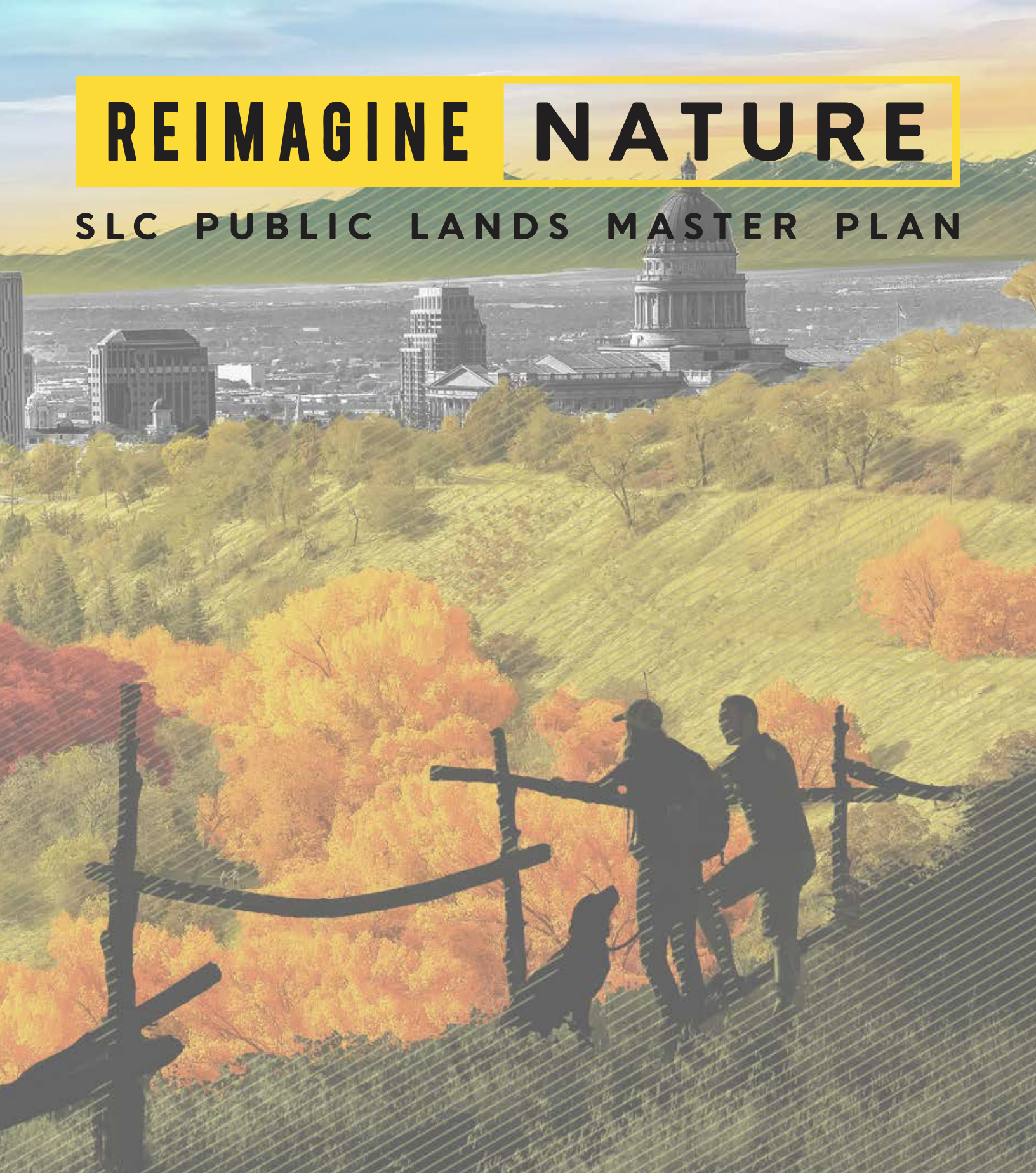


# REIMAGINE NATURE

## SLC PUBLIC LANDS MASTER PLAN



**Public Lands**

Parks | Trails & Natural Lands | Urban Forestry | Golf

**FINAL PLAN 01/2022**

Prepared by

**DESIGNWORKSHOP**

# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

## SLC PUBLIC LANDS PROJECT TEAM

Kristin Riker, Director of Public Lands  
Nancy Monteith, Senior Landscape Architect, Project Manager  
Lewis Kogan, Public Lands Deputy Director  
Lee Bollwinkel, Parks Division Director  
Tony Gliot, Urban Forestry Division Director  
Matt Kammeyer, Golf Division Director  
Luke Allen, Community Outreach, Events, and Marketing Manager  
Amy Nielson, Community Events Manager  
Katie Riser, Volunteer, Outreach & Education Coordinator  
Valerie Huitzil, Graphic Design Technician  
Leah Smith, Special Events Permit Coordinator  
Suzy Lee, Parks Usage Coordinator  
Kezia Lopez, Office Facilitator

## SALT LAKE CITY STAFF

Nick Norris, Planning Director  
Allison Rowland, Public Policy Analyst II, City Council  
Sarah Benj, Salt Lake City American Disability Act (ADA) Coordinator  
Michael Guymon, Engineer, Public Utilities  
Celina Milner, Policy Advisor for Diversity and Human Rights  
Kyle Strayer, Civic Engagement Team

## PARKS, NATURAL LANDS, URBAN FORESTRY AND TRAILS ADVISORY BOARD

Ginger Cannon, At-large  
Polly Hart, At-large  
Jenny Hewson, At-large  
Elliot Mott, At-large former  
Fred Fife, District 2 former  
Melanie Pehrson, District 2  
Phil Carrol, District 3  
Gwen Springmeyer, District 3 former  
Brianna Binnebose, District 5  
Katie Davis, District 6 former  
CJ Whittaker, District 6  
Samantha Finch, District 7

## UNIVERSITY OF UTAH COLLEGE OF CITY AND METROPOLITAN PLANNING

Dr. Ivis García, Assistant Professor  
Elizabeth Arnold, Westside Studio Teaching Assistant  
Students of Community Engagement in Planning  
Students of West Side Studio

## DESIGN WORKSHOP

Anna Laybourn  
Amanda Jeter  
Mary Oliver  
Michael Stout  
Ashton Breeding  
Nino Pero  
Renee Ludlam

## ETM ASSOCIATES

Tim Marshall  
Desiree Liu

# CONTENTS

<b>PREFACE</b> .....	<b>I</b>
Executive Letter .....	vii
Plan on a Page .....	viii
<b>CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION</b> .....	<b>1</b>
Background .....	3
Plan Horizon .....	3
Planning Process .....	4
How To Use This Plan .....	5
Plan Framework Diagram .....	6
Past and Present .....	7
System Facts .....	9
Challenges .....	11
Plan Components & Relevant Plans .....	15
Needs Assessment Snapshot .....	17
Community Engagement Summary .....	19
<b>CHAPTER 2: FRAMEWORK</b> .....	<b>31</b>
Master Plan Vision Statement .....	33
Plan Values .....	33
Plan Goals .....	35
Transformative Projects Overview .....	41
<b>CHAPTER 3: SUSTAIN</b> .....	<b>43</b>
Sustain: Environmental Health & Sustainability .....	45
Sustain: Strategies & Policies Overview .....	49
Transformative Project 1 - Put Environment First .....	51
Transformative Project 2 - Grow Our Urban Forest .....	57

<b>CHAPTER 4: CONNECT</b> .....	<b>63</b>
Connect: Accessible & Connected Green Spaces .....	65
Connect: Strategies & Policies Overview .....	71
Transformative Project 3 - Connect Mountains To The Lake .....	77
Transformative Project 4 - Just Five Minutes From Here .....	83
<b>CHAPTER 5: WELCOME</b> .....	<b>89</b>
Welcome: Active & Inclusive Places .....	91
Welcome: Strategies & Policies Overview .....	95
Transformative Project 5 - Reimagine Neighborhood Parks .....	97
Transformative Project 6 - Coming Soon To A Park Near You ...	107
<b>CHAPTER 6: PROTECT</b> .....	<b>113</b>
Protect: A Commitment To Stewardship .....	115
Protect: Strategies & Policies Overview .....	121
Transformative Project 7 - Revive Our River .....	123
Transformative Project 8 - Sustaining Our Stories .....	131
<b>CHAPTER 7: GROW</b> .....	<b>139</b>
Grow: Expand Our Park System .....	141
Parks Classification Tables .....	145
Future Investments and Recommendations by Planning Area ...	149
Grow: Strategies & Policies Overview .....	157
Transformative Project 9 – Downtown Comes Alive Outside ...	160
Transformative Project 10 - Welcome To The Green .....	165
<b>CHAPTER 8: ACTION STRATEGIES</b> .....	<b>175</b>
Next Steps .....	177
Approaches For Action .....	181

## APPENDIX DOCUMENTS:

- A. Public Engagement Reports
- B. 2019 Needs Assessment

# REIMAGINE NATURE

## Letter from Mayor Erin Mendenhall

Salt Lake City's natural realm is a shared sanctuary for people, ecologies and wildlife - a legacy landscape shaped by Native Americans, pioneers, flora and fauna including 72 mammal species of the Wasatch Front, and nearly 200,000 city residents represented by 120 diverse spoken languages. While the mountains, plains, wetlands and Great Salt Lake of the valley inspire humankind and provide wildlife habitat, impacts from climate change, poor air quality, increasing population, historic drought and aging infrastructure threaten the city's ability to protect nature. Throughout the city there are disparate levels of engagement in the outdoors, requiring attention to differing interests, needs, access, and investments. We must intentionally correct for historic racism and classism and providing people access to opportunities across the city so as not to inherently perpetuate disparities. The state of the city's extraordinary public lands is at a crossroads and all these factors create a need for a bold and transformational plan to guide us.


The first citywide public lands master plan in 29 years, Reimagine Nature delivers a vision for the next 20 years and is informed by over 12,000 community members who shared hopes and dreams for play, civic pride, nature, outdoor fitness, greening, and more in the city. The public process elevated conversations of transitioning Public Lands from a Division to a City Department that would allow for a more robust planning arm focused on projects and ecological services. Salt Lake City's Public Lands Department will now include two collaborative groups to support the planning and operations of the four divisions of parks, trails and natural lands, golf and urban forestry. This move also supports the four objectives of my 2021 Plan: Recharge, Reset, Rebound in keeping pace with the city's growth, leading environmental stewardship, listening equitably to our communities and supporting employee well-being.

Coinciding with the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, public engagement required adaptation, creativity, and support from the many community partners and advocates that we thank for their immeasurable contributions as ambassadors. Through this health crisis we witnessed increased visitation to public lands, learning that parks were a refuge to many – a community asset for resilience and essential service.

Reimagine Nature reflects core community values for public lands: equity, stewardship and livability. Conversations around equity in public lands reflect nationwide and neighborhood trends to provide additional resources to public spaces and programs serving low and middle-income households who often struggle to access quality natural experiences as part of their daily lives. Calls for stewardship of public lands came across emphatically with desires to take care of what we have and protect invaluable pieces of our natural community. Concerns for the livability of Salt Lake City are also top of mind in the midst of many environmental and climate challenges, rising cost of living, urgent social issues of homelessness and keeping up with population growth.

With dedication, passion, and foresight to conserve Salt Lake City's greatest natural asset, it is our hope that this document directs us in responsibly managing the public's lands and waters in ways that honor community aspirations and support thriving plants and wildlife. The next page provides a summary snapshot of the plan's key elements.

Sincerely, Mayor Erin Mendenhall



Natural lands along the Jordan River provide essential riparian habitat.

