

WELCOMING COMMUNITIES

*A Guide to Planning
for a Fair and
Thriving Utah*



**Envision
Utah** How we grow matters.

2024



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ABOUT ENVISION UTAH

Envision Utah is a non-profit public-private partnership that was founded in 1997 by community, business, and government leaders. Envision Utah serves as a nonpartisan facilitator that connects community members, stakeholders, and decision makers to ensure all Utahns have a voice in the decisions that impact their future. To learn more visit envisionutah.org.

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Morgan Stanley



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PROJECT BACKGROUND

Many planners have recognized that there are shortcomings in land use and transportation planning, design, and development. Some populations are not as heard as others in planning processes, and our communities don't work as well for some people as for others. In 2021, Envision Utah began working with stakeholders and community leaders to address inclusivity within the built environment, with a focus on land use and transportation planning. The goal of the effort was to help bridge the gap between planners and those least heard in the traditional planning process, ultimately leading to better economic opportunity and upward mobility for all and creating more welcoming communities for all Utahns.

The project was directed by a steering committee composed of community leaders representing public agencies, community-based non-profits, cities, and educational institutions. Findings in this report are informed by a three-day online focus group to understand the needs and perspectives of those typically underrepresented in planning processes, and included people of color, women, low income, disabled, LGBTQIA+, and/or living with chronic illness. Five expert working groups focused on housing, transportation access, economic opportunity, recreation and green space, and public outreach shaped the recommendations. Envision Utah and its staff are profoundly grateful to everyone who contributed to this guide.

Utah is a place where people come to thrive, connect, and invest in hopeful futures. **This guide aims to present best practices for how planners, government leaders, and community stakeholders can better engage all Utahns in processes related to our built environment and guide development in a way that provides even more opportunities to thrive.**



INTRODUCTION

As planners, we recognize the impact of intentional decision-making on shaping the landscapes of our neighborhoods. Utah has a rich history of being a place where many individuals from various backgrounds have found safety, opportunity, and happiness, and we honor that history by deliberately cultivating our communities' remarkable attributes. Our state consistently ranks among the best in terms of economic opportunities, health, and quality of life, reflecting the exceptional achievements and strengths of our communities.

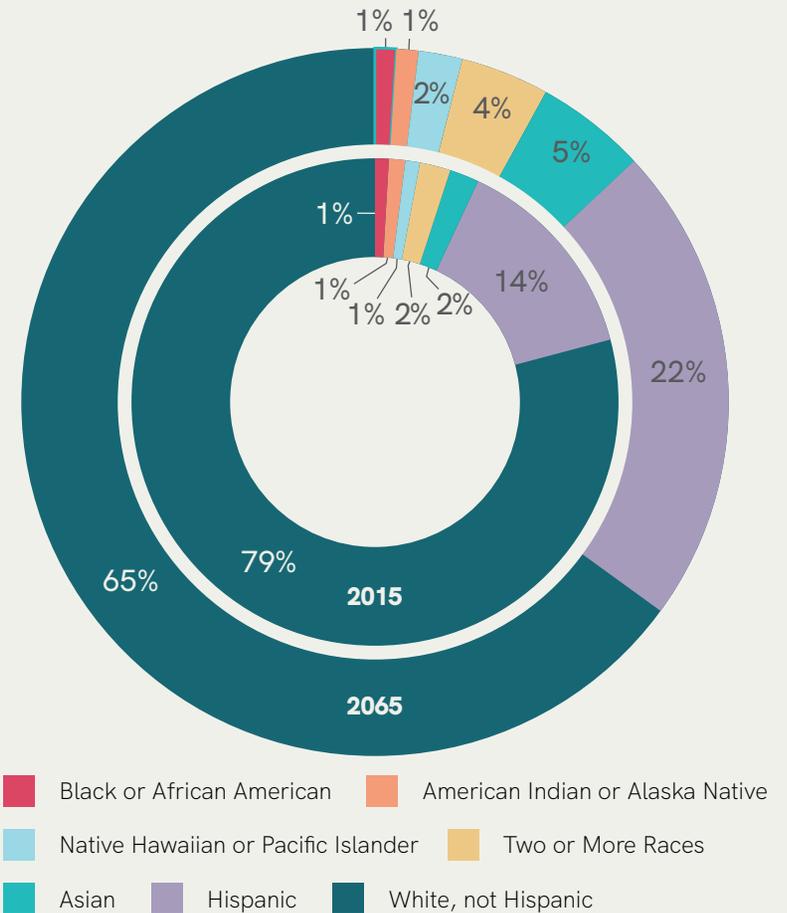
However, these benefits are not equally shared by all communities. For some groups, a variety of barriers to upward mobility cause persistent inequality. The good news is that we can design our municipalities to help provide equal access to opportunity for all Utahns. Given the substantial impact of the built environment on life outcomes, intentional and ongoing efforts for inclusive communities are essential. Local contexts play a crucial role in shaping these outcomes, as emphasized by Dr. Melody Goodman's (Professor of Biostatistics at NYU School of Global Public Health) statement: "Your zip code is a better predictor



of your health than your genetic code.”¹ Other studies further reveal that neighborhoods have a significant influence on a child’s future earnings, underscoring the importance of fostering inclusive communities that promote upward mobility and provide access to opportunity.²

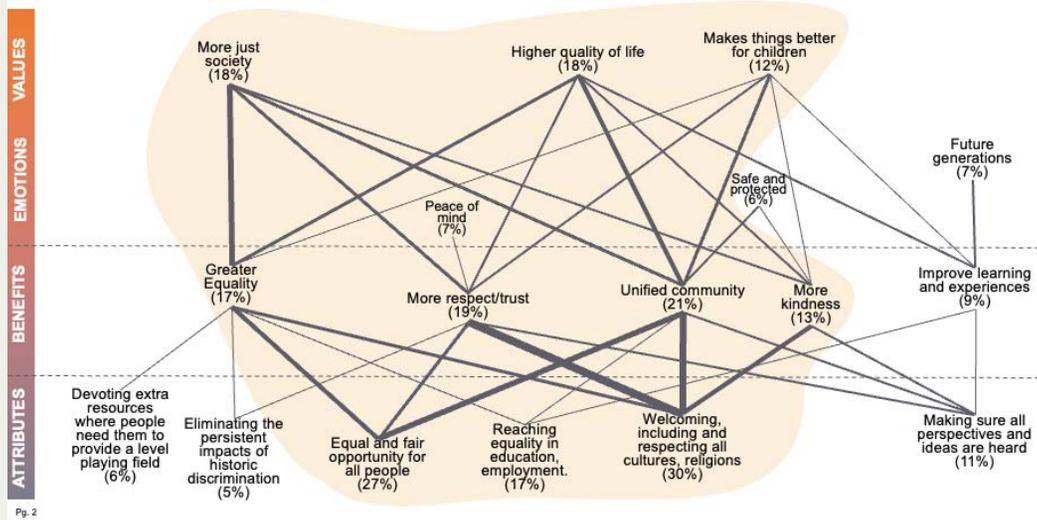
With planning, we hold the power to foster positive change. By evaluating our practices, embracing our shared values, and promoting inclusion, we can create prosperous communities and improve the quality of life for residents from all walks of life. In this guide, we explore actionable strategies and practical steps that enable all Utahns to pursue their ambitions. Together, we can shape Utah’s communities and create a future of inclusivity, opportunity, and shared prosperity.

