

**DRAFT**

# REGIONAL ACTIVITY CENTER



## 06 Introduction

The East Bench Regional Activity center is comprised of large educational, research, medical, and employment centers. These facilities are critical to the economic and educational vitality of the State, Region and City.

The area is also home to renowned cultural attractions that provide opportunities for exploring Utah's physical, artistic and historical resources. These facilities are a major defining element of the community, the City, and the State of Utah and create a Cultural District that is considered a destination, as well as a benefit to local businesses and residents.

The Regional Activity Center can have a significant impact on nearby neighborhoods. Future growth of the Regional Activity Center should be a coordinated effort between the City, the surrounding neighborhoods, and the activity center facilities that balances State and regional needs with the livability of adjacent neighborhoods.



## GUIDING PRINCIPLE

### Collaboration

Future growth of the East Bench regional activity center is a coordinated effort between the City, the surrounding neighborhoods, and the activity center facilities that balances State and regional needs with the livability of adjacent neighborhoods.

## City Planning Context

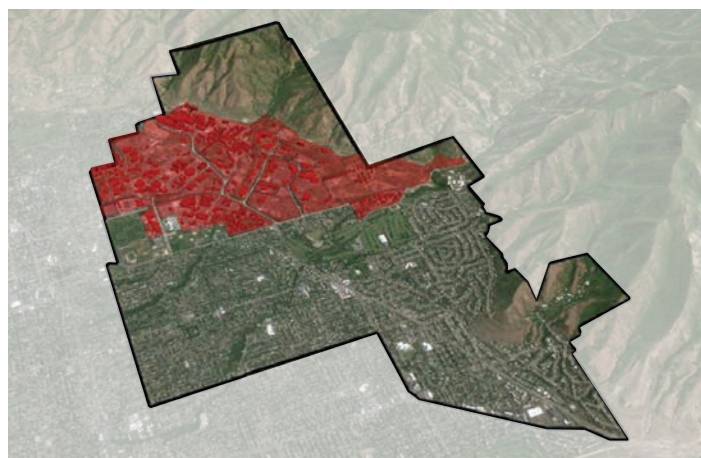
**Plan Salt Lake** recognizes the important role that Salt Lake City serves in being the focal point for culture, education, and the economy through the following initiatives:

- Promote and support Salt Lake City as a regional entertainment, artistic, and cultural center and destination.
- Promote and support Salt Lake City as an international tourism destination.
- Strengthen our role as an economic and social commerce center.
- Support quality jobs.
- Maintain the City's competitive economic edge
- Support entrepreneurship and innovation.
- Foster and support growth of the creative economy
- Integrate higher education into the social and economic fabric of the City

The major institutions and facilities in the East Bench Regional Activity Center play a leading role in the future of Salt Lake City as envisioned in Plan Salt Lake.

## Existing Conditions

The East Bench Regional Activity Center is comprised of the University of Utah, Research Park, Veterans Administration Hospital, and the Foothill Cultural District.



The Regional Activity Center occupies approximately 33% of the East Bench plan area. (Imagery: Google)

### University of Utah

One of the defining features of the East Bench Community is the University of Utah. The University is one of the most important cultural and educational hubs of the State of Utah, is a major driver of economic development and is one of the largest employment centers in the State. Its medical and research institutions are nationally renowned. Locally, the University provides educational opportunities, employment, and entertainment for East Bench residents.

The University is a State of Utah facility and is not required to comply with local (City) plans or ordinances; however, it has a strong influence on the character of the East Bench community. Due to close proximity of the campus, the East Bench is a prime housing location for students and the majority of traffic along Foothill Drive is traveling to and from the University of Utah and Research Park. There is a strong desire within the East Bench Community to closely integrate future growth of the University with City planning efforts in an effort to manage impacts to the nearby residential neighborhoods.