# REIMAGINE

## GOALS & 10 TRANSFORMATIVE PROJECTS:

### VISION:

SLC Public Lands Master Plan vision proposes big ideas to transform and sustain quality outdoor spaces that are welcoming, safe and walkable; ensuring people, wildlife and ecosystems benefit from fair investment of Salt Lake City resources over the next 20 years.

### VALUES:



EQUITY



LIVABILITY



STEWARDSHIP

**SUSTAIN**  
environmental health & sustainability




1) Put Environment First

**CONNECT**  
accessible & connected green spaces





3) Connect Mountains to the Lake

**WELCOME**  
active, authentic & inclusive places




5) Reimagine Neighborhood Parks

**PROTECT**  
a commitment to stewardship




7) Revive Our River

**GROW**  
expand our Public Lands system




9) Downtown Comes Alive Outside

**2) Grow Our Urban Forest**



**4) Just 5 Minutes From Here**



**6) Coming Soon to a Park Near You**



**8) Sustaining Our Stories**



**10) Welcome to the Green**




# INTRODUCTION

CHAPTER

## LOOKING FORWARD TO A GREENER HORIZON

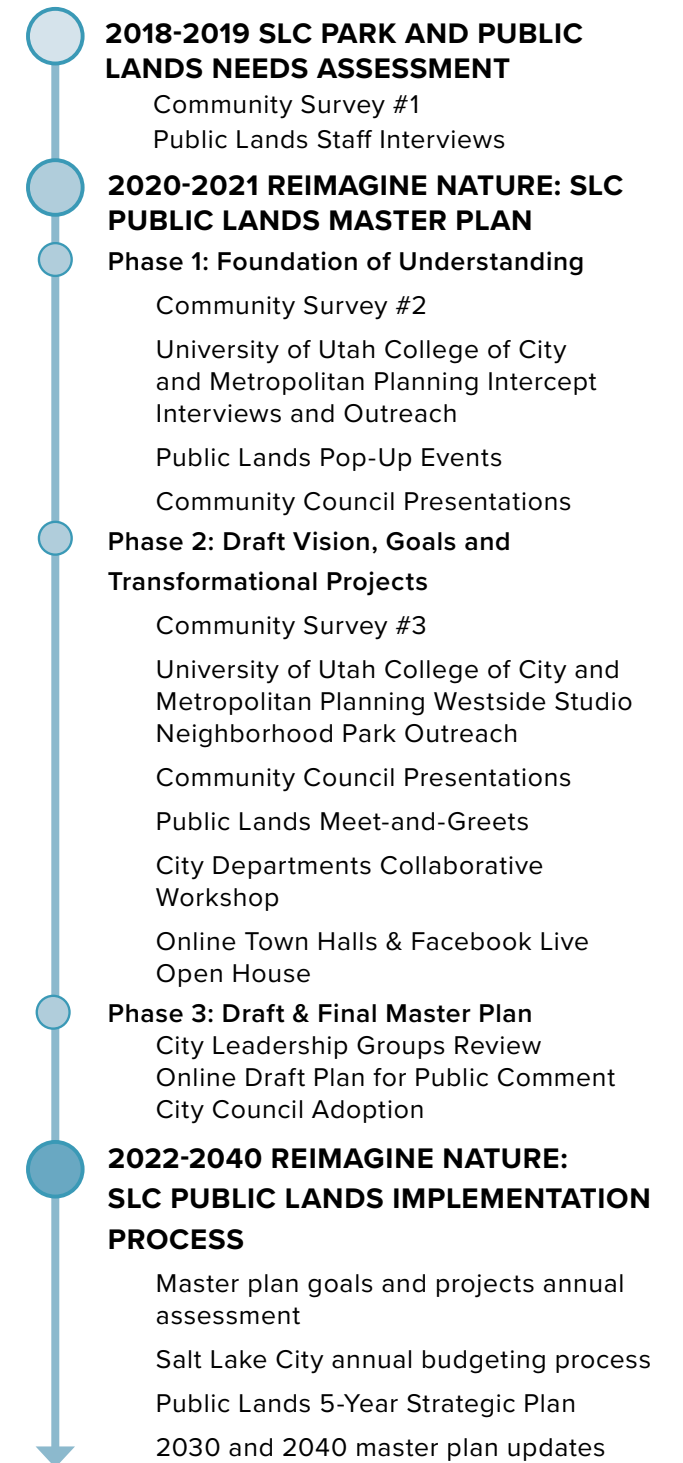
We have a heightened awareness that complex factors such as ecological systems, historical influence, and social equity impact planning for Salt Lake City's Public Lands. Reimagine Nature is an opportunity to redefine approaches for the City's parks, trails, golf courses and natural lands as environmental and social assets. It sets forth a vision for Public Lands to champion initiatives that improve air quality, address public health disparities, make a more resilient future in the face of climate change and provide green space to balance rapid urban development.



Reimagined nature in an urban setting is evident when taking in the treetop views of SLC and the surrounding mountains.



# REIMAGINE NATURE PLANNING PROCESS TIMELINE



REIMAGINE NATURE ENGAGEMENT NUMBERS:  
**12,159**  
 PEOPLE PROVIDED INPUT

## IT'S IN OUR NATURE

### PLAN HORIZON 2020-2040

Salt Lake City's 88 parks, 86,500 urban forest trees, six golf courses and thousands of acres of natural landscapes are the culmination of more than a century of committed care and preservation. As Salt Lake City welcomes another 30,000 residents over the next 20 years (by 2040) and as the diversity and health of our city's nature is threatened by the impacts of climate change, a plan to grow and protect public lands and the quality of life those natural landscapes afford to all living things is needed. This plan provides a vision to aspire to for

the next two decades and outlines specific direction for near-term actions.

### PLANNING PROCESS

Reimagine Nature is one component of a larger planning effort to direct the future of SLC Public Lands. The planning process includes the *2019 Needs Assessment*,<sup>1</sup> an inventory of the Public Lands system; Reimagine Nature, which outlines goals and strategies; and will be completed with detailed Public Lands 5-Year Strategic Plans, a series of 5-year

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.slcdocs.com/parks/SLCPLNeedsAssessment.pdf>

working plans updated annually by Public Lands Staff.

A comprehensive community engagement process informed every step of the plan development, including a statistically valid resident survey and other outreach to inform the *2019 Needs Assessment*.<sup>2</sup> Community member, technical expert, partner staff and stakeholder input guided the Reimagine Nature plan content through the course of the planning process. The timeline to the right highlights the phases and engagement activities.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid*

# HOW TO USE THIS PLAN

Elements of the master plan have been refined by the public to ensure the language reflects the community's hopes, concerns and desires for the future of public lands. Over the past year, more than 12,000 community members have helped direct a vision and identify what needs to be improved for our natural lands, urban forests, city parks and city golf courses.

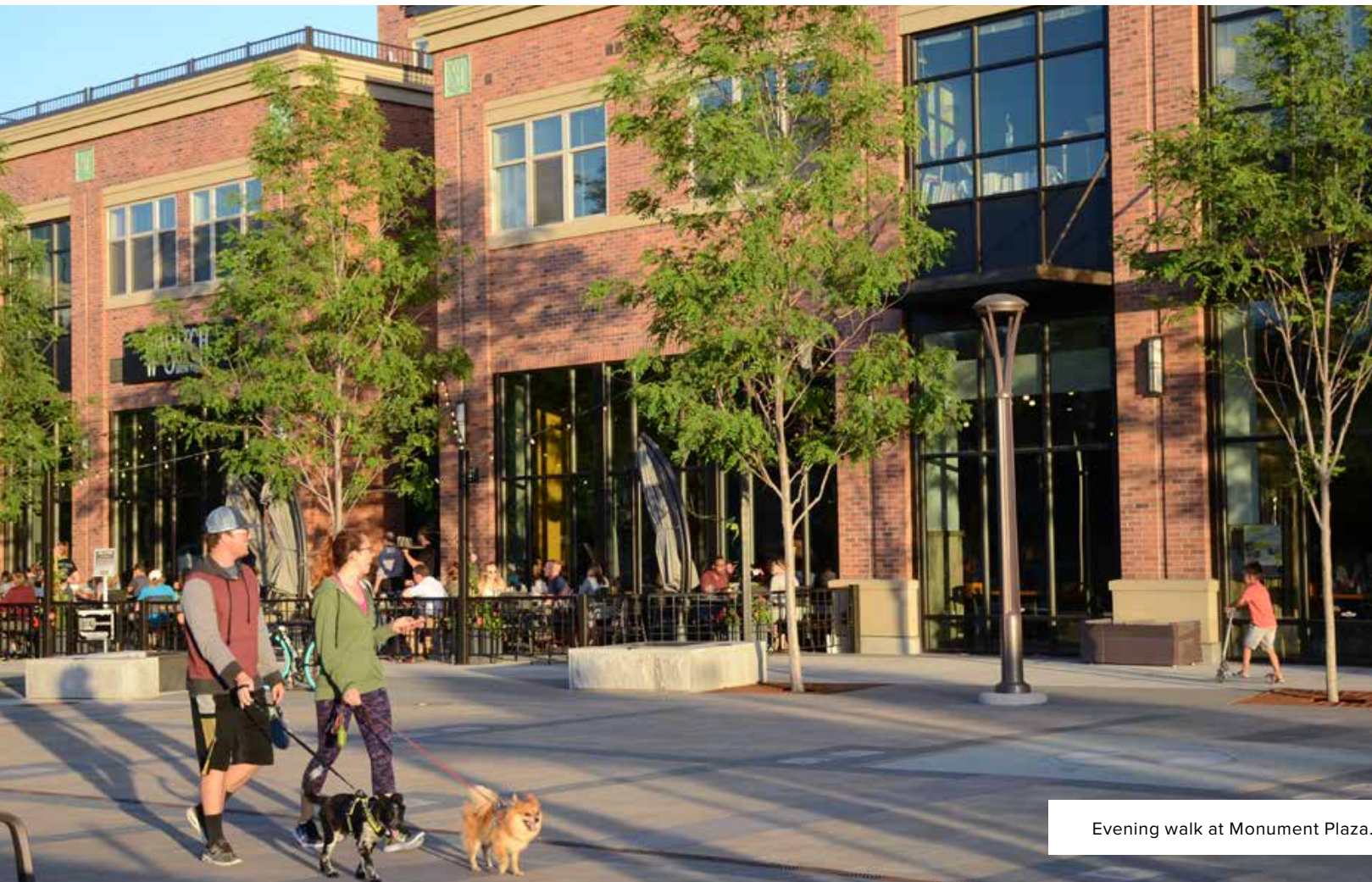
The intention is to establish collective aspirations for the future that create strategic planning and alignment. This is meant to be flexible to adapt to changing

circumstances and will require significant additional effort, resources, and funding to achieve over a ten-year period or more, with some of the actions already underway.

The master plan is a compilation of visions, values, goals, projects, strategies and actions. These elements are organized in a hierarchy ranging from broad ideals to detailed policies and are highlighted in Figure 2 to the right.