Demographic Change In Utah 2015-2065



State demographers at the Kem C Gardner Policy Institute expect the share of Hispanic and non-White Utahns to grow to 35% by 2065 and that these populations will account for half of population growth during this period. Utah’s future is largely connected to the future of these growing populations.

Utah Diversity Goals Values Map



Utahns (especially younger Utahns) value inclusivity because they feel it can help create a more just society and enhance quality of life for future generations.

2022 Values Study, Envision Utah & Heart & Mind Strategies

HOW DID WE GET HERE?

Some historic and ongoing policies and processes related to planning and development that were designed to help people have left others behind. In some instances, these policies or processes created community structures that limit access to opportunity, exclude certain people or groups, limit upward mobility, or otherwise perpetuate inequality. Some of the impacts of these historical actions are ongoing.

As we plan for communities that allow people from all walks of life to thrive, it is important to understand how we arrived where we are, so we can learn from our shared planning history. The accomplishments and mistakes of the past offer the launching point for next steps.

Below is a brief overview of some of the policies and processes that have brought us to where we are.

REDLINING, 1933-1968

Redlining was the process of grading neighborhoods based on perceived risks, including social, economic, racial, and ethnic composition. Redlining limited access to federally-backed mortgage financing in low scoring neighborhoods.

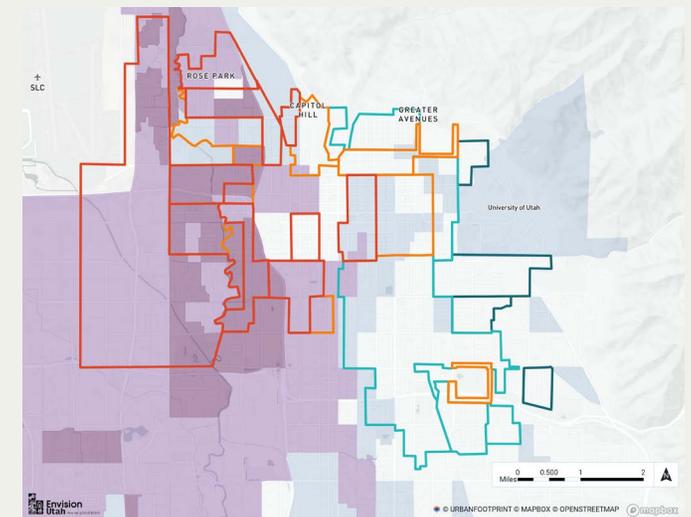
IMPACTS:

- Many formerly redlined neighborhoods are home to Utah's Hispanic, Black, Asian and Pacific Islander communities today.³
- Previously redlined areas have lower average incomes.⁴
- In part because their opportunities to build home equity were limited by redlining, non-white families have less intergenerational wealth today, on average.⁵
- Residents in formerly redlined areas face higher displacement risks.⁶
- Exposure to industrial pollution is higher in redlined areas.⁷

WHAT HAS BEEN DONE?

- The Fair Housing Act (1968) bars discrimination in housing.
- The Community Reinvestment Act (CRA)(1977) obligates banks to provide loans and services in low- and moderate-income communities.

HOME OWNER'S LOAN CORPORATION RATING AND RACIAL DISTRIBUTION - SALT LAKE CITY



Previously redlined neighborhoods are home to higher non-white populations today.

HOME OWNER'S LOAN CORPORATION RATING

■ D "Redlined" ■ C ■ B ■ A

PERCENT WHITE ALONE, ACS 15-19

Race and Ethnicity - Census Planning Database (2021)

■ Null ■ 10.4-30 ■ 30-55

■ 55-75 ■ 75-100

RACIAL COVENANTS, UNKNOWN-1947

Restrictive real estate covenants, contracts with sellers and homeowners’ associations, limit the use of purchased land. These covenants were sometimes used to prevent Black, Latino, Asian, and other races and nationalities from living on certain properties, with the exception of domestic servants.

ENDURING IMPACTS:

- In part because their opportunities to build home equity were limited by racial covenants, non-white families have less intergenerational wealth today, on average.⁸

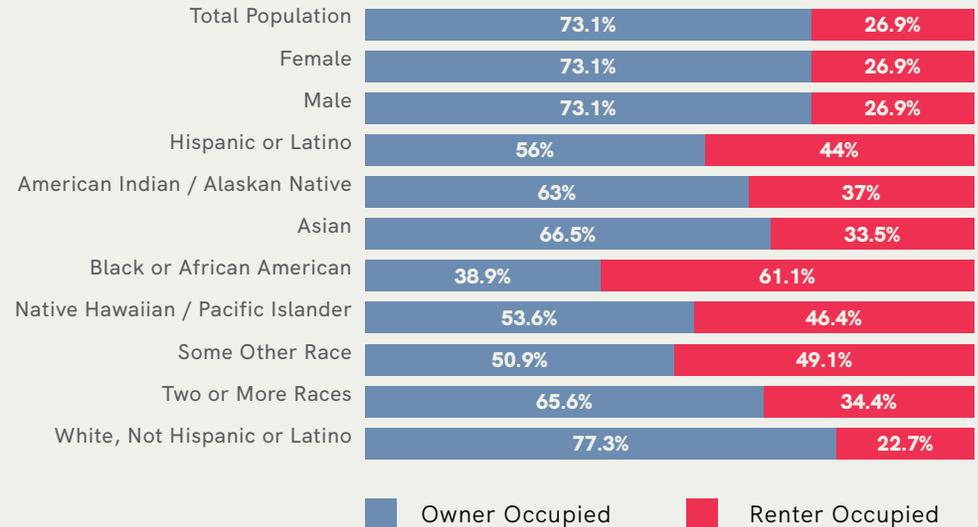
WHAT HAS BEEN DONE?

- Racial covenants have been unenforceable under federal law since 1947.
- Utah House Bill 374 (2021) provides a clear process for property owners to file a notarized statement with their property records clarifying that discriminatory portions of any active covenants are void.



The 1936 tax reappraisal for this property lists “colored tenants” and “poor location” as the rationale for a ten percent reduction in taxable value. Image courtesy of Salt Lake County Archives. Use inspired by Salt Lake West Side Stories.