Several thousand commuters travel to these major regional facilities in the East Bench nearly every day. (Imagery: Google)

## University of Utah Statistics

**1,500** ACRES OF LAND

**412,962** SQ FT OF CLASS SPACE (2014)

**3,300** STUDENT HOUSING BEDS (2012)

**32,003** STUDENTS ENROLLED (FALL 2014)

**1.5%** PROJECTED YEARLY ENROLLMENT GROWTH RATE

**37,316** PROJECTED ENROLLMENT IN 2024

**17,899** FULL TIME EMPLOYEES (FALL 2014)

**55%** OF COMMUTERS TRAVEL BY AUTO

**28%** OF COMMUTERS TRAVEL BY TRANSIT

(Sources: Utah System of Higher Education Data Book 2015; University of Utah Master Plan, 2008; Student Housing Master Plan, 2012; University Commuter Survey, 2014)

## Research Park

Research Park was established in 1968 and was meant to stimulate economic development within the State. It was also intended to entice the students who graduated from the University of Utah to stay in Salt Lake City by providing research jobs. The jobs generated in Research Park are intended to support the functions of the University of Utah.

The property in Research Park is owned by the State of Utah. Generally, properties owned by the State are not regulated by local zoning laws; however, private development on property within Research Park is regulated by Salt Lake City Zoning and Building codes.

Research Park has been developed in a suburban business park model with large surface parking lots, limited support businesses (restaurants and supporting retail), and minimal bike and pedestrian facilities. There is also limited transit servicing the Park. Similar to the University of Utah, the growth of Research Park is a benefit to the region; however,





Research Park has been developed in a suburban model with large abundant parking lots, and minimal transit and pedestrian connections. (Imagery: Google)

this growth can impact the East Bench Community through an influx of additional traffic and obstructing the views of the nearby foothills.

## Cultural Attractions

There are a number of cultural destinations within the East Bench community that attract visitors from all over the region. Dance, theatre, and music can be found throughout the University of Utah most notably at Kingsbury Hall and Pioneer Theatre Company. There are also a number of attractions that bring people to the East Bench learn about their natural and cultural heritage.

Many of the cultural destinations within the East Bench have joined together to form a marketing organization and have branded themselves as the Foothill Cultural District.



A number of cultural destinations attract visitors from all over the region. (Imagery: Google)



The Foothill Cultural District is comprised of:

- Hogle Zoo
- This Is the Place Heritage Park
- The Tower at Rice Eccles Stadium
- Red Butte Garden
- Natural History Museum of Utah
- University Guest House Hotel and Conference Center
- Fort Douglas Military Museum
- Utah Museum of Fine Arts

In 2014, the Foothill Cultural District received over 2 million visitors with approximately 1 million people visiting Hogle Zoo alone. The number one issue in accommodating both present and future visitors to the district is parking and there is a strong desire among each of the facilities to develop a coordinated and connected transportation network. Many of the visitors to the Foothill Cultural District travel through the East Bench community along Foothill Drive. The facilities would like to cultivate relationships with the businesses along Foothill Drive and to enhance wayfinding.

## Veteran's Administration Hospital

The Veteran's Administration Hospital, located at 500 South Foothill Drive, is owned and managed by the federal government. The facility provides medical services to veterans with a service area covering all of Utah and portions of Wyoming and Nevada. Foothill Drive provides the primary access to the facility from I-80 and I-215 as it is the easiest route for individuals who are not familiar with the area.



The Veteran's Administration Hospital employs approximately 2,200 people, making it a major commuter destination in the East Bench.

# MOVING FORWARD > > >

The following are the guiding principles and associated initiatives that are intended to help guide the East Bench Community into the future. The initiatives include general policies, as well as specific strategies and goals. Applicable Plan Salt Lake policies are also included that help inform these guiding principles and initiatives.

## GUIDING PRINCIPLE R-01

### COLLABORATION

**Future growth of the East Bench regional activity center is a coordinated effort between the City, the surrounding neighborhoods, and the activity center facilities that balances State and regional needs with the livability of adjacent neighborhoods.**



*Plan Salt Lake* initiatives supported by this action:

#### Neighborhoods

- Maintain neighborhood stability and character.