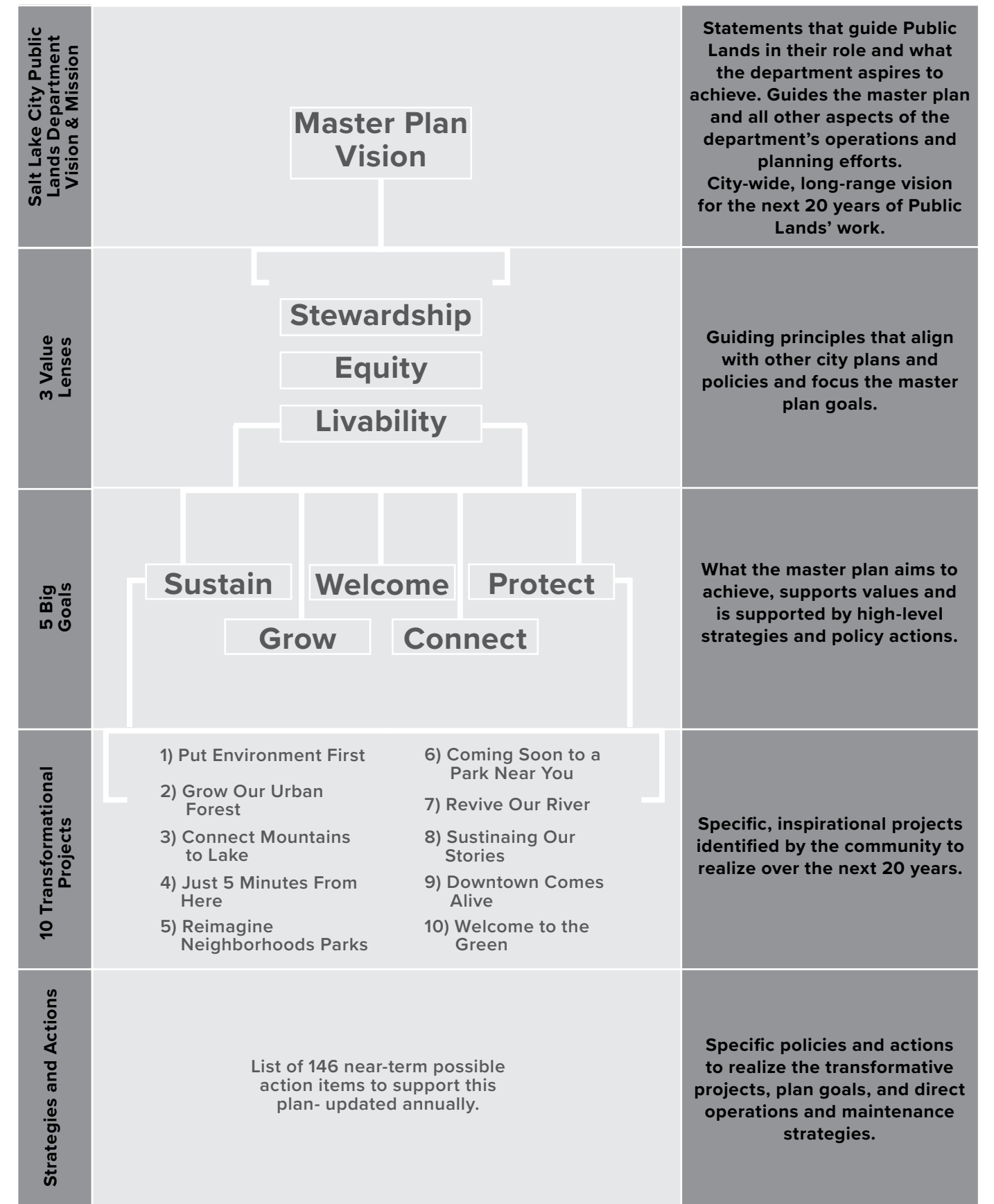


Monument Plaza in Sugar House.



Evening walk at Monument Plaza.

Figure 2: Master Plan framework and definitions







Public Lands are integral and essential to life in Salt Lake City.

**Salt Lake City’s natural lands, urban forest, city parks and golf landscapes reflect the scenic beauty of the Great Salt Lake ecosystem and are the culmination of more than a century of preservation and cultivation since the city’s founding in 1847.**

## PAST & PRESENT

### THE NATURE OF SALT LAKE CITY

Ancient Lake Bonneville once covered the present-day mountain valley of Salt Lake City and beyond into Utah, Nevada and Idaho. The Great Salt Lake remains the last remnant of Lake Bonneville in the Intermountain West and frames the northwest part of the city. The Wasatch Mountains stand sentinel to the east and north and the Oquirrh Mountains (pronounced “oaker”) to the west. This geologic history gives shape and form to the present-day landscapes of the city’s Great Basin, marshlands, mudflats, ancient lakebed benches,

drainages and cottonwood galleries, foothills, narrow canyons and mountain peaks, some of which rise 6,000 feet from the basin floor.

### THE HISTORY OF PEOPLE AND PLACE

Five tribes including the Shoshone, Piute, Ute, Goshute and Navajo inhabited the territory that later became Utah. The lands where desert meets lake and surrounding wetlands adjacent to Salt Lake City hosted American Indian habitation beginning 10,000 years ago through European settlement. Explorers, Mormon settlers, farmers and miners heading to the California gold rush traveled to present day Salt Lake City in the

mid-1800s. Settlers laid out tree-lined city streets in a Jeffersonian-grid originating on the southeast corner of Temple Square and the city’s earliest parks, including the 10-acre, square-shaped Pioneer Park, follow this form. The city acquired additional parks and natural areas in the surrounding foothills and along creeks and rivers - within neighborhoods and as larger regional and community destination parks. The natural and cultural histories of this place are embedded in the parks, trails, urban forest, natural areas and bucolic golf landscapes which remain today and enhance the quality of life for current-day residents.

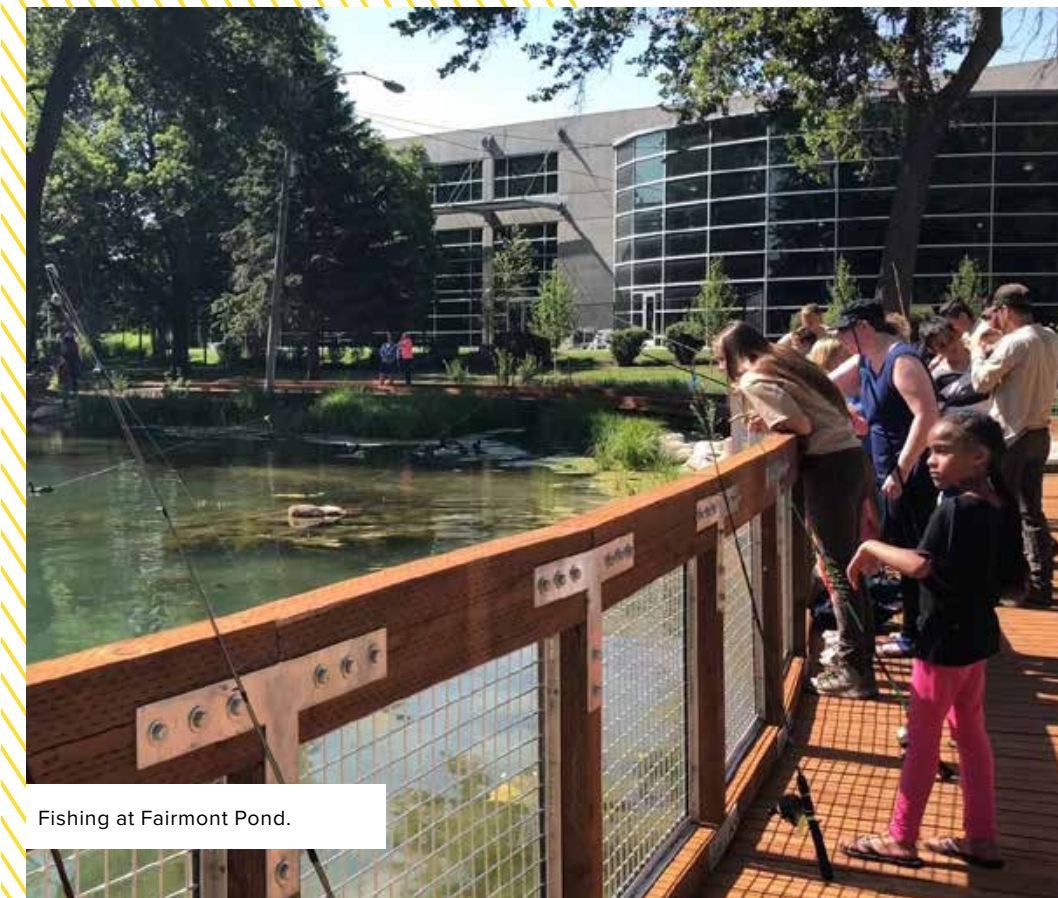
## SLC PUBLIC LANDS DEPARTMENT MISSION & VISION

### MISSION: What We Do

We enhance the livability of the urban environment through a diverse network of natural open spaces, recreational opportunities, park facilities, city golf landscapes, the city cemetery and the urban forest to ensure that the resources under our management are carefully stewarded for future generations.

### VISION: What We Aspire to Achieve

A vibrant system of connected public landscapes and living infrastructure that enhances the community’s identity, sense of place and quality of life.



Fishing at Fairmont Pond.

## PRESENT SYSTEM

**NATURAL LANDS**

Walking, jogging and hiking are top activities in areas managed by the Trails and Natural Lands Division such as the Fife Wetland Preserve and the 6,423-acres of Foothills Natural Area, canyons and foothills bordering the northern and eastern limits of SLC. More than 70 miles of off-street trails connect residents to parks and natural lands.



**CITY PARKS**

Most residents live within a half mile or 10-minute walk to a local park, and that's important to 97% of people polled. 75% of residents who live on the east side visit parks at least once a month, while 60% of west-siders visit parks once a month. Established in 1881 to be SLC's "Central Park," historic Liberty Park is the most visited park in the system.



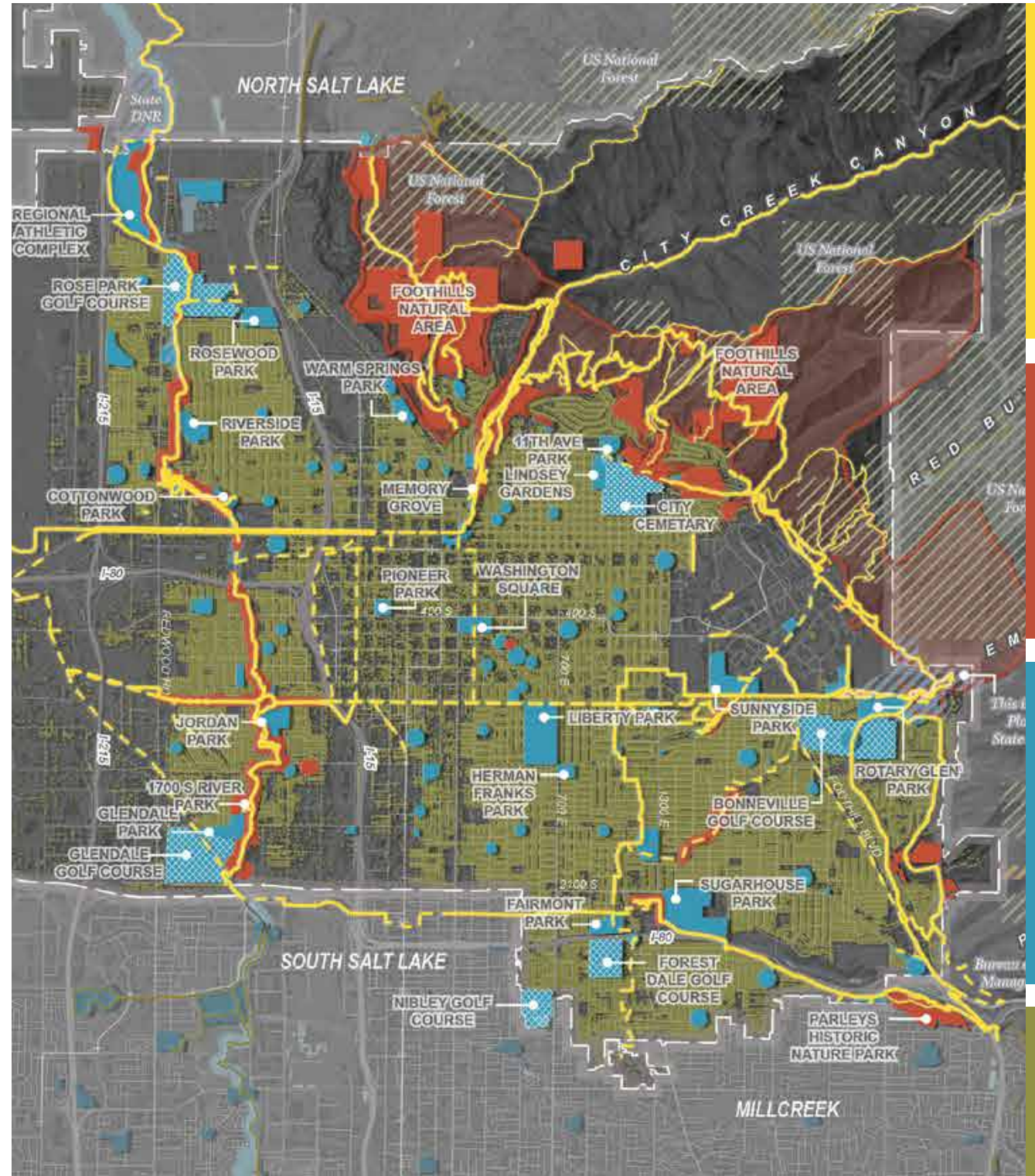
**CITY GOLF**

SLC Public Lands six municipal golf courses are the newest addition to the public lands management. These spaces create opportunities for the community to exercise in nature, while also providing critical open space within the City that helps clean the air and reduce urban temperatures and provides shelter for urban wildlife.