Utah Housing Tenure by Race, Ethnicity, and Sex, 2015–2019



EXCLUSIONARY ZONING, 1925-TODAY

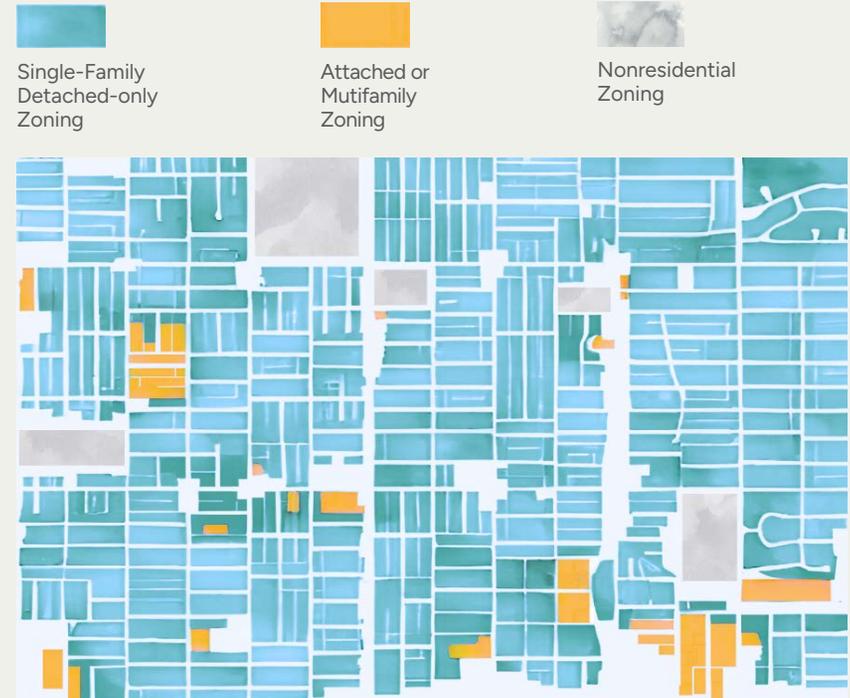
Zoning is commonly used to separate large single-family housing from commercial developments, offices, and other types of housing, and to keep other, more affordable types of housing out of certain neighborhoods.

IMPACTS:

- Exclusionary zoning restrictions contribute to Utah's housing shortage, a primary driver of affordability issues.⁹
- Housing cost burdens are most pronounced for renters and households making less than \$50,000 per year, Utahns of color, and Hispanic Utahns.¹⁰
- Exclusionary zoning may inhibit upward economic mobility by making it illegal to build more affordable types of housing in high-opportunity neighborhoods.¹¹
- Exclusionary zoning contributes to sprawling development patterns, which limit upward economic mobility.¹²
- Lower-income and non-white neighborhoods generally have fewer protections from the impacts of industrial and environmentally unsafe businesses than areas zoned for large single-family housing.¹³

WHAT HAS BEEN DONE?

- Requiring minimum home sizes greater than 1,000 square feet was prohibited for one and two-unit homes at the state level.
- Regional visions such as the Wasatch Choice Vision and city plans call for a network of mixed-use centers that include attached housing products.
- Utah Senate Bill 34 requires municipalities to adopt strategies aimed at encouraging affordable housing to be eligible to receive investment funds from the Utah Department of Transportation. It offers Utah municipalities a menu of 25 strategies they can pursue to encourage affordable housing such as allowing accessory dwelling units (ADUs) and adopting zoning that encourages construction.



Single-family detached-only zoning dominates residential land area in many communities. In this example map, the orange shading demonstrates pockets of the community which allow multiple units, such as twin homes, duplexes, townhomes, condominiums, and apartments.

INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT, ONGOING

Public infrastructure is intended to benefit everyone, but the benefits and costs aren't always distributed equally.

IMPACTS:

- Utah's poorer and international communities were often the last to receive public infrastructure like water and sewer.¹⁴
- When interstate freeways were designed and constructed in Utah, they followed the path of least resistance, sometimes demolishing portions of low income neighborhoods.¹⁵ Highways and freeways concentrate amounts of tailpipe emissions that impact nearby communities.
- Infrastructure built through much of the 20th century was designed and built without the needs of people with disabilities in mind.

WHAT HAS BEEN DONE?

- The Americans with Disabilities Act (1990) prohibits discrimination against people with disabilities and establishes standards for accessible design.
- The Wasatch Front Regional Council established the Wasatch Choice Advisory Committee to apply an equity lens to regional transportation planning.

UNREPRESENTATIVE PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT, ONGOING

Participatory planning provides opportunities for the public to voice their ideas, opinions, and concerns about local planning decisions, but it is challenging to include diverse backgrounds and perspectives. Future residents, those who would like to live in a community, are not typically represented at all.

ENDURING IMPACTS:

- Low income Utahns are less likely to attend city council meetings and research the topics that are discussed (20% of low income Utahns vs. 29% average).¹⁶
- Only a third of Utahns know when, where, or how to provide public input on local government decisions.¹⁷
- Utahns who are more comfortable with development in nearby cities and towns but not their own community were more likely than average to have attended a city council meeting (53%) than people who are comfortable with development in their own community (35%).¹⁸

WHAT HAS BEEN DONE?

- The Utah Division of Multicultural Affairs has been working to promote a welcoming climate and opportunity-filled solutions for Utah's multicultural communities since 2012.
- Stipends were provided to community-oriented non-profits to promote the statewide Guiding Our Growth survey.

RECOMMENDATIONS

As a professional or citizen planner with expertise in understanding local conditions and an interest in long-term community success, you are well-positioned to be a champion of inclusion in your community. By prioritizing respect and fairness for all, you can contribute to the creation of welcoming communities.

To jump start incorporating inclusion into your planning work, consider asking these three questions when making plans, policies, recommendations, or decisions:¹⁹

Who is helped?

Who is harmed?

Who is left out?

These questions serve as a valuable framework for understanding the impacts of planning decisions and processes. Each of these questions can be adapted to different situations, including plan making; deliberations and meetings; and policy, program, and project development and implementation.

Considering who is helped or harmed — financially, physically, culturally, psychologically, or by neglect — can provide insights about whether an idea needs to be adjusted to better meet community needs. By asking whose voice is left out of a planning process, planners can identify where additional outreach is needed.

In the following sections, we will explore key recommendations and approaches to foster inclusive communities. Each step outlined in this guide is aimed at creating a more accessible and vibrant environment for Utahns from all walks of life.

RECOMMENDATION 1

Facilitate broad and meaningful public engagement in planning

RECOMMENDATION 2

Foster welcoming communities with a variety of housing options

RECOMMENDATION 3

Design multimodal transportation systems

RECOMMENDATION 1

Facilitate Broad and Meaningful Public Engagement in Planning

The fairness and effectiveness of participatory planning hinges on WHO participates. Simply meeting the current legal requirements for public involvement often leads to fragmented and reactive engagement that fails to capture the diverse perspectives within the community. This type of outreach often occurs just before adoption, misses opportunities to integrate community feedback, occurs outside the context of a constructive conversation about the future of the community, and creates barriers to participation for most residents.

Facilitating more extensive and meaningful public engagement takes effort, time, and resources, but has the potential to overcome the shortcomings of the baseline approach. When implemented effectively, this approach can create a positive return on investment with better planning and more public support.

To make public engagement more inclusive, we recommend that you:

1. Make it easy
2. Branch out
3. Build partnerships
4. Explore opportunities for institutional change

SHORTCOMINGS OF PUBLIC HEARINGS

Public hearings create high barriers for participation. Beyond the barrier of knowing that an action is proposed, that there is an opportunity for comment, and how and when to give that comment, participating requires attendance at a certain time and speaking in a highly formal setting in front of other people, often on a subject that involves complex planning and legal jargon and processes. As a result, those who comment in public hearings tend to be older homeowners who are motivated to oppose a proposal and are rarely representative of the community as a whole.

FOCUS ON CONSTRUCTIVE PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT IN PLANNING AS OPPOSED TO DEVELOPMENT APPROVALS

Public engagement in long-range, larger area planning like general plan updates, neighborhood plans, or city or county-wide updates to the zoning code is likely to be more fertile than engagement in ad-hoc, hyper-local, and administrative decisions like conditional approvals and rezones. In the context of larger plans, conversations about growth pressures, trade-offs, and infrastructure needs can be more robust and constructive, leading to the ability to evaluate rezones and other applications primarily for consistency with larger plans.

