CREATING COMMUNITIES: A GUIDE TO WALKABLE CENTERS

A RESOURCE FOR CREATING LIVE, WORK, PLAY, AND LEARN COMMUNITIES IN UTAH
HOW TO USE THE GUIDE

• Tool for city staff, officials, planners, and the general public

• To learn more about creating centers as a strategy for accommodating growth while maintaining our high quality of life

• The guide discusses the major components of centers & how to bring them to life in your community
INTRO TO CENTERS
HOW WE GROW MATTERS

Challenges

• Water
• Traffic
• Air Quality

• Housing
• Geographically constrained

Utah 2060 Population Estimates


WHAT IS A CENTER?

• A walkable, mixed-use location in a region, city, or neighborhood that provides a variety of amenities and services.

• All centers share 3 fundamental components:
  • A mix uses
  • Access to regional transportation
  • A walkable design
SCALES OF CENTERS

NEIGHBORHOOD CENTER

URBAN CENTER

CITY CENTER

METROPOLITAN CENTER
LOCATION IS IMPORTANT

• Centers provide the most benefit when connected as part of a network

• Centers of different scales should be distributed throughout the region

• Connect centers through robust transportation corridors

• Distribution allows centers to remain accessible and economically viable
CENTERS ARE A UTAH TRADITION

The above photos are used with permission, Utah State Historical Society.
WHAT’S IN A CENTER?
Good centers include more than one of the following uses:

- Housing
- Retail
- Office space
- Public spaces
- Civic uses

Centers are not:

- Strip malls
- Auto-oriented
• A key use to include in centers
• Residents have convenient access to amenities and transportation
• Centers create opportunities to increase the supply of affordable and missing middle housing

THE GATEWAY, SALT LAKE CITY
ZONING & FORM-BASED CODE

- Zoning for multiple uses allow a space to best respond to market shifts

- Form-based code
  - Regulates the design of buildings and streets rather than the use of spaces
  - Contributes to sense of place
  - Ensures development matches the desired urban form

CONCEPTUAL AREA MAP FOR THE DRAPER PRISON SITE
PHOTO CREDIT: POINT OF THE MOUNTAIN STATE LAND AUTHORITY
USABLE PUBLIC SPACE

• Valuable amenity, especially in urban areas
• Create safe and welcoming public spaces
USABLE PUBLIC SPACE

• Open space should be a few minutes walking distance from other destinations

• To be truly usable, include:
  • Walking paths
  • Benches
  • Plaques
  • Picnic tables
  • Shade covers
  • Lighting
  • And other community needs or desires

PHOTO CREDIT: UNIVERSITY PLACE
Today’s shoppers are spending less on goods and more on services and experiences like dining out, concerts, and festivals.
The best centers are unique to the locality and blend into the fabric of the surrounding community.

PARK CITY
WHAT'S IN A CENTER?

- Preserve communities
- Amplifying the existing character of the area
- Inform design standards through public engagement

THE CAIRNS, SANDY
PHOTO CREDIT: SANDY CITY
EXAMPLES OF COMMUNITY CULTURE
MOVING TO AND THROUGH CENTERS
• Locate centers near high-capacity transportation infrastructure

• To maintain walkability, locate the center to one side of facilities

• Buffer areas with high pedestrian use from transportation infrastructure
TRAFFIC CALMING STRATEGIES

Examples include decreased or narrower lanes, larger medians, traffic circles, one-way couplets, and extended curbs.
STREET CONNECTIVITY

• Connected streets provide safe and more direct routes for walking and biking

• Less connected streets force traffic into high-speed arterial roads
If connecting streets isn’t possible, consider adding pedestrian or bike connections.