**URBAN FOREST**

The urban forest's street trees are one of the most accessible forms of nature, extending into every neighborhood and business district in the city, resulting in a literal canopy of shade, beauty, socioeconomic, environment and health benefits.



- 70.7** Miles of Existing Trails
- 129.4** Miles of Proposed Trails
- 1,694** Acres Natural Lands
- 6,423** Acres Foothills Natural Area Collaborative Management Zone
- 3 Special Event  
15 Community and  
2 Regional Parks
- 42 Mini Parks  
19 Neighborhood Parks
- 108 Holes of City Public Golf
- 121 Acre City Cemetery
- 1 Regional Athletic Complex (16 Outdoor Sports Fields)
- 86,500** Urban Forest Trees

Figure 3: Public Lands System Map. System facts are current as of 2020.



Air pollution inversion over the Salt Lake Valley.



Many of the city's mature shade trees were lost in the 2020 wind storm.

# CHALLENGES

## COMPLEX ISSUES

Today Salt Lake City's urban nature faces many challenges: rapid degradation to ecological systems exacerbated by climate change, lingering social inequities from historic zoning and planning decisions, unhealthy environmental factors like poor air quality fueled by expanding population, competing priorities for limited city funding, rapid development downtown and the urgent need to redefine green space. The Reimagine Nature master plan vision is shaped by an understanding of the environmental and social challenges facing public lands.

Salt Lake City's Public Lands are increasingly under pressure from the impacts of climate change including record heat, volatile weather, drought and some of the worst air quality in the nation. The environmental pressures impact nature today and in the future. A 2019 climate study predicts Salt Lake City's summers could feel more like Las Vegas by 2050, a change that would drastically impact the city's plants and wildlife.<sup>3</sup> The city has been experiencing an extreme drought of historic proportion, prompting a state of emergency called in 2020 by Utah's governor and creating

<sup>3</sup> Crowther Lab, <https://journals.plos.org/plosone/article?id=10.1371/journal.pone.0217592>

a need for solutions that support nature in the absence of water resources. The September 2020 wind storm (derecho) blew down 1,300 trees in the city and over a dozen parks shut down temporarily for clean-up activities. Many of these mature trees reflect decades of care and provided valued shade.

Since their earliest establishment more than a century ago, the City's parks, trails, and public green space have been promoted as places of refuge from the nuisances of city life with goals of addressing a host of social woes. However, encampments of

unhoused people within public properties and their removal have often brought in to question this premise. Throughout this process the most common topic raised was concern and a spectrum of approaches suggested for public lands and people experiencing homelessness. It is clear that housing dispersal of unhoused individuals throughout the city has caused more people to feel discomfort, witness challenges with social interactions and/or environmental degradation of spaces people are occupying for their survival. The graphic below is a past public relations

informational campaign that was used to help build comfort with interactions and expresses that parks cannot solve for homelessness alone, but must take a compassionate approach for collective response.

## SALT LAKE CITY GROWTH

SLC is home to over 196,000 people representing a broad range of socioeconomic backgrounds and cultural heritages that include over 80 spoken languages. *The 2019 Needs Assessment* estimates that this "population

**Understanding Homelessness in SLC Parks**

- All members of the community are welcome to use public parks and open spaces.**
  - Everybody is welcome to use parks
  - Those experiencing homelessness are part of our community.
  - Public parks can be a more comfortable space for those experiencing homelessness.
  - Know the rules of the park; call the parks or police department when necessary.
  - High volumes of public complaints may strain park resources.
- We will see less unsheltered homelessness as our community works to resolve homelessness.**
  - Become familiar with the organizations who serve those experiencing homelessness.
  - Provide support and/or volunteer for such organizations
  - Public complaints may result in the displacement of those experiencing homelessness and make it more difficult for organizations to engage people in resolving their homelessness.
- Anyone can experience homelessness.**
  - Each person experiencing homelessness is unique.
  - Those experiencing homelessness may face issues such as extreme poverty, physical and mental health concerns, and/or addiction.
  - Such barriers and limited community resources make homelessness difficult to overcome.
  - Securing housing can take longer than 6 months.

Questions? Contact SLC Parks and Public Lands at [openspacecomments@gmail.com](mailto:openspacecomments@gmail.com) or Jeff Rose at [jeff.rose@utah.edu](mailto:jeff.rose@utah.edu).

Parks & Public Lands

Figure 4: 2018 SLC Parks and Homelessness Public Relations Campaign.

doubles during the daytime, due to individuals coming into the city to work.”<sup>4</sup> The City’s parks and surrounding natural areas create a desirable quality of life drawing a projected future population growth of an additional 30,000 people moving to Salt Lake City by 2040. Additionally, Salt Lake City’s population is aging and becoming more diverse. The **2019 Needs Assessment** found that the majority of city residents live within a half mile of a park, natural land or trail and parks are well distributed. The study also noted that 94 acres of new park land will

be required to meet future park needs at the same level of service as today. However, Utah is growing faster than projections made during the Needs Assessment and it is likely that the city will need to be innovative and do even more than previously reported to meet increasing demand.

## PUBLIC LANDS SERVICE GAPS

The **2019 Needs Assessment** analyzed the public’s needs and desires for public lands and performed different types of analysis mappings to understand where gaps may exist. The assessment found gaps (visible

light-yellow areas in Figure 5 below) or areas where residents are not within a half-mile walk of a park or green space particularly in the Central Community, Sugar House and East Bench planning communities.

The questions of who can walk to public lands, who can afford to travel to public lands, who has the leisure time to enjoy public lands and what languages and social cues welcome different groups to public lands have also been asked during the **2019 Needs Assessment** and the Reimagine Nature community process. Nationally, best practices encourage reflecting on these

types of questions to assess the equitable access of urban nature to different communities. And if there are gaps, to offer master plan strategies that can help those areas of the city that need additional resources most.

## OPERATIONS & MAINTENANCE

Concurrently during the Reimagine Nature community outreach, a national consultant team, ETM and Associates, analyzed Public Lands level of staffing, resources and responsibilities. As Public Lands’ responsibilities have expanded over time, a youthful, diverse and energetic staff has tackled increased responsibilities. Compared to

other North American benchmark cities, Public Lands is relatively understaffed, particularly in the area of long-term management of environmental assets. For example, Urban Forestry staff is stretched at one staff member protecting an average of 10,000 trees. The public may not be highly aware of this shortfall as a 2021 citizen survey shows “parks” was one of the highest rated city services, after fire/paramedics, library, garbage pickup, and airport. However, 63% of Public Lands assets have been evaluated to be in poor or fair condition.

Throughout the master plan development, it became clear that elevating Public Lands from

a division to a City department would allow for growth in capacity to take better care of the city’s urban nature while also tackling vital adaptations needed to address the impacts of climate change and social issues. Additional evidence for supporting investment in current parks, trails and open spaces can be seen in the high rankings in the recent 2021 Salt Lake City Resident Survey where participants ranked investment in Public Lands as the number four priority for the city, just under investment in affordable housing, supporting local businesses and expanding sustainability.

4 2019 SLC Public Lands Needs Assessment

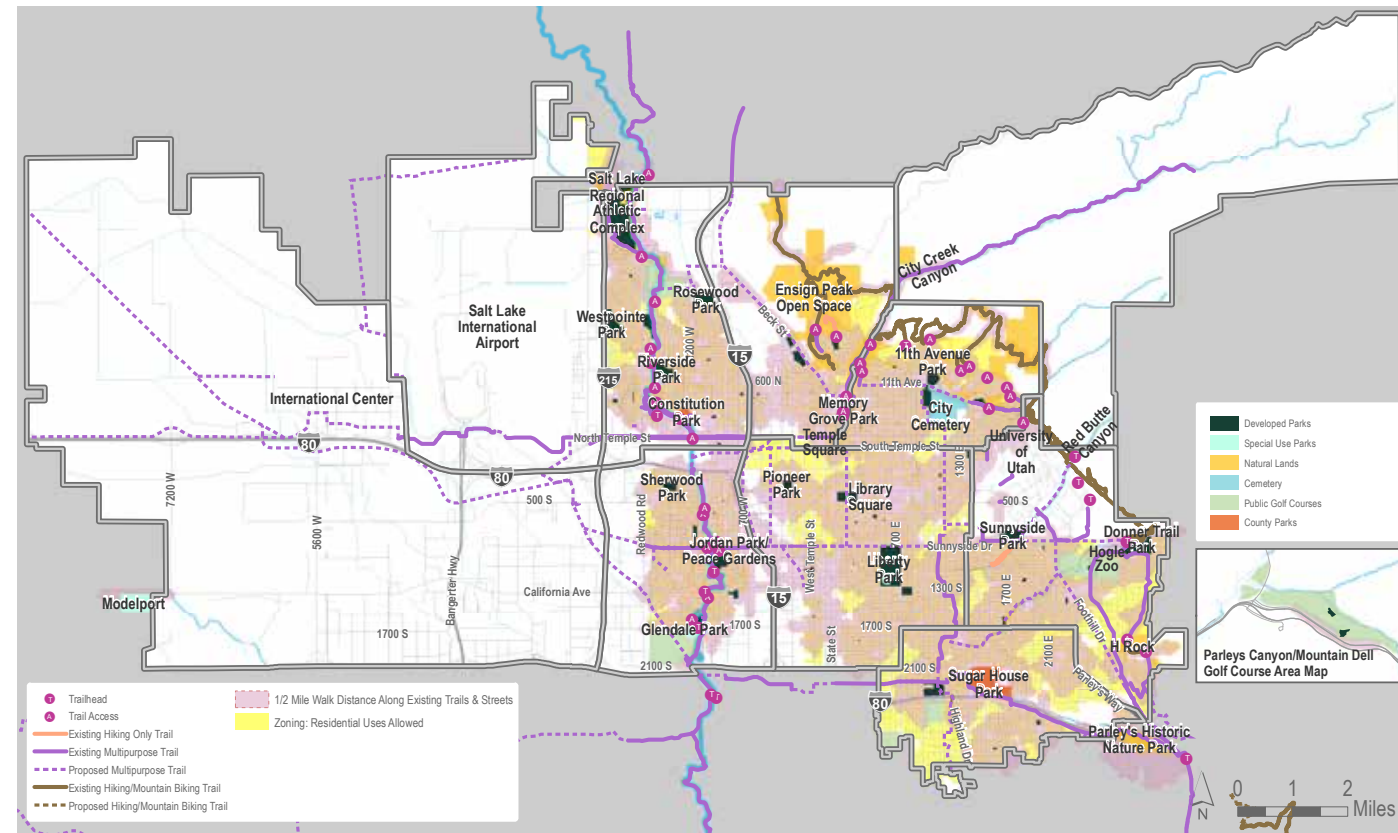


Figure 5: Needs Assessment Parks Gaps Map. Source: 2019 Needs Assessment.