1. MAKE IT EASY

To empower residents from all walks of life to participate in public engagement, make it easy for them.

a) Meet people where they are.

Rather than expecting residents to come to your meeting or go out of their way to take a survey, bring public engagement opportunities to them. Options include facilitating intercept surveys in high-traffic areas, promoting convenient online surveys that connect actions to outcomes, tabling at community events and street fairs, presenting at community council or other community group meetings, and organizing a block party around a planning or visioning effort.

The Utah Division of Multicultural Affairs continues to encourage best practices that center community-informed strategies in communications, messaging, and engagement modeled through their partnership with the Utah COVID-19 Multicultural Advisory Committee, which led out on critical efforts during the pandemic to address disparities.

A full “Meeting People Where They Are” Engagement Toolkit will be released from the division soon. [Sign up for updates here.](#)

CONSIDER THESE WORDS:

“The concept of ‘meeting people where they are’ is both a mentality and a process. It means resisting the urge to do things because ‘it’s the way they’ve always been done’, and instead striving to co-create solutions with communities who have experienced extensive gaps in thriving and bear the brunt of social burdens. This means going at the pace of community trust, slowing down to ask questions, build proximity, show empathy, and share the process, rather than rush to prescribe solutions.”

The Utah Division of Multicultural Affairs



Salt Lake City Public Lands set up booths in local parks to collect input for their Reimagining Nature Public Lands Master Plan

b) Overcome communication and language barriers.

Keep messaging understandable and approachable to people with different backgrounds and abilities by using plain, concise, and specific language.

Translate surveys and facilitate meetings and other interactive engagement opportunities in the most common local languages in addition to English to enable community members with limited English proficiency to participate. Statewide, the most common languages spoken are English, Spanish, Chinese, Austronesian languages (including Samoan and Hawaiian), and Portuguese, although language prevalence varies by neighborhood.²⁰ Native speakers are best equipped to provide translation and facilitation services. Rather than translating word-for-word, native speakers and community partners may be able to tweak input methods and language to be more culturally relevant.

c) Use unifying language for discussing inclusion and equity in planning.

In 2021, Envision Utah surveyed Utahns to understand local values and perceptions on a variety of topics, including equity issues. This survey found that terms including *respecting everyone*, *treating everyone fairly*, *welcoming everyone*, *equal opportunity*, *equality*, and *inclusion* are the most constructive. We suggest that these phrases can be used in most discussions about issues related to diversity and inclusion. Using unifying language can enable people to talk about inclusion and related issues and priorities without derailing conversations and deterring participants who may have negative views of other terms.

The word *equity* was perceived positively by some and negatively by others, while *equal opportunity* was largely perceived positively. Only 8% of the survey population found the word *equity* divisive overall; however, this value was higher among certain demographics, including Utahns living in rural areas, with a high school education or less, who identify as Hispanic, who have an annual income below \$40,000, and/or who identify as politically conservative. While using the term *equity* should be effective in most settings, these audiences may respond more positively to terms like *equal opportunity* when they can be used to capture the same meaning. If you plan to use the term *equity*, it may be helpful to establish a shared definition.

d) Provide incentives and assistance.

Incentivize participation by providing food and childcare, educate and empower community members to make choices that have real impacts, and thank people for their input. In some cases people may need to be paid for their time. If trying to reach a specific cultural audience, consider providing culturally-relevant food.

2. BRANCH OUT

a) Spread the message early and widely using various channels.

Channels could include email, social media, text, calls, mail, and flyers. Every channel will more effectively reach some audiences than others. Choose digital platforms wisely to reach different audiences effectively. While platforms like TikTok might attract local youth, consider alternative methods to reach older Utahns and individuals with limited digital know-how. Embrace multiple channels to overcome accessibility barriers.

b) Provide diverse opportunities for participation online and in person.

Offer surveys, focus groups, charrettes, map-based commenting, and meetings focused on listening and dialogue. Online tools like surveys are convenient and suit busy schedules, but don't forget to include in-person options for those without digital access. To inform the creation of this guide, residents shared their experiences with planning and the built environment via a three day, asynchronous focus group. Participants, who were compensated for their time, could log in at any time of day to answer a set of questions and view and respond to the responses of other participants. This is just one of many alternative engagement strategies that can provide greater flexibility.



Lawn signs posted in English and Spanish throughout the Jordan River Parkway directed people to the Jordan River Blueprint Survey.



In-person meetings make it easier for some people to engage in planning processes, but they make it harder for others. In-person meetings should ideally be one of several engagement strategies.

c) Engage with businesses, local employees, renters, new residents, and long-time residents alike.

Value the input of all stakeholders, even those who don't currently own a home in the community or who haven't lived there long. Recognize the perspectives and needs of individuals who aspire to live in your community but face affordability constraints.

d) Connect policies and decisions to relatable and personal impacts without leading participants.

By combining education with tangible choices, participants can develop a better understanding, enhance their capacity, and gain confidence in the planning process.

Case study: Reimagine Nature Salt Lake City Public Lands Master Plan

Salt Lake City Public Lands partnered with the University of Utah College of City and Metropolitan Planning to develop a multi-pronged approach to engagement for the update of their Public Lands Master Plan. This robust outreach and engagement effort included:

- Widely advertised online surveys (in English and Spanish)
- Pop-up events and intercept interviews
- Student-led placemaking, wayfinding, and “paint the pavement” workshops
- Organizational partnerships to reach underrepresented groups
- Hundreds of social media posts, targeted social media ads, and opt-in email newsletters

Combined, these strategies reached over 12,000 Utahns. The project team compared survey demographics with resident demographics to refine their outreach over time.



3. BUILD PARTNERSHIPS

a) Partner with local leaders and community groups.

Include social, religious, cultural, non-profit, and interest-based groups to learn about opportunities and needs within the community. Work with these partners to co-design engagement processes in a way that resonates with and is accessible to target communities.



Case study: Wasatch Choice Community Advisory Committee

The Wasatch Front Regional Council, Utah Transit Authority, Mountainland Association of Governments, and Utah Department of Transportation came together in 2022 to create the Wasatch Choice Community Advisory Committee. The goal of the committee is to enhance community partnership with organizations and community leaders that represent those with limited income, communities of color, populations with disabilities, and elderly and youth populations. Fifteen to twenty committee members who represent or serve diverse communities were selected from a qualified pool of applicants and are compensated for each meeting they attend. The committee serves as a forum to better understand the needs and priorities of their communities and advises on long- and short-range transportation planning and investment, technical planning assistance related to land use and transportation, and data and analytics tools.

Case study: Operation My Hometown — West Valley City

In 2019, community leaders approached West Valley City staff and elected officials, concerned that many residents in West Valley City (WVC) were not putting down roots in the city, but instead saving up for a few years and then moving somewhere else. Religious leaders suggested creating a network of volunteers to partner with the city to improve neighborhoods so that residents, especially young families, would decide to stick around long-term. This was the birth of Operation My Hometown.

A local Community Resource Center operated by The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints partnered with the city to steer people to grants including community development block grants, low-interest loans, and other programs available through the city and other sources.