#### Arts & Culture

- Promote and support Salt Lake City as a regional entertainment, artistic, and cultural center and destination.
- Promote and support Salt Lake City as an international tourism destination.
- Ensure access to, and support for, a diversity of cultural facilities citywide.

#### Economy

- Integrate higher education into the social and economic fabric of the City.
- Strengthen our role as an economic and social commerce center.
- Support quality jobs.
- Maintain the City's competitive economic edge.
- Support entrepreneurship and innovation.
- Foster and support growth of the creative economy.

#### Government

- Encourage collaboration and partnerships to ensure efficiency and responsiveness.
- Collaborate to set short and long term priorities and invest accordingly.

## INITIATIVE R-1.1

### Support a Mix of Uses

The City, in partnership with the regional facilities, should evaluate zoning changes that would allow a mix of land uses that specifically support the Regional Activity Center. Such supportive uses include small scale retail, restaurants, and grocery stores.



Additional supportive uses could reduce automobile trips during the day by employees and visitors.



## INITIATIVE R-1.2

## Integrate Future Projects with City Planning Efforts

The City, in conjunction with all of the regional facilities, should establish a communication and coordination protocol when planning and designing future projects and should work together to integrate City Planning efforts with State and Federal projects. These efforts include, but are not limited to, increasing transit (both regional and local), designing projects to be visually compatible with the adjacent neighborhoods, managing automobile traffic in adjacent neighborhoods, increasing housing on and near the University to reduce commuter traffic, protecting the adjacent foothills from development encroachment, protecting view sheds, increasing safe pedestrian and bicycle access to these centers from the residential communities to the south and implementing the City's housing, open space, pedestrian, bicycle, and transportation plans.



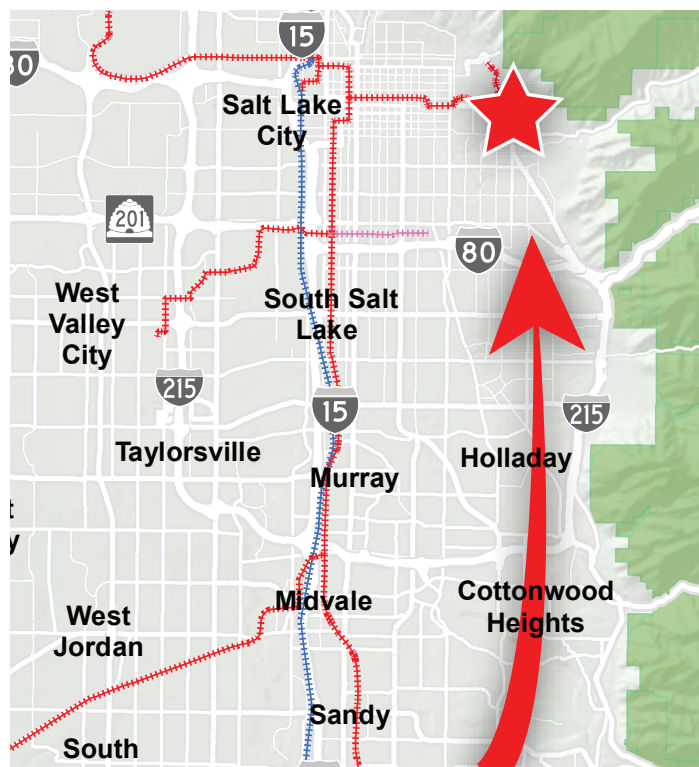
If the existing University student housing at 1945 E Sunnyside Ave (shown above) is redeveloped, the City should coordinate with the University to ensure the development integrates with the Open Space plan for the Transvalley Corridor and promotes pedestrian and bicycling from the housing development to the University.

## INITIATIVE R-1.3

## Increase Transit Options

There has been a strong focus on providing transit options from the southwest area of the Salt Lake Valley to the East Bench Regional Activity Center; however, limited transit options exist to and from the southeast. The City, regional facilities, and Utah Transit Authority should work to provide additional options that serve those traveling to and from the southeast area of the Salt Lake Valley, as well as those living directly south in the East Bench Community.