# PLAN COMPONENTS

The National Parks and Recreation Association (NRPA) defines a master plan as “a system-wide...comprehensive document and process that include an internal assessment, community engagement, resources and data collection, and development of an implementation plan.”<sup>5</sup> In 2019, Public Lands commenced data collection and analysis, research on international best practices and consultation with the public, staff, partners, stakeholders and experts. The result of this work is presented in three parts listed below.

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.nrpa.org/publications-research/best-practice-resources/creating-equity-based-system-master-plans/>

**“IT IS THE SET OF THE SAILS, NOT THE DIRECTION OF THE WIND THAT DETERMINES WHICH WAY WE WILL GO”.**

**- JIM ROHN**

## SLC PARK AND PUBLIC LANDS NEEDS ASSESSMENT (2019)

The SLC Park and Public Lands Needs Assessment provides a measurement of the quantity and quality of existing parks and natural lands.

## REIMAGINE NATURE: SLC PUBLIC LANDS MASTER PLAN (THIS DOCUMENT-2021)

This ambitious, community-driven master plan is composed of a plan vision, values, goals and transformative projects that prepare us for the enhancement and protection of our public lands over the next 20 years.

## PUBLIC LANDS 5-YEAR STRATEGIC PLANS (UPDATED ANNUALLY 2022-2040)

5-year Strategic Plans will outline and prioritize specific strategies and actions to implement Reimagine Nature. These will be working plans which are updated annually by Public Lands staff.

# RELEVANT PLANS

Reimagine Nature: Public Lands Master Plan sits within a larger planning context of policies and city initiatives. The following list indicates the purpose of these previous plans and their influence on the Public Lands Master Plan and value alignment.

- » 1992 Open Space Plan
- » 2010 Salt Lake City Open Space Acquisition Strategy
- » 2012-2017 Salt Lake County Parks and Recreation Needs Assessment Survey
- » 2015 Salt Lake County East West Recreation Trails Master Plan Review
- » 2016 The Downtown Plan
- » 2015 Salt Lake City Pedestrian and Bicycle Master Plan
- » 2015 Plan Salt Lake
- » 2017 Salt Lake City Public Lands Strategic Plan
- » 2019 Salt Lake City Parks and Public Lands Needs Assessment
- » 2020 Geographic Equity, Inclusion and Belonging Committee Recommendations
- » Smaller subarea plans, specific property plans, and topical studies also exist to provide targeted direct, such as the Integrated Pest Management Plan and Cemetery Master Plan.



## SALT LAKE CITY PUBLIC LANDS SNAPSHOT

The following snapshot captures factors that currently influence the equity, livability and sustainability of Salt Lake City and its Public Lands. It also takes stock of the current Public Lands system including an inventory of urban forest trees, natural areas, trails, parks and city golf courses.

### EQUITY

**SLC IS HOME TO OVER 199,723** people who speak 80 languages and represent a broad range of socioeconomic backgrounds and cultural heritages.

**35%** of SLC population is made up of people who identify themselves as Native American, African American, Hispanic, Latinx, Asian or Pacific Islander.

The master plan includes **3** community engagement windows. **200** community groups have been invited to participate in this process.

The 2019 Needs Assessment will help identify priority areas.

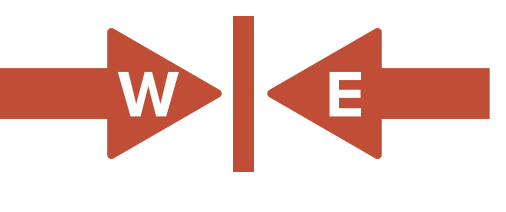
**45%** of metro area renters are cost burdened. Income barriers can limit the amount of leisure time and transportation options people have to enjoy public lands.

Nearly **17%** of the population is projected to be **65** or older by **2045**.

### LIVABILITY

**30,000+** are anticipated to move to SLC by 2040 which will require an additional park space roughly equivalent to Liberty Park.

**94 ACRES** Accessibility gaps and trail gaps still exist in all SLC planning areas, and east-west connections across the city are limited.



City Golf courses maintain over 1,000 acres of open space. As the city grows, how can golf grow as a community partner, serving more of the city population?

### STEWARDSHIP

**86%** of SLC residents who responded to the 2019 Needs Assessment prioritize investments to improve existing parks, trails and natural areas.

Salt Lake City's proposed trails, including expansion of the 9-line Trail, will add another 129.4 miles to the system, the equivalent of adding another Jordan River Parkway (the longest paved urban trail in the US).

Activating underutilized spaces with activities such as outdoor education, guided nature walks, wildflowers and birding would increase park service as the city grows.

**>50%** of all global species are at risk of extinction leading to rapid biodiversity loss.

By 2050 our temps could rise **10°** leading to poorer air quality.

**\$85,000** per year to clean up nuisance graffiti.

Over the last 20 years SLC's urban forests have been in decline.

SLC public lands have opportunity to **increase biodiversity** by adding more natural habitat like recent efforts at Fairmont Park Pond and the Fife Wetland Preserve.

Our 86,500 trees, including 7,000 trees in city golf courses, provide a cooling of summer temps by **6°**

**63%** of public lands assets are in fair to poor condition.

SLC urban forest hosts **260** species of trees that support biodiversity and improve air quality.

Sources: Salt Lake City Public Lands Division, 2019 Salt Lake City Parks & Public Lands Needs Assessment, American Community Survey 2014-2018, Kem C. Gardner Policy Institute, "Understanding Climate Change from a Global Analysis of City Analogues" by Thomas Crowther et. al., "Promoting and Preserving Biodiversity in the Urban Forest" by Alexis A. Alvey, "Utah Forest Facts: Trees and Climate Change" by Megan Dettenmaier et. al., "Salt Lake City Confronts Its Growing Pains" by Trevor Bach, U.S. Census, 2020.

# COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT SUMMARY

The Reimagine Nature master plan process reached over 12,000 members of the community through digital and socially distanced tactics (see figure 6 below). Engagement was conducted in two periods: Window #1, (2020) and Window #2 (2021). Now more than ever, public lands contribute to the community’s personal health, identity and civic ideals. The plan is a reflection of the community’s vision for a bright future of public lands.

## HOW WE LISTENED

The figure below shows one metric of how engagement was evaluated for how it was inclusive of representative demographic populations that reflect the city’s current diversity. More information about the participation demographics and engagement methods can be found in the document appendix. Partnerships with the University of Utah College of City and Metropolitan Planning and on-the-ground, “intercept survey” efforts of Salt Lake City staff members and volunteers supplemented digital tactics to target engagement of typically underrepresented areas or populations of the city.



## SURVEY DEMOGRAPHICS

	COMMUNITY SURVEY 1	COMMUNITY SURVEY 2	SALT LAKE CITY DEMOGRAPHICS
ASIAN	1.5%	2.2%	5.4%
AMERICAN INDIAN	0.3%	1.3%	1.4%
BLACK / AFRICAN AMERICAN	0.5%	1.4%	2.3%
HISPANIC / LATINO	4.0%	8.2%	21.6%
NATIVE HAWAIIAN / PACIFIC ISLANDER	0.3%	0.5%	1.5%
WHITE	80.0%	76.3%	73.1%
OTHER	1.2%	2.4%	3.4%
PREFER NOT TO SAY	4.0%	7.7%	

Figure 6: Reimagine Nature Survey Demographics.

## FINDINGS

Targeted engagement improved the diversity of survey respondents, with multi-cultural participation in survey two increasing an average of 232% from that of survey one.



Community feedback at an engagement event in Liberty Park.

## ENGAGEMENT BY THE NUMBERS

### ENGAGEMENT WINDOW #1

<b>SURVEYS</b>	<b>4,455</b>
Public Survey	3,735
City Staff Survey	85
Intercept Surveys	635
<b>POPUPEVENTS</b>	<b>2,320</b>
Ice Cream Social Distancing	
Trailside Snacks	
Trail Intercepts	
<b>MICRO-ENGAGEMENT EVENTS</b>	<b>47</b>
Focus Groups	
<b>17 COMMUNITY PRESENTATIONS</b>	<b>260</b>
Community Councils	
Boards And Committees	
<b>ADDITIONAL ENGAGEMENT WITH OVER 200+ COMMUNITY STAKEHOLDERS</b>	

### ENGAGEMENT WINDOW #2

<b>ONLINE PUBLIC SURVEY #2</b>	<b>3,318</b>
4 STUDENT-LED PLACEMAKING EVENTS	69
16 INTERCEPT EVENTS	582
COMM. COUNCIL PRESENTATIONS	260
FACEBOOK OPEN HOUSE EVENTS	848
Spanish Views	195
English Views	653
<b>SOCIAL MEDIA POSTS</b>	
43 Facebook + 39 Twitter + 29 Instagram + 4 Next Door = 115 Posts	
<b>3 EMAIL NEWSLETTERS</b>	To 7,907 People
<b>Total Engagement Window 2</b>	<b>5,077</b>
<b>Total Engagement Window 1</b>	<b>7,082</b>

**Total Directly Reached Reimagine Nature Engagement 12,159**

Figure 7: Summary of Engagement Activities and Community Reached.



Community Member participating in a Paint the Pavement engagement event at Poplar Grove Park.



Planning students from the University of Utah provided support to make targeted community engagement possible.



Ice cream social distancing interviews.

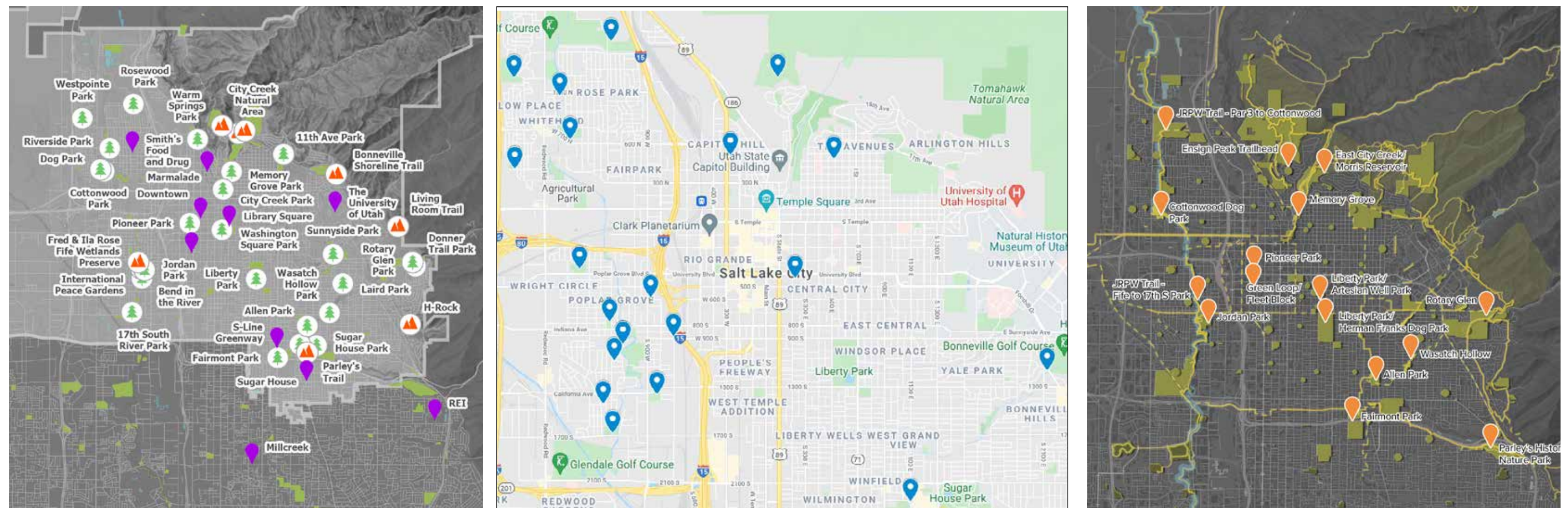
# COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT SUMMARY

## TARGETED COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

In-person surveying occurred in 80 locations but was focused in Westside and Northwest neighborhoods. These communities are the most ethnically diverse areas of the city and are cut off from downtown by railroads and highways. Compared to their neighbors to the east, residents in these neighborhoods are in “higher need” according to the 2019 SLC Public Lands Needs Assessment. Parks in westside communities also have lower rates of visitation compared to parks in Salt Lake City’s east side, signaling a need to hear community-led solutions from westside neighborhoods. The multi-level approach captured a more diverse sample of the community.