WVC planners contributed by coordinating with other city departments to learn about community needs, conduct a neighborhood health audit for each neighborhood, and identify the communities that need the most support. These audits offer metrics that can help WVC measure the impact over time. WVC also paired code enforcement with information on city resources and connections to volunteers willing to help with basic repairs and maintenance.

Leaders of Operation My Hometown began to plan or attend community events such as block parties to get the word out about neighborhood services and available funding. Organizations and individuals are able to support Operation My Hometown by providing supplies and making tax-exempt donations to the program.

Operation My Hometown began in one neighborhood and has since expanded into four other neighborhoods, contributing to the rehabilitation of several owner-occupied homes. Operation My Hometown targets residents based on age, income, and disability status.

[Learn more about Operation My Hometown here.](#)





Streamlining administrative decisions

can increase efficiency and reduce public clamor, enabling planners and elected officials to rely more on input gathered earlier in the planning and zoning process. In 2023, the Utah Legislature adopted S.B. 174, which standardizes the subdivision approval process throughout the state. Municipalities may take public comment and hold one public hearing for a preliminary subdivision application. If the preliminary subdivision application is approved and the final subdivision plat is consistent with the preliminary application, a municipality shall approve the plat administratively.

4. EXPLORE OPPORTUNITIES FOR INSTITUTIONAL CHANGE

a) Encourage inclusive representation.

Encourage residents from communities that haven't been represented to apply for appointed positions and jobs and to run for office. This can be done by building relationships and partnerships, as described above. Diverse employees and appointed officials can provide insights into the experiences of people with different incomes, identities, and abilities and act as liaisons between planners and community members.

b) Update standards and requirements.

Local and state standards and requirements could be changed to encourage more robust approaches to public engagement.

c) Only require public hearings for applying the zoning code when there is a genuine need to use discretion.²¹

Administrative decision making can often reduce opportunities for bias to enter the process when a decision can be made based on clear and objective standards. A robust public conversation at the long-range planning and visioning level can allow specific approvals to focus on consistency with the prior planning work.

RECOMMENDATION 2

Foster Welcoming Communities with a Variety of Housing Options

Including a variety of housing options (with a variety of lot sizes, duplexes, townhomes, accessory dwelling units, apartments, etc.) in each community is one of the most effective ways to welcome people from a variety of backgrounds, incomes, and life stages, while also increasing access to opportunity and upward mobility.

Research conducted by Harvard Opportunity Insights highlights the significant role of ‘economic connectedness’—the presence of high-income friends among low-income individuals—as a powerful predictor of upward income mobility.²² Exposure to individuals from diverse income backgrounds in schools, churches, and neighborhoods plays a crucial role in fostering economic connectedness.²³ Additionally, regional compactness has been shown to have a positive correlation with upward economic mobility.²⁴ Expanding housing options in high-opportunity neighborhoods is paramount because the neighborhoods people live in significantly affect their economic opportunities and overall well-being.

The ongoing housing crisis presents an opportune moment to address this challenge by promoting diverse housing options in high-opportunity areas. However, existing local zoning laws often hinder the development of neighborhoods with housing diversity, particularly in areas with abundant opportunities.

To foster welcoming communities with a variety of housing options, we recommend that you:

1. Allow smaller lots
2. Allow more than one housing unit per lot and per building
3. Facilitate smaller homes
4. Promote mixed-use development
5. Consider economic opportunities of different locations



Creating communities with a variety of housing options requires a fundamental shift in our planning practices, reversing the trend of commonly excluding certain types of housing and, consequently, Utahns of certain incomes. Consider the following recommendations for local governments from the Utah Division of Housing and Community Development’s Land Use Strategies to Bring Housing Back within Reach report:

1. ALLOW SMALLER LOTS

In many places in Utah and elsewhere in the country, homes are being constructed on lots that are 5,000 square feet or even smaller, creating an inventory of entry-level or “starter” homes. These products also appeal to Utahns who are not interested in spending a large portion of their time maintaining a yard. Small-lot homes can be arranged in creative ways, such as the “cottage court,” in which homes are arranged around a shared courtyard or common area that’s visible from the street. The courtyard replaces the function of a rear yard.

a) Why does this matter?

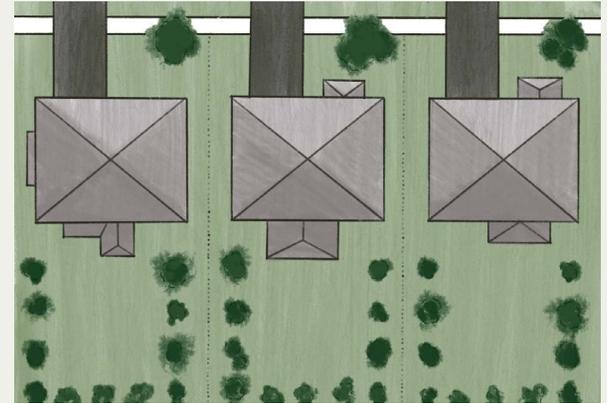
Homes on smaller lots will generally be more affordable because each home carries less land cost. In addition, it is possible to build more units on the same amount of land, making a greater dent in Utah’s housing shortage and allowing more people to live in high-opportunity areas. Without smaller lots, it is practically impossible to build a “starter home” that allows someone to enter the equity ladder and build family wealth. Large setback requirements can also result in inefficient use of land, reduce the number of units that are feasible, and increase the land costs for the home.

b) Impact of Lot Sizes on Affordability

Shifting from a 10,000 square foot lot to a 3,500 square foot lot can reduce the overall home price by around \$137,000, or 28%.

c) Where is this appropriate?

Smaller lots can be appropriate in almost any area, whether greenfield, infill, or redevelopment. A mixture of lot sizes within one neighborhood can be beneficial to increase upward mobility and prevent demographic “bubbles” that lead to future school closures.



Three 2,500 sq ft homes on 10,000 sq ft lots.
Est price: \$796K+



Six 2,500 sq ft homes on 5,000 sq ft lots.
Est price: \$626K+
These smaller lots allow twice the number of homes on the same amount of land—with 22% lower prices per home.

Sample Pricing Analysis of Various Lot Size Reductions — Salt Lake County, 2023

Home Type	Home Size	Avg. Construction \$/ SF	Home Price	Lot Size (Feet)	Land Price	Builder Profit	Total Home Price	Lot Size Reduction	Total Price Reduction
SFD	2,500	\$165	\$412,500	10,000	\$311,754	10%	\$796,679		
SFD	2,500	\$165	\$412,500	7,500	\$233,815	10%	\$710,947	-25%	-11%
SFD	2,500	\$165	\$412,500	5,000	\$155,877	10%	\$625,215	-50%	-22%
SFD	2,500	\$165	\$412,500	3,500	\$109,114	10%	\$575,775	-65%	-28%
SFD	2,500	\$165	\$412,500	2,500	\$77,938	10%	\$539,482	-75%	-32%
Townhomes	2,000	\$180	\$360,000	2,500	\$77,938	10%	\$481,732		
Townhomes	2,000	\$180	\$360,000	2,000	\$62,351	10%	\$464,586	-20%	-4%
Townhomes	2,000	\$180	\$360,000	1,500	\$46,763	10%	\$447,439	-40%	-7%
Townhomes	2,000	\$180	\$360,000	1,000	\$31,175	10%	\$430,293	-60%	-11%

2. ALLOW MORE THAN ONE HOUSING UNIT PER LOT AND PER BUILDING

Including multiple units within the same structure could involve a townhome, duplex, triplex, or fourplex, and can be designed in a way that looks like a single-family home. Accessory dwelling units, whether internal (e.g., a basement apartment) or external (e.g., a small unit in the backyard) can also add another unit on the same lot. In some cases, a very small apartment complex on the scale of a large single-family home could also be appropriate.

a) Why does this matter?