Providing an efficient transit system does not stop at moving people to the Regional Activity Center. Oftentimes, people prefer to drive simply because there are not efficient options between the various facilities. There needs to be an increased focus on providing efficient transportation alternatives within the Regional Activity Center itself.



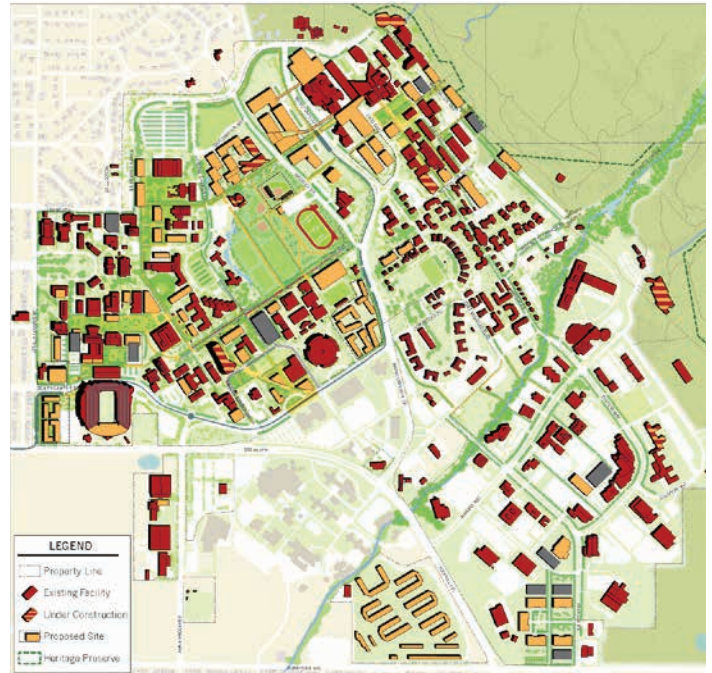
Additional transit options from the southeast areas of the valley could reduce commuter and visitor vehicle traffic to the Regional Activity Center.



## INITIATIVE R-1.4

## Manage Growth According to Infrastructure Demand

The facilities in the Regional Activity Center will continue to grow. This growth is a positive contribution to the State and Region; however, it can strain City resources and impact the livability of adjacent neighborhoods. Growth of the regional facilities should be managed according to ability of the transportation and utility infrastructure to meet that growth. When studies and projections related to future projects show that the project will impact the infrastructure level of service, the facilities should work with the City and any other partnering agencies for a solution prior to construction.



The University of Utah Master Plan (2008 & 2010 Update) details a variety of potential growth opportunities within the University's existing boundaries. These growth opportunities are shown in orange on the map.

## INITIATIVE R-1.5

## Respect Natural Assets

The Regional Activity Center is situated at the base of the Wasatch Foothills and is bisected by the Red Butte riparian corridor. Buildings located near the base of the foothills, at higher elevation levels, should decrease in height in an effort to preserve views of the foothills. Future development near the foothills should also integrate pedestrian and bicycle connections to the foothill trail system. The City and the regional facilities should develop a partnership for the purpose of implementing the Salt Lake City Open Space Plan related to the Red Butte Creek Corridor.



The landscaping and sidewalks at the Utah Natural History Museum link into the Bonneville Trail System. Other future development near the foothills should integrate pedestrian and bicycle connections to the foothill trail system.



## INITIATIVE R-1.6

## Improve Pedestrian and Bicycle Connectivity

There are many streets, particularly in Research Park, that lack sidewalks. Future development of Research Park should include the necessary infrastructure that encourages active circulation within the park.

There also needs to be an increased focus on providing safe pedestrian and bicycle connections between the major facilities. Many of the facilities within the Regional Activity Center do not have functional connections. For example, medical students studying at the University also work at the Veteran's Administration Hospital and many of the facilities in Research Park are closely integrated with research functions at the University. All roadway infrastructure projects should be coordinated with these major institutions to ensure safe pedestrian and bicycle access between the facilities.



