviewees discussed the need for people in the area to be better informed.

Interviewees talked about the need for better planning in individual communities (24%) and for more effective and comprehensive, regional plans (7%).

Notable responses are listed below.

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**Community conversation,** people making conscious decisions; collaboration, not stifling of creativity and entrepreneurial spirit; cooperation among groups is essential; more discussion needed; people of different ideologies need to come together to find common ground; “need a common base of knowledge, rather than ideology—CRM for a community;” continued dialogue between interests, between locals and new residents; compromise; community-wide dialogue about future—engage as many folks as possible; “seek first to understand and then to be understood, we don’t listen well, when we disagree we stop listening;” “listen more, demand less;” develop mechanisms to bring people together—talk leads to trust and sharing of information; all parties need to listen; need to have diversity [in groups addressing problems]; communication about diverse needs; more players at the table; try to be inclusive; make sure all partners are at the table—incorporate all interests and stakeholders; use a facilitator

**Planning:** Planning and zoning boards need to be more businesslike; review planning and zoning in all counties, modify rules to ensure protection of agricultural land; maintain good planning and zoning committees; follow the rules, have public hearings; proper planning based on consensus building; strong land-use planning; develop consensus-based planning and zoning; continue land-use planning process; educate local leaders on importance of local land-use planning; “better planning based on what locals want;” strategic planning; better long-term planning; mixed-use zoning

**Regional plan:** Need overall plan—there are a lot of fragmented plans, Forest Service, Park Service; master plan for the whole region for utilities, transportation, wildlife; these towns have to see they’re interconnected; greater interagency planning and coordination; cities, county, schools should work together on capital planning; coordination, cooperation, and communication on city, county, regional level; plan and implement regionally; regional standards—intergovernmental discourse

**Involvement:** Get involved; “people have to be involved, our political system allows for involvement;” need people involved—hard to get people on committees to spend time solving problems; “conservation groups need to get more involved in what’s happening day to day, it’s the only way anything will get done”

**Inform residents:** interest groups need to become more informed; more instruction, the more we learn the better off we are; get new information to folks; educate ranchette owners about wildlife accommodation; more science in decision-making

**Education:** Fund education well at all levels; invest more in education; support education

**Leadership:** Develop and support local leadership; need good leadership, with that communities will find their own direction; look for political leaders who share some hopes

**Apply fairness and common sense;** “western common sense man”

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***Economic future is tied to maintaining the quality of life;*** invest in quality of life elements

***Green community:*** Be conscious of our impact, be a more green community, recycling, reusing, etc.; sustainable building; green development--incentives and rewards for green development and protection of open space

***Invest in infrastructure***—roads, sewer, water, recreation, cultural; maintain infrastructure to support community needs

***Maintain traditional industries:*** “We should take care of what we’ve got, including oil and gas and mining; don’t forget what got us here;” “Focus on traditional activities in the region—commodities, hunting and fishing”

***Protection of open lands;*** more open space

## **XVI. INVESTMENT IN QUALITY OF LIFE**

When participants were asked how they would invest money to improve the regional quality of life, the largest percentage (28%) said they would invest to protect agricultural land and other open space.

The next two areas of investment—education (21%) and infrastructure (21%)—are areas that might be important in any region but are particularly important in an area that has been growing quickly.

An additional 7% of the participants said that they would use money to support community dialogue. Other interviewees want to improve affordable housing for workers (6%) and job opportunities by producing more value-added agricultural and forest products (5%).

Notable responses are listed below.

***Protect open space, agricultural land:*** Maintain agricultural land, open lands; buy easements; maintain open space through continued viability of ranching; local land trust; buy land to maximize wildlife corridors and habitat; “open space defines Wyoming, all else will follow, migration routes”, wildlife; prevent development of 35-acre ranchettes; wildlife forage compensation for private land owners

***Education,*** scholarships for young people; adult literacy programs; create a small tourism-oriented college in West Yellowstone, people could study in a laboratory that is unequalled; educate youngsters in programs like Friends of Teton River; pump money into elementary and secondary education; graduate school of business in this part of state; K-12 education; retaining high school graduates and sending them to college will produce better employees; science education; K-6 education

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**Infrastructure**, public works; city parks; “treatment plants aren’t sexy;” bike paths connecting the entire region; roads, water, utilities, business parks; improve trail system; roads, airports; hiking and biking trail system, landscaped city park, improve highways, make safer, mortality rate is too high; road, sewer, water; infrastructure for high-tech businesses