Initial survey results led to preliminary plan ideas that were shared in a series of focus groups with representative community stakeholders to refine master plan direction. The focus groups cultivated stronger relationships resulting in new collaborations and solutions.

Figure 8: Engagemenet locations throughout SLC.



**ENGAGEMENT WINDOW #1  
STUDENT & STAFF OUTREACH LOCATIONS**

**ENGAGEMENT WINDOW #2  
STUDENT OUTREACH LOCATIONS**

**ENGAGEMENT WINDOW #2  
STAFF OUTREACH LOCATIONS**



# COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT SUMMARY

## WHAT WE HEARD

The focus of engagement was to gather community feedback and input on the Master Plan framework, including refined goals and transformative projects ideas.

It also served as a check point with the community and stakeholders to verify that the Master Plan was developing in the right direction, had community support, and provided an opportunity to contribute any important ideas that may be missing from the Master Plan.

The following pages show a selection of some of the responses received from the community through the online survey, focus groups and micro-engagement events. The document appendix includes detailed reports on the public engagement windows and their findings for more information.



Community members of all ages provide their thoughts during a student intercept survey event.



## STEWARDSHIP IDEAS

Source: 2020 Community Survey 1

I would volunteer to clean up parks, paint bathrooms, help with trash and waste disposal I would also donate money to groups that contribute to stewardship of the parks.

Encourage non-motorized visitation. Supply and timely service waste receptacles. Landscape with broad ecological goals, e.g. not just trees but flower and open areas that support birds and bees.

Work with school districts on biodiversity education and curriculum including hands on projects to give our youngest citizenry a sense of ownership.



## EQUITY IDEAS

Source: 2020 Community Survey 1

Recruit stewards, rangers/ ambassadors, and volunteers from minority communities near the public lands.

A fully integrated trail system through the city so that folks can access trails regardless of where they are

Increased accessibility for all members of society, along with native fauna that calls the space home. So more bike paths, ramps for wheelchairs, inclusive non-gendered bathrooms. For the wild life, creating more pockets of space not meant for human traffic or usage, and planting more native plants essential to their natural habitats.

Reach out and listen. Specific place-based responses for acts of restoration, maintenance, and development.

Have signs displayed in 2-3 languages.



## LIVABILITY IDEAS

Source: 2020 Community Survey 1

Add neighborhood opportunities to spend time in water. Salt Lake City is getting hotter summers and one of the key missing public land opportunities for residents is access to water for recreational opportunities.

More trails closer to home so I and my neighbors don't have to drive to other places (Millcreek, Draper, Herriman, etc.) for trail running and riding opportunities.

Substantially improve tree cover in neighborhoods, parks and natural areas by 50% to compensate for human impacts."

Expand community gardens.

# COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT SUMMARY

## COMMUNITY INPUT IN THE PLAN

In addition to asking for ideas around the values, respondents from Community Survey 1 were asked to choose their preferred actions to increase livability and sustainability in SLC. These actions were integrated into goals and helped to craft the transformative projects found in the Reimagine Nature Plan.

With more than 4,455 surveys completed and roughly 1,000 individual conversations, there was abundant ideas and variety of perspectives provided by the community to reflect in crafting this plan.

## LIVABILITY TOP PRIORITIES

A thriving urban forest, improving networks for active transportation and investing in neighborhood public lands were seen as the top actions that would improve livability in SLC.

Source: 2020 Community Survey 1

Q - What do you think would most benefit the livability of Salt Lake City and encourage you to get outside more often?  
(Pick your top 2)



- **Grow our urban forests** \_\_\_\_\_ **46%**
- **Improve the sidewalk and trail network in order to travel by bike and foot to public lands and everyday destinations like work and school** \_\_\_\_\_ **44%**
- **Invest in neighborhood public lands and amenities that encourage everyday use** \_\_\_\_\_ **42%**

Figure 9: Livability top priorities, 2020 Community Survey 1.



Community member providing feedback during a student intercept survey.

## SUSTAINABILITY TOP PRIORITIES

Biodiversity, the environment, trails & maintaining existing amenities were themes that emerged among survey respondents. The most chosen actions are highlighted below.

Q - What stewardship actions would be most impactful to public lands over the next 10-20 years?  
(Select all that apply)

### DIRECT ACTIONS

- Create wildflower meadows
- Incorporate more native, waterwise plants in landscaping
- Plant more trees
- Expand public access points to trails
- Add or renovate aged restrooms, playgrounds and other amenities

### FUNDING



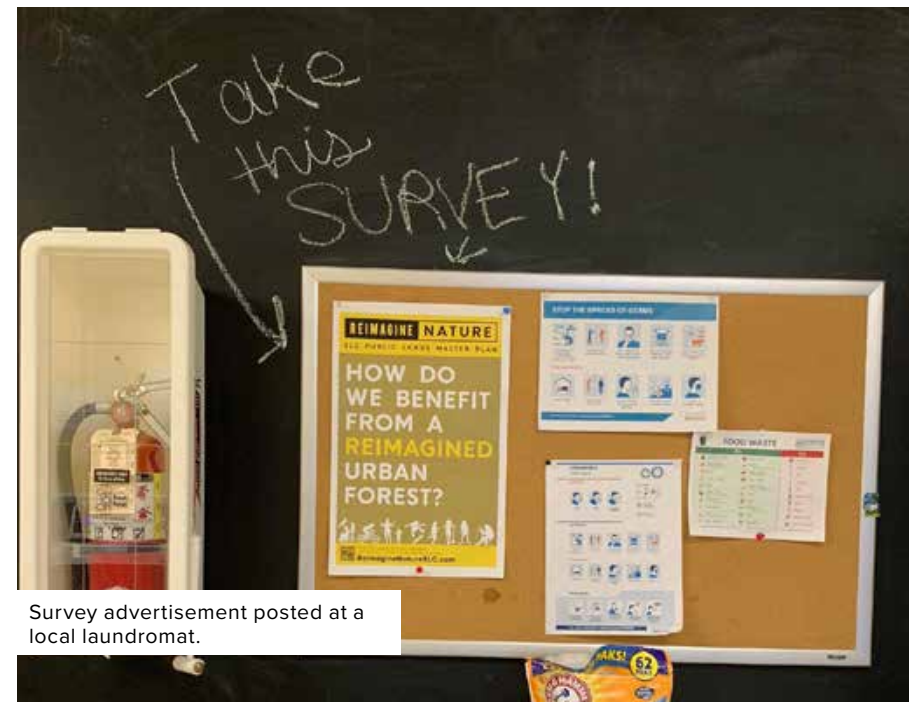
- Acquire additional natural areas
- Acquire lands adjacent to water
- Invest in increased maintenance
- Improve the City's donation process
- Develop adoption programs, i.e., adopt-a-tree, adopt-a park, etc.



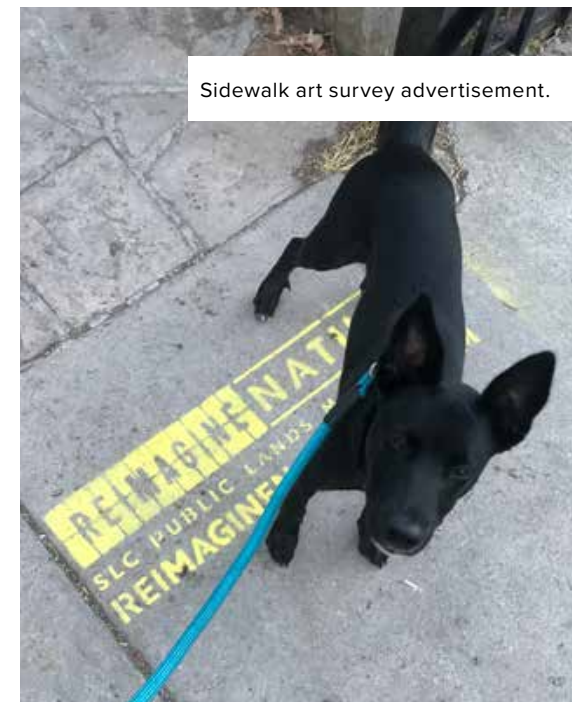
### DAILY PRACTICES

- Support active modes of transportation
- Expand collaboration with non-profit organizations
- Host education events
- Improve capacity to respond to environmental emergencies
- Create a Biodiversity Advisory Committee

Figure 10: Sustainability top priorities, 2020 Community Survey 1.



Survey advertisement posted at a local laundromat.



Sidewalk art survey advertisement.

# COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT SUMMARY

## NEW IDEAS AND FEEDBACK

Source: 2020 Community Survey 1

“safety for marginalized and over policed communities. for black and brown people public spaces are not always safe (RIP Trayvon Martin, Tamir Rice, Darren Hunt and many more). part of access for these communities is assurance that they wont get shot or arrested just for existing in public spaces while being a person of color. some sort of police and emergency service outreach to ensure this message is heard would be appropriate.”



Engagement event at 1700 South Park.

“More emphasis on making areas bike and bus friendly and reducing the need to drive to parks.”



“I think the vision statement should include explicit language on climate change.”

“Since more people are using the outdoors, education on how to treat and take care of it is essential.”



Trailside snack bike trailer advertisement.

## TRANSFORMATIVE PROJECT SUPPORT

Source: 2021 Community Survey 2

Survey #2 yielded responses from 3,318 community members rating their satisfaction with the plan vision statement, plan goals, and transformative projects. All aspects of the plan had community support with 82% of survey respondents saying they thought the vision plan was on the right track, and 87% agreeing with the plan goals. Overall, all transformative projects had a combined satisfaction rate of between 75%-92% among survey respondents. The community indicated they were most satisfied with projects centered on sustainability, with the projects “Grow Our Urban Forest” and “Put Environment First” receiving the most selections for extremely and somewhat satisfied. Note, some of the goals and projects have been revised in response to this input.

