Empowering Communities Through the GNAR Initiative
QUESTION:
Have you heard of the GNAR Initiative?
Who is GNAR?

**Gateway**
...to a state or national park, national forest, BLM recreational area, protected cultural heritage site, or other prominent public lands

**Natural Amenity**
...community and economic development is closely tied to landscape and natural assets utilized for recreation, tourism, and outdoor-based leisure

**Region**
...part of a larger region with similar attributes AND/OR a region surrounding a resort-like community
Who is GNAR?

• Small town
  • 150-25,000 people

• Proximity to natural amenities
  • Within 10 miles of a national park, state park, national forest, lake, scenic river, etc.,

• Not in an urbanized area
  • Further than 15 miles from an urbanized area by road
• 1522 GNAR communities
  • 821 incorporated cities
  • 701 Census designated places
• 30.6% of Mountain West communities
• 61.1% of “small” Mountain West communities
What is GNAR?

Park City, Ut
What is a GNAR?

Tahoe, Ca
What is a GNAR?

Telluride, Co
GNAR-ly issues
GNAR(ly) Challenges

- Affordability and availability of housing
- Traffic/congestion/parking
- Short term/Long term rentals
- Climate change vulnerability/adaptation

Big city problems in small rural towns...
Big city problems in small rural towns...
Big city problems in small rural towns...
Identity Crisis

GNAR(ly) Challenges

A lot of GNAR communities say they don’t want to be like:
• Vail, Aspen, or Breckenridge, CO
• Jackson, WY
• Moab, UT

Or to be:
• “A tourist trap”
• A big city
• Many say they want to maintain their “small town-ness”

On the other hand, some are concerned about becoming:
• “An abandoned small town”
Help Wanted!

GNAR(ly) Challenges

**GNAR communities want assistance with their planning, development, and sustainability issues**

- Strong interest in:
  - Model ordinances
  - White papers on key topics
  - Case studies and lessons learned
  - Best practice guidelines for GNAR communities
  - Help with charrettes and design workshops
  - Models for regional collaboration
  - Information about different funding options
  - Forums (in person, webinars, etc) for peer-to-peer learning and sharing innovative ideas

- 95% said an online toolkit to support planning in GNAR communities would be helpful
GNAR-ly issues

![Graph showing recreation visits (in millions) for different national parks from 2012 to 2019]

- Arches
- Bryce Canyon
- Canyonlands
- Capitol Reef
- Zion

*Gateway and Natural Amenity Region Initiative*
GNAR-ly issues

~4.5 Million Visitors in 2017-2019
GNAR-ly issues
QUESTION:
What’s the main challenge your community is facing right now?
Zoom Towns: Why Your Last Vacation Getaway May Be Your Next Home

Irene S. Levine  Contributor

Travel

How the Zoom boom is changing the West
Remote workers are flocking to Western towns.

Jonathan Thompson
Jan. 1, 2021 | from the print edition

Technology & Ideas

Booming ‘Zoom Towns’ Should Ease City Housing Costs

With highly paid remote workers looking as if they’ll stay put in vacation spots, pricey urban areas might become more affordable.
Laying the Groundwork
“The GNAR Initiative exists to help western GNAR communities thrive and preserve the things that make them special.”
**Research**

- What are the challenges?
- What are the opportunities?
- What are communities doing to prepare and respond?

**Education**

- Getting students out working in GNAR communities
- Engaging students in research and developing tools
- Training for public officials and community members in GNAR communities

**Capacity Building**

- Technical Assistance
- On-the-ground planning, urban design, and collaboration assistance
- Online toolkit
- Tool and resource development
- Peer-to-peer learning forums
A GNAR-LY RESPONSE
CAPACITY BUILDING
CAPACITY BUILDING - The GNAR Network

- Peer-to-peer learning through facilitated interactions
- Community based network
- Aiming for meetings 2-4 times a year
- Join our email list to learn when our peer-to-peer meetings occur: gnar.usu.edu

The GNAR Network provides a forum where representatives of gateway communities can meet, share ideas, and identify immediate and high-priority needs that would allow them to make more informed decisions to protect the well-being of their residents and their local economies.
CAPACITY BUILDING - Online Toolkit

- 11 focus areas,
- Continually building new pages as critical topics and resources come up.
- Have a resource or topic area you think we could add to our toolkit? Contact liz.sodja@usu.edu
EDUCATION
EDUCATION - Webinar Series

- Two Completed Series
  - Fall 2020: Amenity Migration Trends
  - Spring 2021: Tools to Address Short-Term Rentals and Housing Affordability
EDUCATION - Webinar Series

- This Year:
  - Red Emerald Resilience Training Program

- Coming fall 2022:
  - Planning 101 Webinar Series

https://extension.usu.edu/iort/services/red-emerald-resilience-training-program
EDUCATION

● Blogs from practitioners and researchers relating things to communities
● Highlights new resources and research.

● Has your community done something innovative to address a challenge? Consider writing a blog!
● Sign up for our email list to find out when new blog come out!
EDUCATION - Linking Students to Communities

- Spring 2022 - CMP 6280 -GNAR Workshop Course
  - University of Utah Class tying into communities around the west. Example projects include:
    - Water conservation tools research for Springdale, UT
    - Short-term regulation research for Springdale, UT
    - Wildlife conservation ordinances and regulation research for Driggs, ID
    - Planning 101 webinar for Bonner County, ID
    - Water Conservation and Fire Planning Toolkit pages
The study that started it all!
- Funded by the National Institute for Transportation and Communities.
- Assessment of planning and development challenges in western gateway communities in 2018.
- Involved in-depth interviews with 33 public officials and a survey of more than 300 public officials in western gateway communities.
RESEARCH

GNAR COMMUNITY GENTRIFICATION & SPILLOVER EFFECTS:
Integrated Housing, Transportation, Land Use Challenges and Strategies in Gateway Communities

- Builds off of the first study
- Funded by the National Institute for Transportation and Communities
- Study on interconnected housing, transportation, and land use issues in western gateway communities/regions.
- Aims to develop tools, guidelines, and planning and policy recommendations to assist gateway communities in addressing interconnected housing, transportation, and land use concerns.
Future opportunities for involvement:
- Partnering to develop a library of community case studies
- Sponsor a case study within your own community
Hub
Interdisciplinary
Regional Scale
How can we help each other?

Scan the code to sign up for our email list!

GNAR.usu.edu