Check out the Utah Street Connectivity Guide to learn more.
WALKABLE DESIGN

• Design spaces to be interesting for a person at walking pace, for example:
  • Eye-level signs
  • Buildings close to the street
  • Doors that open to the sidewalk
  • Clear pathways
  • Places to stop & sit

CENTER STREET, LOGAN
COMPLETE STREETS

• Streets that serve the needs of cars, bicyclists, and pedestrians

• Elements to include:
  • Well-marked crosswalks
  • Narrower driving lanes
  • Slower posted speeds
  • Center medians
  • On-street parking
  • Park strips
  • Artwork
  • Furniture

900 S 300 W, SALT LAKE CITY
• Parking detracts from walkability when located in large surface parking lots

• However, parking is essential for convenient auto access in a center

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THOUGHTFUL PARKING

• Parking in well-designed centers will be much lower than ITE recommendations
• Trends are showing less parking demand
• Parking should work to heighten overall connectivity, convenience, and walkability
STRATEGIES FOR IMPROVED PARKING DESIGN

CENTRALIZE PARKING
THE GATEWAY, SALT LAKE CITY

UTILIZE SHARED PARKING RESERVOIRS
CITY HALL, PARK CITY
STRATEGIES FOR IMPROVED PARKING DESIGN

PROVIDE ON-STREET PARKING
9TH & 9TH, SALT LAKE CITY

LOCATE SURFACE PARKING LOTS
BEHIND BUILDINGS
HOLLADAY VILLAGE, HOLLADAY

INCLUDE PEDESTRIAN NAVIGATION
TROLLEY SQUARE, SALT LAKE CITY
REGIONAL BENEFITS
REGIONAL BENEFITS

- Achieved by developing centers of different scales in strategic locations
- Ensure centers are well-connected
- A network of centers helps Utahns access:
  - Housing
  - Employment
  - Recreation
  - Education
  - Healthcare
  - Etc.
• Centers provide attractive, convenient spaces for new housing & other buildings in concentrated areas.

• Denser development reduces infrastructure costs by saving miles of roads, pipes, and utilities.

**Reducing the Urban Footprint**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Total Land Consumed</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Baseline</strong></td>
<td>90,955 Acres</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Vision</strong></td>
<td>51,201 Acres</td>
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</table>

- **Urban Vacant**
- **Urban Redevelopment**
- **Agricultural Land**
- **Woodland**
- **Other Greenfield**
MEETING HOUSING NEEDS

• Housing construction has not kept pace with population growth
• This is especially true in the Wasatch Front, which also hosts the majority of Utah jobs
MEETING HOUSING NEEDS

- A variety of housing types allows people to have flexibility and freedom to choose where they live throughout different stages of life.

- Centers create an opportunity to supply a variety of housing types in attractive places supported by transportation infrastructure.
• Centers expand travel options and reduce the cost of living

• A network of centers reduces the overall amount of driving by bringing destinations closer to people

• Housing, transportation, job, and education opportunities located in centers and nearby centers increases the accessibility of opportunities for Utahns
REGIONAL BENEFITS

• Local centers provide the opportunity for more Utahns to spend time walking or biking rather than in their car

• 40% of Utah’s air pollution comes from our vehicles

• Centers can reduce or eliminate the need for vehicle trips, promoting healthy activity and reducing poor air quality
• Research has shown that higher density developments that are well-connected to existing transportation infrastructure are less costly to the public sector.

• The Wasatch Choice Regional Vision forecasts that increasing the level of centered growth to match the vision would save local governments approximately $2.3 billion.

• Savings would come from needing to provide less infrastructure to serve new development.
FOSTERING SENSE OF PLACE AND COMMUNITY IDENTITY

• Centers provide an opportunity to create enjoyable, welcoming, and memorable gathering spots

• Help foster a sense of local identity and distinguish the community from neighboring areas

• Centers encourage social interaction, which helps cultivate a sense of safety and community

SHAKESPEARE FESTIVAL, CEDAR CITY
PHOTO CREDIT: KARL HUGH
PLANNING A CENTER
• Centers should be unique to the local community
• Have the goals of the community in mind
• Learn from other centers in similar settings
• Ultimately the process and resulting center must be their own

To learn more about how centers are assessed, see Wasatch Front Regional Council’s State of the Centers 2019 report.
• Consider the market when deciding what needs to be built in your community & where

• Look to existing retail-only spaces to meet other needs, especially housing
The public sector can play key roles in retrofitting commercial areas by:

- Acquiring & aggregating property
- Reducing parking requirements
- Improving walkability
- Adopting flexible zoning
- Adding civic uses, open spaces, or points of interest
- Using tax increment or other financing mechanism to fund infrastructure and affordable housing costs
REIMAGINING DOWNTOWNS

HOLLADAY BOULEVARD, 2002

HOLLADAY BOULEVARD, 2019
• Building a quality center can take many years

• The future is impossible to predict

• Establish and maintain a clear vision for the future, but allow for flexibility to adapt to changing circumstances
STRATEGIES TO INCREASE FLEXIBILITY

FORM-BASED CODE
Use principle-based ordinance wording and form-based code rather than focusing on use-based regulations.

