

Jonathan Schechter – “Corpus Callosum” Column
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Last Thursday, my Charture Institute hosted our second annual “22 in 21: Jackson Hole in the 21st Century” conference. My belief is that Jackson Hole is one community spanning two states and three counties, and at 22 in 21, 150 people from our regional community came together to identify clear steps we can take to shape a future which complements our values, character, and resources.

Perhaps the most gratifying feedback I received about 22 in 21 was also the oddest. It came from one attendee who said: “That was the strangest conference I’ve ever been to. People at 22 in 21 were actively trying to figure out things they could do during the coming year. Every other conference I’ve ever been to, people are content to just talk about doing stuff. At 22 in 21, people were trying to figure out actions they could take. Really weird.”

Weird indeed, but in a wonderful way. I emerged from 22 in 21 feeling as though that we, as a region, have the potential to take some significant steps in 2013 toward shaping our own destiny. The archetype for those steps was created by a group which came together after last year’s 22 in 21. Calling themselves “Table 14” after the table at which they sat, Table 14 turned their passion for entrepreneurship into a variety of actions, including starting an annual Pitch Day matching local entrepreneurs with local investors, and Chance Meetings, a networking event for local entrepreneurs held the first Monday of every month from 5-7 pm at the Rose.

Building on this model, 22 in 21 attendees committed to take steps to further the region’s efforts in areas which ranging from the arts and cultural diversity to coping with a resource-constrained future and helping position the Tetons as a global icon of sustainable tourism.

Because of my excitement over what occurred, I’m going to devote my next three columns to 22 in 21. Going in order of how events unfolded on Thursday, today I’ll focus on the results of an exercise we had all attendees participate in, and then ask for your thoughts. In two weeks I’ll review what the day’s speakers had to say. In four weeks, I’ll talk about the different action-oriented groups which emerged, and share how you can become involved in those which interest you.

As suggested above, 22 in 21 focused on taking actions. To that end, since the collapse of the region’s construction-based economy, a significant question facing us is: “What – if anything – will take construction’s place as the foundation of our middle class?” Following on that, a related question quickly became: “Can we take steps to define that something, so that it complements our values, character, and resources?”

Charture believes in the scientific method; i.e. in order to accurately answer a question or address a problem, you first need a solid understanding of it. To that end, at 22 in 21 we ran attendees through a two-part exercise, asking them to rate factors which have shaped our region to date, or will shape it in the future.

25 different factors were grouped into five basic categories – Economic Capital, Social Capital, Natural Capital, Government, and Other – and attendees were asked to allocate 100 points across these 25 categories. For example, if they felt the region’s agricultural heritage was the only factor which mattered in determining how we became what we are today, they could allocate all 100 points to that attribute. Alternatively, if they felt all 25 factors would be equally important in determining where we’re headed, they were free to give each one four points.

Table 1 shows the overall results of the exercise. Table 2 lists the top responses to the “How we got here” portion; and Table 3 lists the top responses to the “Shaping our future” portion.

Focusing on Tables 2 and 3, four things jump out.

One is the group's general consensus that the region's environment has been the primary influence on what we became, and will be an even bigger influence on what we will become. But in both cases, coming in a close second were economic factors.

The second is the changing nature of those economic factors. Attendees saw the Jackson Hole Mountain Resort's founding and growth as the biggest single economic factor affecting the nature of the region today. Looking ahead, though, the consensus was that technologically-driven changes in the kinds of businesses that can be here, as well as the kinds of jobs those businesses will create, will be the single most important driver of our future, even more so than our environmental quality.

Third, there's a bit of a paradox going on. One is that we don't necessarily see government as being too terribly important in shaping either our present or past. At the same time, though, there's a clear awareness that much of the region is protected public lands, which in turn are fundamental to our economy and lifestyle.

Finally, and not surprisingly, there's less certainty about what will shape the future than what has shaped the present. "Growth of location-independent businesses" was viewed as the most important factor shaping the future, but would have ranked only third regarding what has shaped us today. Similarly, the scores of the factors ranked second and third in the "future" category would have ranked a distant fifth and sixth in the "present" category.

That noted, it was also very clear to attendees that natural and economic capital-related factors will be the ones most important to shaping our future, and many of these are, thankfully, within the community's control.

Here's where the opportunity lies. If we view the environment and economy as at odds with one another, our future is not good. If, however, we in the Tetons region can continue to make strides in forging a consensus that the kinds of economic activities we will support will be those which form a synergy with a healthy environment, then we have great potential in being able to create a future which truly does complement our values, character, and resources.