Research Park developed as a car oriented, suburban style office park and in many places lacks the sidewalks and bike paths that would encourage active circulation in the park and to other regional facilities.

## INITIATIVE R-1.7

## Support the Growth of Research Park as an Innovation District

Research Park is a key driver of economic development for the City and State of Utah. The City should work with the University of Utah to continue development of Research Park as a high tech, bioengineering and research district. Uses in the Park should be closely integrated with the University and there should be a mix of uses within the Park that support the daily needs of the employees. The existing development pattern of the Park is auto-oriented with large surface parking lots and minimal pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure. Redevelopment should allow for and encourage pedestrian, bicycle and transit uses to and within the Park. Research Park's major contribution to the State's economy should be highlighted and used as a tool for requesting additional public transit options that tie into the regional and local transportation network.



## INITIATIVE R-1.8

**Strengthen the Identity of the Cultural District**

The East Bench Regional Activity Center is the jewel of the State in regards to cultural attractions. Hogle Zoo, This is the Place Heritage Park, the Natural History Museum, Red Butte Gardens, and the University Museum of Fine Arts brings visitors to the East Bench from all over the region. These facilities should be embraced by the City in an effort to create a connected cultural and natural history district with an emphasis on the following:

**Improve Access to the Cultural Amenities**

Hogle Zoo, This is the Place State Heritage Park, the Natural History Museum, and Red Butte Gardens should be better connected to enhance the visitor experience. A centralized parking structure with a shuttle service to each facility and better access to the facilities from the Bonneville Shoreline Trail are ways that may accomplish this.



The Bonneville Shoreline trail can be improved with the installation of interpretive educational and wayfinding signs.

**Incorporate the Bonneville Shoreline Trail into the District**

In conjunction with all Bonneville Shoreline Trail stakeholders, the facilities could improve the Bonneville Shoreline trail or an adjacent trail and transform it into a learning experience in conjunction with the programming of each facility. For example, interpretive signs could be placed along the trail identifying wildlife habitat,



The Bonneville Shoreline Trail runs next to and through four of the largest cultural attractions in the Regional Activity Center. The trail could be further integrated with these facilities and visitors could be encouraged to visit other attractions by way of the trail.



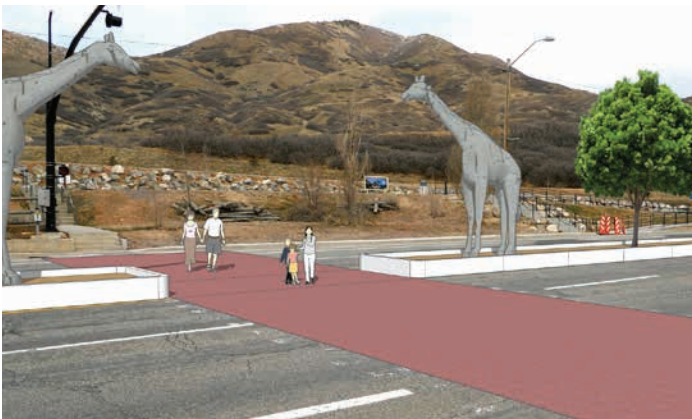
vegetation, geologic features, and historical points of interest. The facilities could encourage visitors to walk the nature trail and visit multiple facilities during their stay.

### **Improve Corridors**

Foothill Drive, 500 South and Sunnyside Avenue should showcase the cultural district and provide clear direction on how to access the facilities. In particular, Sunnyside Avenue, east of Foothill should incorporate public way design features that define and enhance the district, such as unique lighting, street banners, and public art elements.

### **Form Partnerships**

Foothill Drive serves as the gateway to the East Bench cultural district. As such, there could be a great benefit in developing partnerships between the cultural facilities and the businesses along and near the Foothill Drive corridor. Development of a corporate partner program could allow the local businesses to advertise at the facilities and encourage visitors to stop and eat or shop. The fees that the facilities collect through the program could be used to fund projects that support and enhance the cultural district.



Public way design features, such as art installations in street medians, can help define and enhance the cultural district.