STREET GRID
Build a connected street grid to support a variety of development types and intensities over time.

INTEGRATED DESIGN
Design standards can help a center look and feel integrated into the community, regardless of use.

FLEXIBLE FIRST FLOORS
Ground floors that can go from housing to commercial space offer the ability to adapt to changing economic realities.

TRANSITION ZONES
Create a transition zone between the center and residential areas that could be integrated into the center in the future.

MULTI-USE PARCELS
Ensure each subdivided parcel is of a shape and size that it could in the future be used for other purposes.
AFFORDABILITY

• Higher density development has the opportunity to save costs by using less land and infrastructure

• However, new construction is typically unaffordable for low-income residents or small businesses

• Attractive centers are in high demand, further driving up costs

• Incorporate the topic of affordability from the beginning stages of development

  Essential Workers Average Annual Income

  $38,360  $30,930  $28,890  $35,630  $24,500

  Firefighters  Preschool Teachers  Nursing Assistants  EMTs & Paramedics  Waiters & Waitresses
AFFORDABILITY

• Long-term affordability is often a challenge when relying on grants or loans

• Partners like the Utah Housing Corporation and other housing authorities specialize in funding opportunities and managing administrative work

• Consider mixed income housing strategies to keep the project economically viable while reducing community opposition
Residents often fear that higher density development leads to a decline in the neighborhood and decreased property values.

Another common fear is that high density development may increase crime, often rooted in stereotypes about multifamily residents.

Adding residents and visitors to the neighborhood raises concerns around traffic and crowding.
General messaging techniques include:

- Emphasize growth realities
- Speak to audience values
- Convey fiscal benefits
- Pursue placemaking
- Address myths

Engaging the public creates support and buy-in to the center
SCALES AND EXAMPLES
## Wasatch Choice Classification of Centers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Catchment</th>
<th>Floor Area Ratio</th>
<th>Housing Density</th>
<th>Building Height</th>
<th>Typical Land Uses</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Neighborhood Center</strong></td>
<td>2,500</td>
<td>0.35 to 1.0</td>
<td>6 to 25</td>
<td>1 to 3</td>
<td>Retail/Civic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>City Center</strong></td>
<td>25,000</td>
<td>0.5 to 1.5</td>
<td>10 to 50</td>
<td>2 to 5</td>
<td>Grocery/Restaurant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Urban Center</strong></td>
<td>100,000</td>
<td>0.75 to 4.0</td>
<td>20 to 100</td>
<td>4 to 10</td>
<td>Commerce/Regional Retail</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Metropolitan Center</strong></td>
<td>Entire Area</td>
<td>1.0+</td>
<td>40+</td>
<td>4 to 25</td>
<td>Unique Destinations</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The regional goal is to develop centers of various sales that are as close together as the market will permit but also widely distributed throughout the region.
NEIGHBORHOOD CENTERS

SODA ROW, DAYBREAK, SOUTH JORDAN

15TH & 15TH, SALT LAKE CITY
CITY CENTERS

DOWNTOWN LOGAN

DOWNTOWN ST. GEORGE
URBAN CENTERS

DOWNTOWN PROVO

FAIRBOURNE STATION, WEST VALLEY CITY
EMERGING CENTERS

- Taylorsville Center Point
- Millcreek City Center
- Murray City Center District
- Sandy The Cairns District
- Downtown South Salt Lake
- Heber City Envision 2050
- Layton Forward
- Vineyard Town Center
QUESTIONS AND DISCUSSION
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Envision Utah

2021