Including more units within the same lot or building footprint reduces land and sometimes building costs per unit. This helps alleviate Utah’s housing shortage and promotes proximity to employment centers and amenities.



This home in South Jordan includes multiple units and is designed in a way that looks like a single-family home.

Additionally, these units offer homeowners the potential to generate rental income through accessory dwelling units or second units in duplexes. These units can be excellent “starter homes” that allow someone to enter the equity ladder and build family wealth.

b) Where is this appropriate?

These housing types are appropriate for a wide range of communities, spanning greenfield, infill, and redevelopment areas. Rather than confining attached units solely to multifamily zones, a more effective approach is to permit them in single-family zones, provided that lot sizes and building footprints align with those of single-family homes. This approach recognizes the benefits of diverse housing options in bolstering upward mobility.

c) Accessory Dwelling Units

Local governments are encouraged—indeed, required under state law—to allow internal accessory dwelling units. Some cities, however, are still finding ways to impose barriers such as separate utility metering, business license, or onerous parking location requirements. Cities should carefully evaluate such barriers to determine whether they are actually necessary.

3. FACILITATE SMALLER HOMES

The market is not currently producing very many small single-family homes under 2,000 square feet, significantly limiting opportunities for starter homes. There may be many reasons for this, including large lot size and parking requirements as well as a housing shortage that allows builders to choose to focus primarily on those units with the highest profit margin.

a) What can be done?

Minimum home sizes above 1,000 square feet are generally forbidden under state law. Homes below 1,000 square feet may be appropriate to accommodate smaller households. Strategies to reduce minimum land requirements and allow more units on each lot can also help smaller units to become more feasible. Closing the gap between supply and demand is perhaps the most important thing that can be done to make smaller, less luxurious housing more attractive to build. Financial, procedural, or regulatory incentives (e.g., density bonuses) can also be used to help encourage smaller unit sizes. Cities and counties may even consider setting a maximum unit size in some places.



Historic neighborhoods are often composed of smaller homes that were built before modern zoning regulations.

b) Where is this appropriate?

Smaller homes can be appropriate in almost any area, whether greenfield, infill, or redevelopment. A mixture of home sizes within one neighborhood can be beneficial to increase upward mobility and prevent demographic “bubbles” that lead to future school closures.

4. PROMOTE MIXED-USE DEVELOPMENT

Mixed-use development places housing and other uses—e.g., retail or office—in the same area or even in the same building rather than separating them. While zoning has long been used to keep incompatible uses away from each other, it can also be used to encourage the co-location of complementary uses. Mixed-use centers come in a variety of scales, ranging from a place with mid rise buildings like downtown Ogden to a school, park, or church at the center of a compact neighborhood. Larger centers are great places for the most intense housing, including large-scale apartment and condominium buildings.

a) Why does this matter?

Office and retail centers are places that can accommodate substantial density to make a real dent in Utah’s housing shortage. Moreover, placing housing near jobs, shopping, and public transportation can significantly reduce household transportation expenses, which typically form the second largest piece of a household budget after housing. On average, Utahns spend 23% of their incomes on transportation.



High density housing can be mixed among buzzing town centers near jobs, retail, and parks as pictured in this image of downtown Ogden.



Mixed-use centers can occur at a variety of scales, such as this town center in Holladay.

b) What are some ways local governments can promote mixed-use areas?

- Allow multifamily housing of an appropriate scale in commercial and office zones.
- Allow strip malls, big box stores, and parking lots to be redeveloped into mixed-use areas that include housing, or even in some cases to be replaced by housing.
- Right-size parking requirements, allow shared parking, and seek ways to help finance structured parking (e.g., tax increment financing or HTRZs). Where structured parking isn't currently feasible, arrange surface parking in ways that allow the area to evolve and add structured parking and additional density in the future. Avoid placing parking between the building and the street.
- Consider adopting a form-based code. Form-based codes primarily regulate the form of development rather than focusing on permitted uses. This ensures that the scale and form of development will be uniform while providing market flexibility to determine appropriate uses. For more information about crafting and implementing a form-based code, check out the Wasatch Choice 2050 Form Based Code Template or formbasedcodes.org.
- Seek to design mixed-use areas to make it possible for people to travel from one use to another (e.g., from housing to retail) using a local street, without the need to travel on a high-speed or wide road, so that walking or cycling is safe and convenient.

5. CONSIDER ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY OF DIFFERENT LOCATIONS

The type and total number of housing units may be a key driver of affordability, but the distribution of more affordable types of housing shapes the opportunities available to and quality of life of the Utahns who live there. To encourage a more fair distribution of housing opportunities, consider comparing the locations where different types of housing are allowed under the current zoning code in your community to median income by zip code or to upward economic mobility data from opportunityatlas.org.

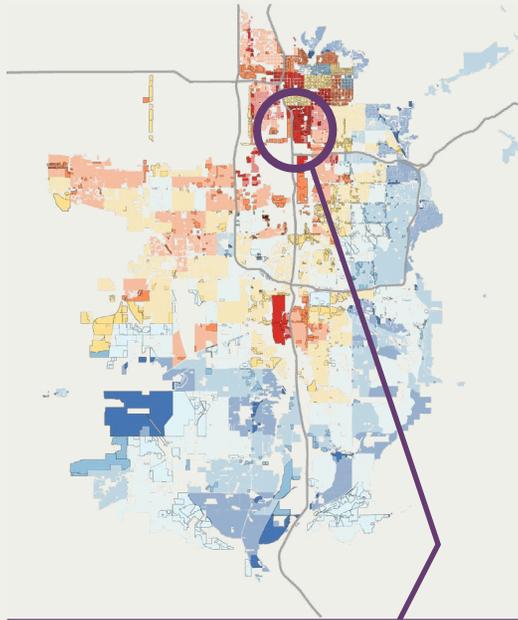
These recommendations attempt to strike a balance between the concerns and preferences of existing residents and the need to expand opportunities for all Utahns. In addition, incentives such as expedited approvals, reduced fees, tax credits, and density bonuses for affordable housing can further expand the supply of more affordable housing in high-opportunity neighborhoods.

Expanding Opportunities for low-income families to live in high-opportunity neighborhoods proves to be a key positive determinant in children's long-term outcomes.