**Support community dialogue**: time and effort making communities sit and figure out what they want to be; create centers in every community where issues can be debated with best available information, good public forums that are objective and credible; local consensus building groups—gives everyone a buy-in to solving problems; regional community/convention center could be used for [community dialogue] and conventions; consensus building leadership group, not control board; group learning—give community leaders money to travel to other successful communities

**Affordable housing**—quality development in town, dense, walkable, infill development

**Develop value-added agricultural and forest products**; give money to universities to develop value-added agricultural activities; rebuild decentralized meatpacking in region; more processing, manufacturing

**Demonstrate how a regional approach would benefit rural and urban areas**, use data to show positive impacts of regional planning, need to use data to dispel misperceptions; strategic planning

**Health care**: basic health care clinics available in small communities

**Incentive-based conservation**

**Develop alternative fuels**; invest in clean technologies so people can have modern conveniences in the least environmentally damaging way

**Protect water quality**, get cows off water; maintain quality of water

**Public venture capital fund** to finance local start ups; invest in entrepreneurs

**Expand concept of Yellowstone Institute**, make it a regional program with a broader base, team instruction with varied viewpoints

**Homestead properties**, local ownership, not federal, shift to small ownership

**Designation of Gallatin River as special resource**, bring together leaders, county commissioners, environmental scientists, park officials

**Preserve access, make available the river edges**, not necessarily a manicured greenbelt, maintain accessibility, won’t be lined by McMansions

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***Protect wildlife on highway***, more protective fences and crossing for wildlife, helps humans too

***Regional airline*** to benefit local population and tourists

***Social services*** for “substantial but invisible underprivileged population in this region, poverty, illiteracy, dysfunctional families, we are only as strong as our weakest citizens”

## **XVII. CRITICAL ISSUES FACING THE REGION**

Participants were asked to identify the number one critical challenge facing the Yellowstone Teton region. Thirty-five percent of participants said that achieving sensible growth was the region’s biggest challenge and that the money to be made through uncontrolled growth was the biggest obstacle to achieving that goal.

Twelve percent of people talked about the challenges of sustaining economic opportunity while maintaining the area’s unique natural amenities. Many respondents talked about the challenges of achieving “balance” in how the region grows.

Ten percent of participants were concerned about the difficulty in reaching regional consensus and agreeing on regional plans that will be necessary if growth in the area is to be controlled. Another ten percent stressed the need to protect the area’s natural resources in the face of rapid development.

About five percent of the people talked about the challenge of maintaining multiple uses of the land, including the timber, mineral and oil and gas industries. These interviewees directly disagreed with some of the priorities and beliefs of those who talked about sustainability and the vulnerability of the local environment.

Two percent of participants are most concerned about the gap between haves and have-nots in the region and another two percent are want to improve the quality of education.

Notable responses regarding regional challenges, obstacles to resolving the challenges, key players in addressing the issues and possible solutions are shown below as direct quotes from the surveys.

***Challenge: Sensible growth;*** responsible growth, unevenness of growth; maintaining unique character of each town in region in face of growth; poor development pattern—lack of clustering; suburbanization (35%)

***Obstacle:*** momentum, land speculators; money to be made, lack of education about impacts; lack of money to address; tradition-bound thinking; construction is a huge part of the economy; independence, no one wants to be told what to do, myth of prosperity, memories of economic depressions; sub-division; attitude of no taxes; lack of ability to make living from agriculture; “people with money who can buy anything;” lack of money, resources; price of land

***Key Players:*** Municipal and county government, conservation groups, agriculture community, land trusts, honest citizens; governor; business community; Realtors,

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chambers of commerce; governors, university leaders; every one of us has a role; elected officials; ranching community; bankers, people with capital; landowners, business people, regular little guy, planners, non-profits; silent majority who aren't groups together and voicing their opinions; non-profits, go betweens; economic development groups

**Solution:** legislation to enforce a growth plan, incentives, green building standards; increase taxes; promote impact people can have on system, citizens have to step up; 2020 Plan, implement regional collaborative, get beyond planning to implementation; conservation easements on private land and the money to do them; communication, consideration, cooperation; "We live in a democracy, get everyone gelled together on how to move forward;" need to ask what people would like to see 100 years from now; general acceptance that we could come together; focus on shared values; great planning sessions with good facilitators; bring University of Virginia High Performance Government Program back to area; must come from the ground up