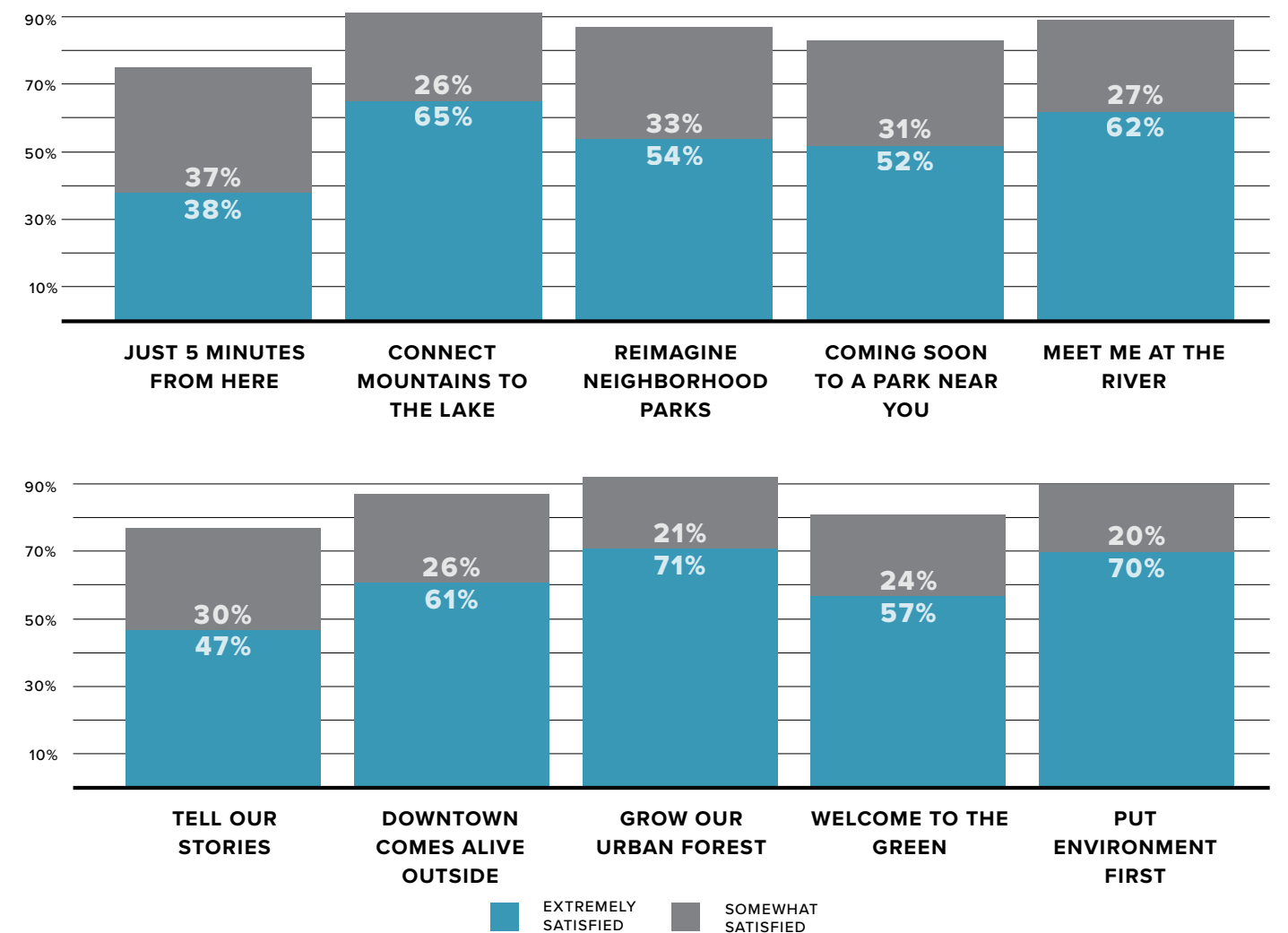


Figure 11: Graph of transformative project satisfaction ratings, Source: 2021 Community Survey 2.

# COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT SUMMARY

## COMMUNITY PRIORITIZING TRANSFORMATIVE PROJECTS

Survey respondents were asked to rate both the urgency and importance of the ten transformative projects. These questions were designed to gain insight into community priorities for each project, highlighting which projects should happen right away and which projects should be prioritized because they are the most impactful and provide value.

When comparing urgency versus importance, two projects stood out significantly. Put environment first was ranked the highest by survey respondents in both categories, with 73% ranking it as very important and 72% ranking it as very urgent. The next highest-ranking project was grow our urban forest, with 71% ranking it as very important and 68% ranking it as very urgent. This again reinforces the community's desire for using sustainable principles in managing

Public Lands and improving the local environment with natural amenities.

These projects also were viewed as significant and held high support with focus group participants. Overall, the question responses show that all projects are valued by the community. When combining the selections for medium urgency and very urgent, the 10 transformative projects were selected by between 56% and 94% of respondents as being urgent. The combined selections for project importance show that the 10 transformative projects were selected by between 70% and 95% of respondents as important.

### TOP CHOICES FOR OVERALL IMPORTANCE:

1. GROW OUR URBAN FOREST - 97%
2. PUT ENVIRONMENT FIRST - 95%
3. REIMAGINE NEIGHBORHOOD PARKS - 89%

### TOP CHOICES FOR OVERALL URGENCY:

1. GROW OUR URBAN FOREST - 95%
2. PUT ENVIRONMENT FIRST - 94%
3. REIMAGINE NEIGHBORHOOD PARKS - 87%
4. MEET ME AT THE RIVER - 83%

## TRANSFORMATIVE PROJECT URGENCY AND IMPORTANCE

Source: 2021 Community Survey 2

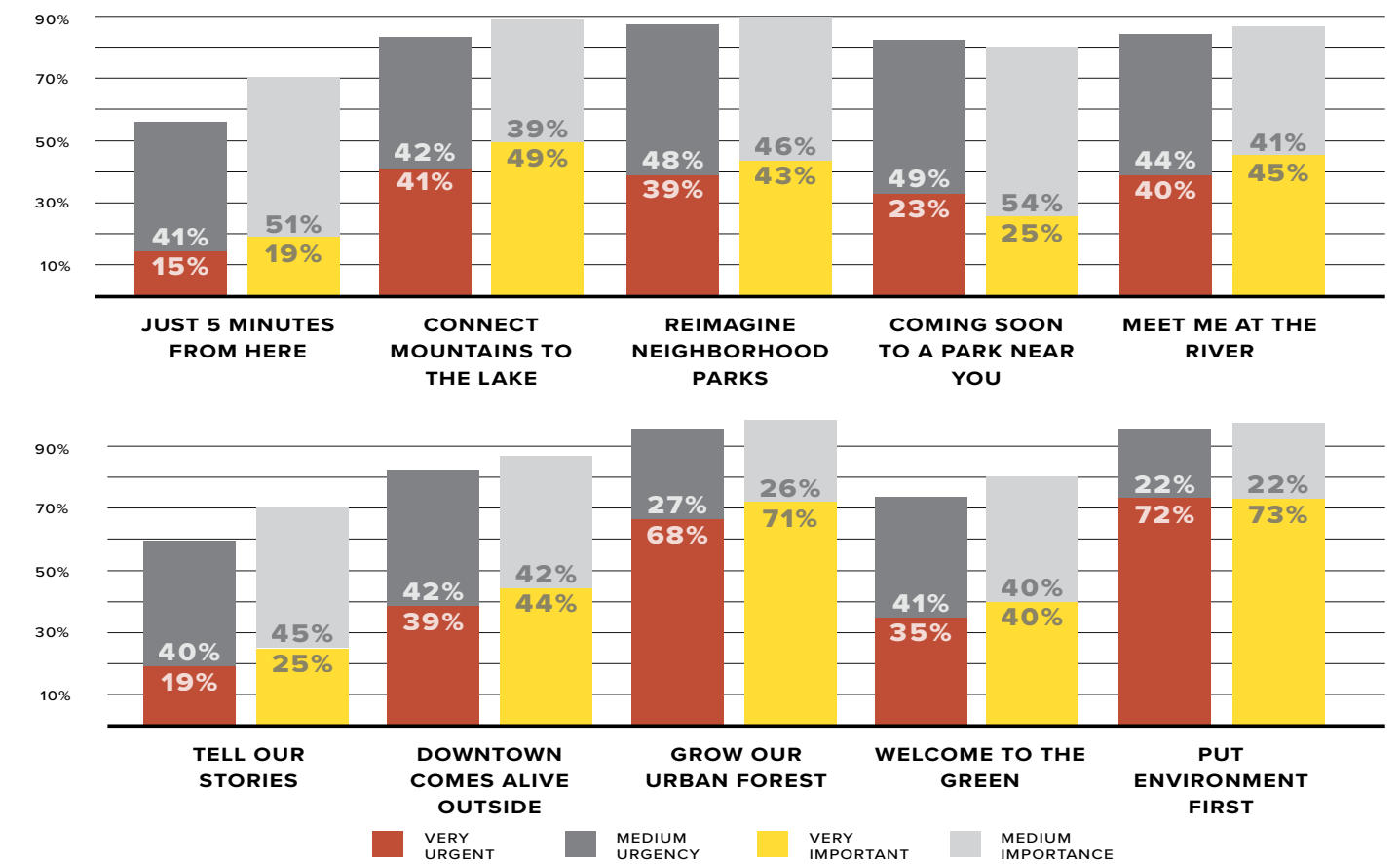


Figure 12: Graph of transformative project urgency and importance, Source: 2021 Community Survey 2.

CHAPTER

# 2

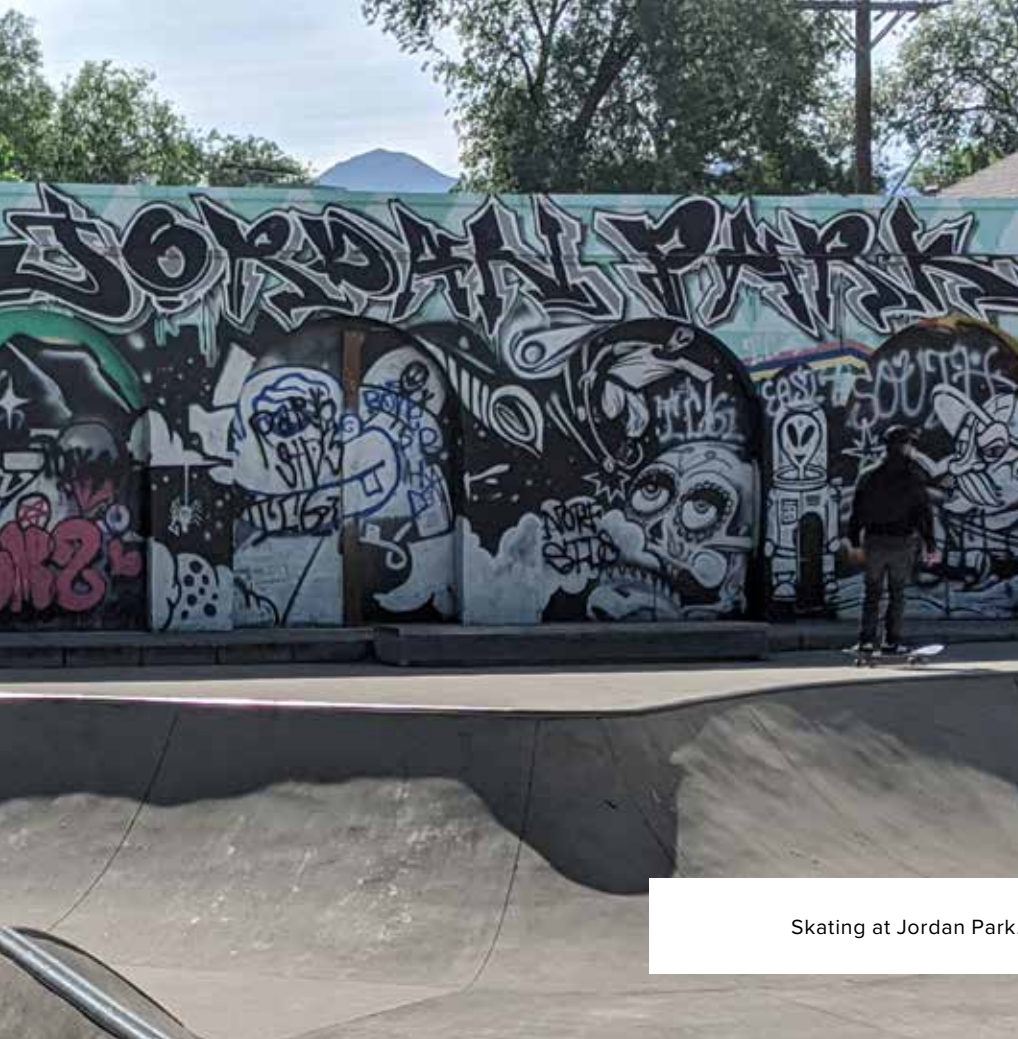
# VISION FRAMEWORK FOR NATURE

## REIMAGINE NATURE MASTER PLAN VISION

SLC Public Lands Master Plan vision proposes big ideas to transform and sustain quality outdoor spaces that are welcoming, safe, and walkable; ensuring people, wildlife and ecosystems benefit from fair investment of Salt Lake City resources over the next 20 years.