Data shows that the places with the highest upward mobility for children tend to be the least likely to allow housing types that might be affordable to lower income families. It has been shown that if lower income families are given the opportunity to live in an area with high upward mobility, their children benefit significantly.²⁵

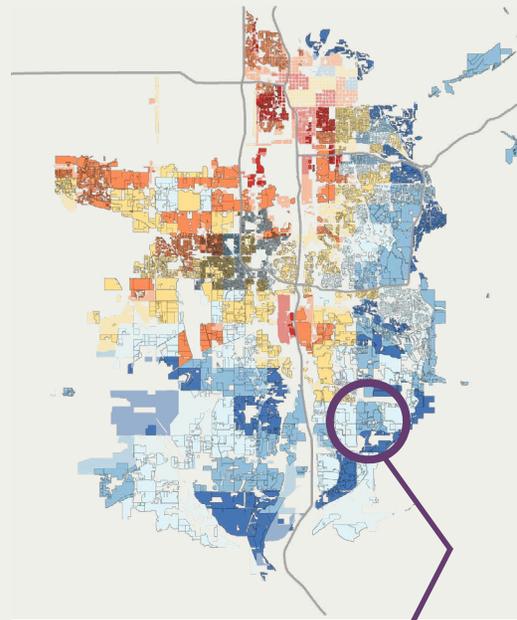
Incomes at age 35 in Salt Lake County for children of low income parents, based on parents' residence

Multiple Units Allowed



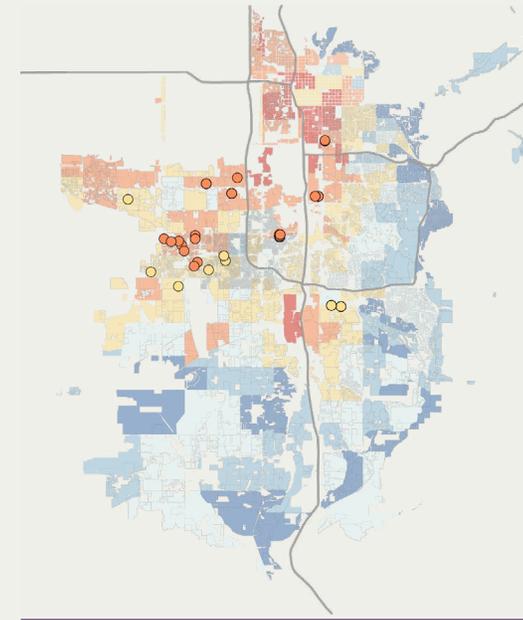
More affordable types of housing are more likely to be legal under current zoning in areas with lower economic mobility.

Single-Family Detached Only



It is illegal to build any dwelling other than a single-family detached home in many areas with higher economic mobility.

Public Housing



There are no public housing buildings in areas with above-average economic mobility.



In Salt Lake County, multi-unit housing is more likely to be allowed in areas with lower economic mobility for children of low-income parents. Areas with above average upward economic mobility are more likely to allow only single-family detached housing.

Source: Opportunity Insights, Salt Lake County, <https://www.opportunityatlas.org>

By fostering communities that embrace diversity and offer a variety of housing options, we can ensure that critical community professionals—such as teachers, firefighters, nurses, and grocery store workers—can live and work within the neighborhoods they serve. This allows us to build inclusive communities that reflect our shared values and provide opportunities for all.

Changes to local development policies may face resistance, so education, dialogue, and collaboration with the community are critical. Emphasizing the benefits of welcoming communities and illustrating how different housing options can harmoniously blend into existing neighborhoods can help overcome initial concerns.

Design Multimodal Transportation Systems

Many low-income individuals in Utah face significant barriers to accessing opportunities for themselves and their families due to transportation systems and land use patterns that rely on cars. The dominance of car-centric transportation systems has unintentionally created a societal framework where car ownership is a prerequisite for meaningful participation in the economy and society. However, the high financial burden of owning and maintaining a car becomes a significant challenge for many families. Unanticipated car repairs can disrupt their ability to commute to work or meet essential needs like grocery shopping. Nationally, households living in auto-dependent neighborhoods spend 25% of their income on transportation costs, compared to just 9% for those living in “location efficient” neighborhoods.²⁶ Additionally, individuals with disabilities, the elderly, and the young face difficulties due to the limited availability of alternative transportation options. Ensuring the availability, affordability, and effectiveness of multiple transportation modes for both local and regional trips will significantly increase opportunities and mobility for many Utah residents.

Planners can expand convenient, affordable, and effective transportation choices for Utahns of all backgrounds by encouraging supportive land use, multimodal transportation infrastructure, and improved public transportation service.

To design multimodal transportation systems, we recommend that you:

1. Foster supportive land use
2. Develop multimodal infrastructure
3. Implement reliable, efficient, and convenient service

1. FOSTER SUPPORTIVE LAND USE

- Develop compact centers where high-capacity transportation investments are or will be located. Situate employment opportunities, educational institutions, and affordable housing options in close proximity to public transportation stations.
- Revise zoning regulations and offer incentives to encourage the co-location of community-serving businesses like hospitals, schools, and grocery stores with more affordable housing options, including subsidized housing. Traditionally, zoning has aimed to separate uses considered incompatible. How can it be leveraged to integrate complementary uses and foster inclusive communities?
- Design buildings and parking to foster walkability. Large parking lots between the building and the street are significant barriers to walking, while on-street parking slows traffic and buffers pedestrians.

2. DEVELOP MULTIMODAL INFRASTRUCTURE

- Invest in public transportation and active transportation.
- Incorporate universal streetscape design for new and redesigned streets.²⁷ Elements of a universally designed street encompass wide sidewalks and pathways, well-defined areas for movement and rest, dedicated infrastructure for various modes of travel, tactile pavement for enhanced accessibility, pedestrian islands for safe crossings, consistent lighting for visibility, and green infrastructure for a sustainable and inviting environment.
- Implement traffic calming measures like narrower streets; on-street parking; bulbouts; raised, colored, or textured crosswalks; and pedestrian islands. Assess active transportation options with a focus on pedestrian experience and universal accessibility. Identify and address any barriers to access and mobility, such as those encountered on sidewalks, trails, pathways, and other pedestrian routes, to ensure inclusivity for individuals with disabilities.
- Create a strong street grid to improve connectivity and facilitate shorter trips on roads with lower speeds.
- Design bus stops and other public transportation facilities to include safety elements such as lights, visibility, and shelters.²⁸
- Increase maintenance, cleaning, and snow removal to improve the conditions of active transportation infrastructure and public transportation stops.