If you'd like to respond to this same survey given to 22 in 21 attendees, you may do so on-line by going to 22in21.com and clicking the "News&Guide Survey" link. While there, you can also check out videos of the event.

Table 1
2013's 22 in 21
Attendees' Scoring of Factors Influencing the Teton Region's Present and Future
(Each Attendee Distributed 100 Points Among the 25 Factors)

	How We Got Here	Where We're Going
Economic Capital		
1. Agricultural heritage	2.3	1.8
2. Air service	5.5	5.3
3. Investments becoming the county's largest source of income	1.5	0.6
4. Founding and growth of the Jackson Hole Ski Area/Mountain Resort	9.6	4.8
5. Many residents' personal wealth	3.2	1.3
6. "Traditional" job base of agriculture, tourism, government, and development & real estate	4.5	3.1
7. Wyoming's lack of income tax	4.8	2.4
8. Growth of location-independent businesses/jobs which can be done here	2.6	9.5
Sub-total	34.2	28.8
Social Capital		
9. Arts heritage	2.1	3.9
10. Culture of self-reliance and self-starting (i.e. basic entrepreneurial qualities)	8.7	4.8
11. Highly-educated populace	4.3	5.0
12. LDS influence	0.3	0.0
13. Philanthropically-oriented community (e.g. Old Bill's & Tin Cup)	5.1	5.1
Sub-total	15.6	18.9
Natural Capital		
14. 97% public lands in Teton WY (plus significant amounts in surrounding counties)	8.7	5.6
15. Consequences of global warming	0.7	3.3
16. Conservation tradition (e.g. Yellowstone's founding; GTNP Rockefeller expansion)	6.2	6.8
17. Generally intact ecosystem, w/ generally intact landscapes and wildlife populations	5.8	7.8
18. Geographic isolation	3.4	1.2
19. Physical beauty of area	11.5	5.9
Sub-total	36.7	30.6
Government		
20. Access to elected officials	1.3	1.0
21. Federal government policies	1.7	1.3
22. Land use regulations	3.0	4.9
23. Wyoming laws/values/limited government philosophy	2.3	2.8
Sub-total	8.4	10.0
Other		
24. Ability of the area to touch heartstrings/inspire residents and visitors	4.6	5.0
25. Advances in technology (computers, internet, tele-communications, etc.)	3.6	7.2
Sub-total	8.2	12.2
Grand Total	101.0	100.4

Table 2
2013's 22 in 21
Attendees' Scoring of Leading Factors Influencing the Teton Region Today
(Each Attendee Distributed 100 Points Among the 25 Factors)

Cat.	Rank Order of Categories	Mean Score
NC	Natural Capital	30.6
EC	Economic Capital	28.8
SC	Social Capital	18.9
O	Other	12.2
G	Government	10.0
Cat.	Rank Order of Top-Rated Factors	Mean Score
NC	Physical beauty of area	11.5
EC	Founding and growth of the Jackson Hole Ski Area/Mountain Resort	9.6
SC	Culture of self-reliance and self-starting (i.e. basic entrepreneurial qualities)	8.7
NC	97% public lands in Teton WY (plus significant amounts in surrounding counties)	8.7
NC	Conservation tradition (e.g. Yellowstone's founding; GTNP Rockefeller expansion)	6.2
NC	Generally intact ecosystem, with generally intact landscapes and wildlife populations	5.8
EC	Air service	5.5
SC	Philanthropically-oriented community (e.g. Old Bill's & Tin Cup)	5.1

Table 3
2013's 22 in 21
Attendees' Scoring of Leading Factors Influencing the Teton Region's Future
(Each Attendee Distributed 100 Points Among the 25 Factors)

Cat.	Rank Order of Categories	Mean Score
NC	Natural Capital	36.7
EC	Economic Capital	34.2
SC	Social Capital	15.6
G	Government	8.4
O	Other	8.2
Cat.	Rank Order of Top-Rated Factors	Mean Score
EC	Growth of location-independent businesses/evolution of jobs which can be done here	9.5
NC	Generally intact ecosystem, with generally intact landscapes and wildlife populations	7.8
O	Advances in technology (computers, internet, tele-communications, etc.)	7.2
NC	Conservation tradition (e.g. Yellowstone's founding; GTNP Rockefeller expansion)	6.8
NC	Physical beauty of area	5.9
NC	97% public lands in Teton WY (plus significant amounts in surrounding counties)	5.6
EC	Air service	5.3
SC	Philanthropically-oriented community (e.g. Old Bill's & Tin Cup)	5.1
SC	Highly-educated populace	5.0
O	Ability of the area to touch heartstrings/inspire residents and visitors	5.0
G	Land use regulations	4.9