**Challenge: *Sustaining an economy that provides living wage jobs that recognizes importance of natural resources;*** growth that protects resources and our livelihoods; sustainability; growing economy in a way that preserves what we value; reconcile conservation of natural amenities with ideologies and realities of population growth; how do we grow and not destroy the resource; sound, balanced development; sustaining our natural resources while enhancing out economic opportunities, balance; promote a steady-state economy using science-based scenarios on total energy use, not markets (12%)

**Obstacles:** Not listening to each other, obstructionism, NIMBY; lack of consensus about what sustainability is and how best to achieve it; inability to separate dogma from information; hierarchy of needs, when people are in poverty, resource is not protected; greed; belief in technological fixes and unlimited growth

**Key players:** Every one of us has responsibility; elect visionaries, good leaders; voters, elected officials; Wyoming Congressional delegation; ranching community, educational institutions, sportsmen's groups, chambers of commerce

**Solution:** There has to be a balance; careful that we don't end up being governed by absentee landowners; develop understanding and awareness about where current paths are taking us; start the process, form coalitions that want to work, believe in this; communication, get everyone in the same room; public study of the situation and alternatives

**Challenge: *Creating a regional plan, eliciting consensus:*** need a plan for the region with three sub-regions; to look comprehensively at what we need to do; developing a common understanding; plan to manage people coming in; communication; improving understanding; resolving conflicting demands on natural resources without destroying the underlying social fabric; working together toward common objectives. (10%)

**Obstacles:** Shutting up and getting sarcastic; difference in attitudes of old timers and new players, different attitudes and values

**Key Players:** Developers, local planners, GYC; people with vision, some elected officials; citizens of area without agenda; local government critical, need non-profit like Friends of Teton River or TNC to hold government accountable; local economic

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development groups, land owners, industry representatives, tourism industry; conservation leaders with a vision for harmonious dispute resolution; Sonoran Institute  
**Solution:** Create incentives; “get everyone involved, everyone’s fingerprints on the knife,” need everyone not just business community, politicians, environmentalists, need broadminded intelligent people, may not be one answer but if we fix half that would help; increased use of federalism, devolution of authority to lower levels of government

**Challenge: *Preserve quality of environment;*** preserve natural heritage of area; maintain natural environment and wildlife; protect quality and quantity of water; land management; keep wildlife habitat intact. (10%)

**Obstacles:** greed, lack of leadership, lack of information; quality and availability of water; ingrained colloquialism that prevents long-range thinking; population growth

**Key players:** Local, state, federal elected officials, scientists, planners, economists, involved and informed citizenry; private landowners, community leaders, non-profits groups, locals not federal government; ranchers, landowners

**Solution:** Key is waking us up; collaboration, working together; create more easements

**Challenge: *Maintain multiple uses of lands and protect natural resources;*** jobs and resource management, we are losing people; making sure we are considered in federal planning processes; grazing, use of public lands by livestock. (5%)

**Obstacle:** Apathy; hasn’t been done historically, we are losing our voice; inability of food producers to get a good return

**Key Players:** State legislature, U.S. Forest Service, U.S. Park Service; state natural resources officials, county representatives, conservation districts; judicial branch, government executives; certain public interest groups

**Solution:** US Fish and Wildlife Service should be scraped, need Wyoming people and state government to make goals county by county; get good folks involved who are looking down the road who will put laws and policies in place to help us toward those ends; involvement in public planning processes to produce informed decisions

**Challenge: *Economic parity, balance between haves and have-nots,*** disappearance of middle class; right balance of people including workers (2%)

**Obstacles:** Lack of social vision, social consciousness, political polarization; anti-growth forces

**Key players:** State and federal legislature, local leaders, education leaders; a little bit of everybody

**Solution:** Best way of addressing is to be a role model; somehow get buy-in from people who are anti-development

**Challenge: *Quality of education;*** increasing intellectual capital, need to make strides in technological economy to [reduce dependence on] extractive economy (2%)

**Obstacles:** Too focused on individual survival, not looking to next generations

**Key players:** Legislature, business leaders, executive government, school boards

**Solution:** Understand long-term thinking is most important, sacrifice short-term rewards for greater gain, tax investment for future.