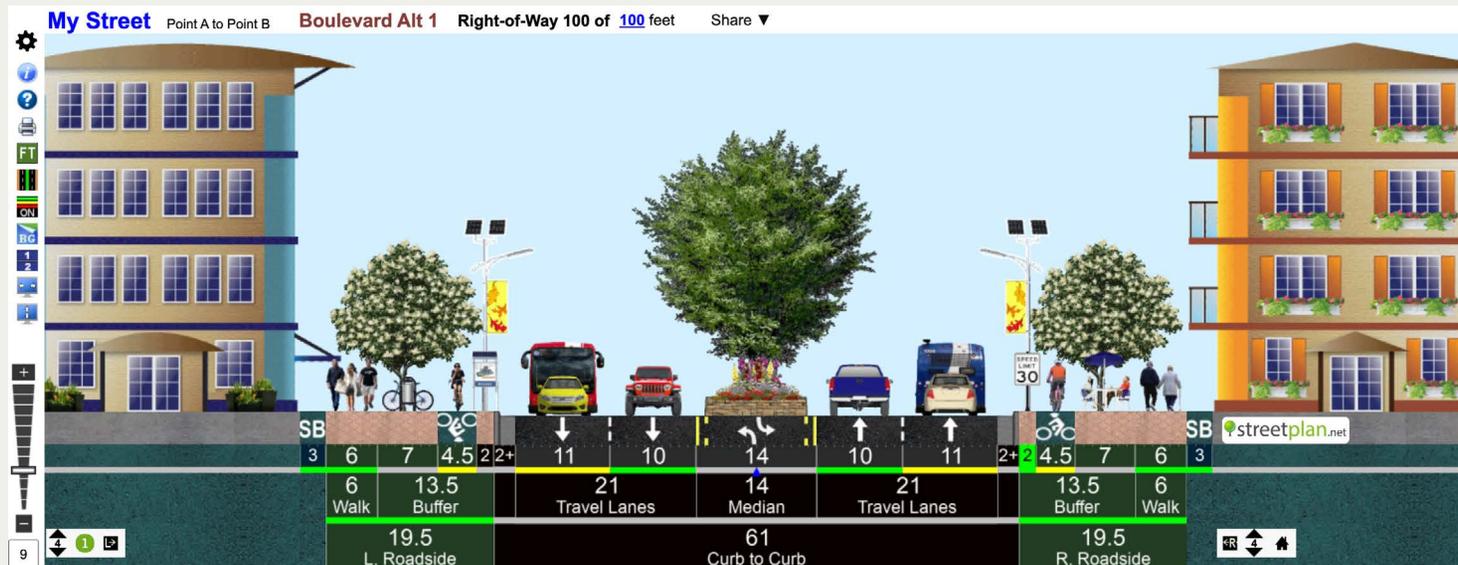
3. IMPLEMENT RELIABLE, EFFICIENT, AND CONVENIENT SERVICE

Prioritize the needs of riders who heavily rely on public transportation by providing reliable and high-quality service for community members who lack suitable alternatives. To do so, consider:

- Expanding the times public transportation service is available.
- Expanding public transportation service to industrial employment centers.
- Providing transit hosts to create a welcoming environment for riders and assist with ridership and compliance.
- Providing free fare public transportation service.

DESIGNING COMPLETE STREETS

The StreetPlan tool at streetplan.net is an excellent resource for designing and visualizing complete streets. This free online tool allows you to construct and modify different elements of a road including lanes, sidewalks, medians, setbacks, street furniture, and land uses. The tool incorporates guidance on best practices and allows users to easily experiment with various ways of transforming standard thoroughfares into complete streets. The interface makes instant adjustments and generates quick renderings, which makes it ideal for both internal work and public engagement.



THE UTAH STREET CONNECTIVITY GUIDE

The Utah Street Connectivity Guide is a valuable resource for creating opportunities for walking, biking, and rolling. This tool was jointly created by the Mountainland Association of Governments, Wasatch Front Regional Council, Utah Transit Authority, and Utah Department of Transportation to provide information on defining street connectivity and measuring connectivity in your area. The guide highlights the direct and indirect benefits that connectivity brings to a community and covers strategies and best practices for how to increase connectivity. Case studies on issues and considerations at different scales make this resource useful in a variety of contexts. See the guide at <https://envisionutah.org/street-connectivity-guide>

UTAH STREET CONNECTIVITY GUIDE



A RESOURCE FOR WHAT STREET CONNECTIVITY IS, WHY IT IS IMPORTANT - AND HOW TO INCREASE IT IN OUR COMMUNITIES



MARCH 2017



CREATING COMMUNITIES: A GUIDE TO WALKABLE CENTERS

The Creating Communities Guide is a free resource designed to help Utahns contribute to the creation of mixed-use, well-connected, compact centers. The guide covers the history and scales of centers in Utah, elements of a successful center, transportation considerations, and how to plan for centers. Chapter 3 “Moving To and Through Centers” explores regional transportation connections, complete streets, thoughtful parking, and more. Check it out at envisionutah.org/creating-communities-guide.

Supplemental Recommendations

The Envision Utah Welcoming Communities working groups delved further into the subject and proposed supplementary strategies that go beyond the scope of the three main recommendations highlighted in this guide. These working groups concentrated their efforts on addressing housing, economic opportunity, and recreation and open space.

1. HOUSING

a) Design and type of housing recommendations

- In affordable housing policy, address larger household size and more bedrooms for larger families and households.
- Consider developing affordable units that allow doors and walls to move, open, and close to create more bedrooms if needed.
- Consider creative and nontraditional housing types, such as shared housing and cohousing.
- Incorporate universal design²⁹ elements into housing development.

b) Government and administrative recommendations

- Develop inclusive progress metrics to track the outcomes of affordable housing strategies in general plans that are required by state code.
- Expand funding opportunities that do not require a project to be 'shovel ready' for rural communities that have limited planning capacity.
- Provide support services in or near housing developments. For example, CityFront Apartments provides resident support services.

c) Rental recommendations

- Expand subsidies and rental assistance for low-income Utahns.





2. ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY

a) Process recommendations

- Create more convenient and direct processes for licensure for refugees with specific training and skills such as doctors, pilots, and engineers.
- Provide assistance for permitting and administrative components of starting a new business to low income Utahns.
- Ensure that the types of jobs added to a community match the needs and abilities of existing community members.
- Develop programs that help build social capital.

b) Infrastructure recommendations

- Provide affordable shared spaces for small businesses to rent including kitchen incubators like Square Kitchen and Bridgerland Entrepreneurship Center, office space, or vehicle and trailer parking.
- Expand broadband service in low income and rural communities.

c) Access to education recommendations

- Diversify STEM education to include more blue-collar type positions such as biomedical manufacturing.
- Consider economic development in the local economic ecosystem rather than focusing solely on attracting large businesses from outside of the state.
- Provide occupational English language training.
- Invest in digital literacy.

3. RECREATION & OPEN SPACE

a) Development & design recommendations

- Utilize universal design³⁰ in recreation spaces.
- Consider cultural representation in design, messaging and signs, and programming.
- Invest in closing the gap in the urban tree canopy between more and less affluent communities.
- Utilize open spaces to help reduce the urban heat island effect.
- Provide flexible public spaces rather than prescribed uses.
- Encourage school districts to form joint agreements with cities to open their playgrounds and open spaces to the community during non-school hours.
- Open golf courses and other single use open spaces for general public uses.
- Encourage mixed land uses and density to help financially support parks and open spaces.

b) Active transportation recommendations

- Consider smooth surfaces for wheelchair access when developing trail surfaces.
- Incorporate tactile strips for the visually impaired.
- Develop pedestrian and cycling routes to parks.
- Develop first and last mile infrastructure from transit.
- Use a safe routes to schools model.
- Provide facilities that make it easier and more comfortable to access parks and recreation via active transportation such as bike and stroller parking and bathrooms.
- Remove or remediate infrastructure like freeways, rail lines, and industrial uses that inhibit access to parks.
- Incorporate universal design into active transportation development.
- Consider park trip generation in transportation planning, including transit planning.



c) Maintenance recommendations

- Keep multiple uses, including adaptive equipment, in mind when designing facilities and maintenance.
- Consider maintenance costs and requirements when developing new recreational facilities and parks.
- Compare park, trail, and other amenity conditions to demographic composition to target maintenance and upgrade efforts where they're needed most.

d) Data recommendations

- Develop an active transportation access dataset based on street design and comfort.
- Develop a dataset of park quality and design, differentiating between facility types.



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