Public Lands maintains some green spaces within public roadways and transit stops.



Skating at Jordan Park.



Mountain biking on the Bonneville Shoreline Trail.

## VISION STATEMENT:

Reimagine Nature SLC Public Lands Master Plan vision proposes big ideas to transform and sustain quality outdoor spaces that are welcoming, safe, and walkable; ensuring people, wildlife and ecosystems benefit from fair investment of Salt Lake City resources over the next 20 years.

## WHAT VALUES GUIDE THE PLAN?

The VALUES that drive the way the Public Lands Department achieves plan goals is through a work ethic:

- » that grows a culture of STEWARDSHIP to protect wildlife, trees, mountains, lakes, rivers and scenic views;
- » that improves LIVABILITY in SLC in the face of impacts of climate change and population growth; and
- » that provides greater EQUITY in the way the community has access to close-to-home, high-quality green spaces.

The plan values are integrated into each goal and transformative project.

## PLAN VALUES:



### STEWARDSHIP

STEWARDSHIP, or taking care of what we have, is investing in the renewal of our existing city parks, urban forest, natural areas and trails. Stewardship inspires us to preserve habitat so plants and wildlife can thrive and be resilient to impacts of climate change like rising temperatures. Potential actions could be planting tree groves in city golf courses or adding butterfly gardens to city parks.



### LIVABILITY

LIVABILITY, or maintaining SLC's quality of outdoor life, inspires us to provide more services to residents as the city grows. We can collectively identify opportunities to use our city's parks, golf courses, school yards, natural areas and streetscapes to increase public access to nature, trails, sports fields, and public gathering places.



### EQUITY

EQUITY, or including diverse voices in the master plan process and priorities, aligns as a citywide value emerging from the roundtable discussion on "Geographic Equity, Inclusion,

& Belonging." We are committed to listening to the realities and perceptions of access to public lands from all sides of Salt Lake City to help guide next steps for a more equitable future.

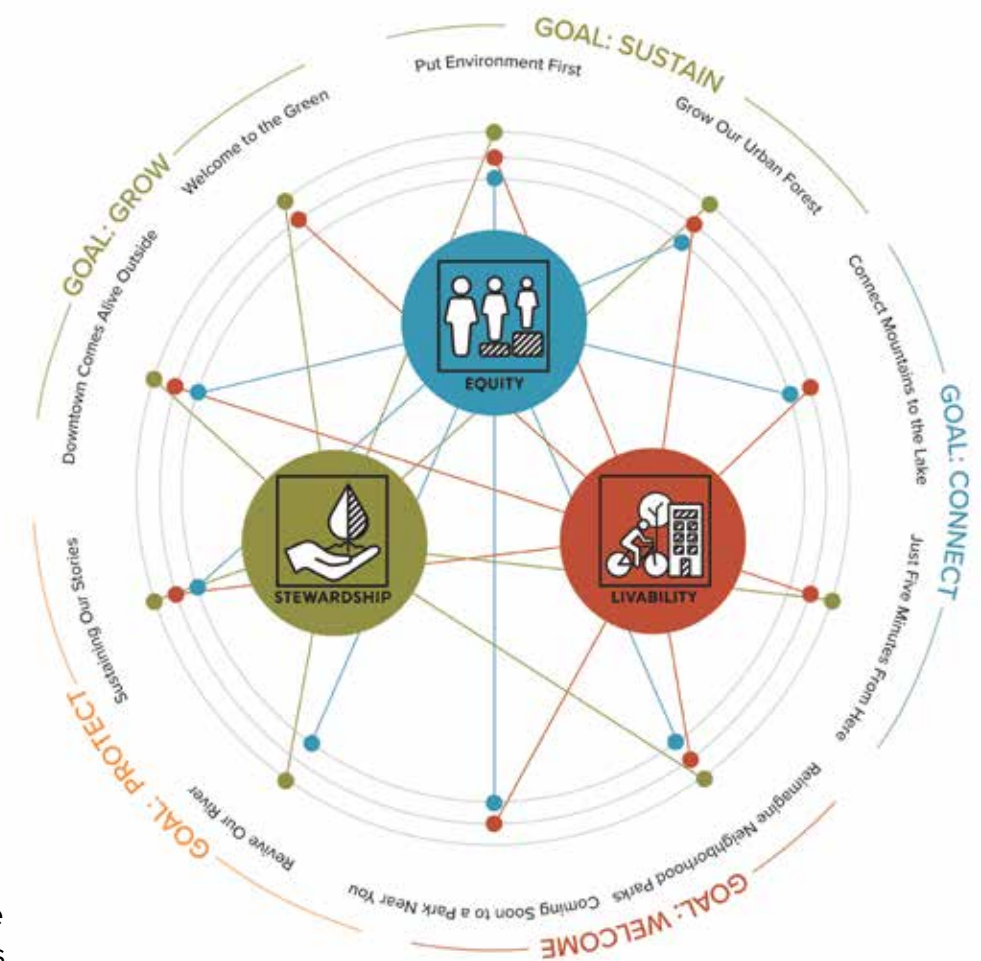


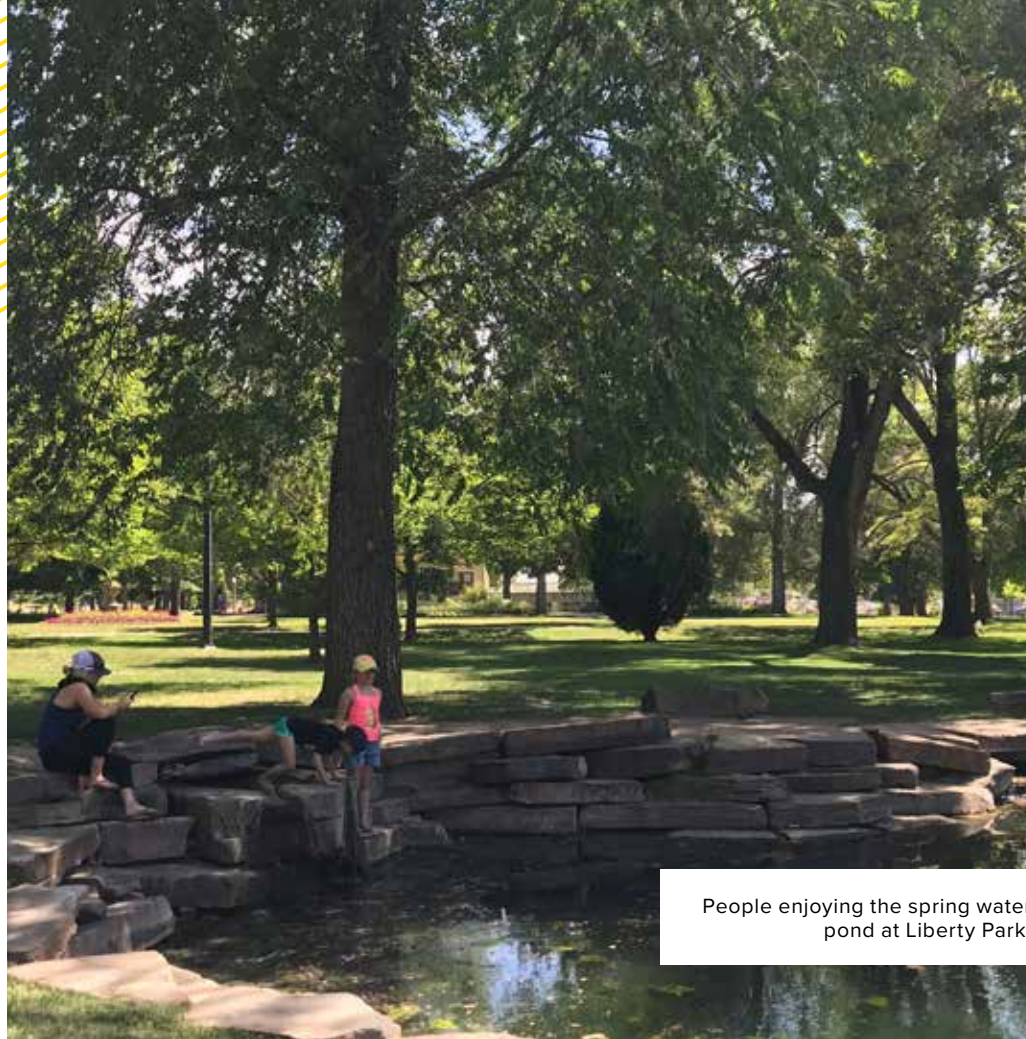
Figure 13: Value Lenses Relationship to Goals Diagram.



# GOALS

Reimagine Nature Master Plan has five main GOALS of what the Public Lands Department is aiming to achieve over the next 10-20 years:

- 1. **Sustain:** Environmental Health and Sustainability
- 2. **Connect:** Accessible and Connected Green Spaces
- 3. **Welcome:** Active, Authentic and Inclusive Places
- 4. **Protect:** A Commitment to Stewardship
- 5. **Grow:** Expand our Public Lands System



People enjoying the spring water pond at Liberty Park.



Mural in the Granary District.

# SUSTAIN: ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH AND SUSTAINABILITY



## GOAL STATEMENT:

Public Lands will continue to be on the forefront of environmentalism, employing sustainable operations practices such as conserving water resources for greater resilience to climate change and making significant contributions to an equitable and healthier natural environment such as increasing tree cover that improves regional air quality and provides bird habitat.

## TOP STRATEGIES:

S1 - Position Public Lands to increase the ambition of Salt Lake City's climate resiliency goals.

S2 - Position Public Lands as the City leader for driving improvements in human and ecosystem health.

## PROGRESS METRICS:

**S1 - Metric:** Percent of occupied tree planting sites.  
**Goal:** 90% occupied by 2030.

**S1 - Metric:** Percent of urban forest trees pruned annually.  
**Goal:** 10% of trees pruned annually by 2030.

**S2 - Metric:** Species biodiversity by site.  
**Goal:** Demonstrate a statistically-significant increase (>0) in species biodiversity on all Public Lands (except mini parks and special use parks) by 2030.

# CONNECT:

## ACCESSIBLE AND CONNECTED GREEN SPACES



# WELCOME:

## ACTIVE, AUTHENTIC AND INCLUSIVE PLACES



### GOAL STATEMENT:

Well-maintained, welcoming trails, streets, public transportation, and sidewalks are interconnected as the city's circulatory system. This system connects pedestrians, cyclists, and riders to the city's green spaces and outstanding natural landscapes of Salt Lake City's Public Lands: mountains, foothills, valley, wetlands, and lakes. The City will continue to enhance these systems and increase connectors to include everyday destinations ranging from the daycare, library, grocery store, pharmacy and museum. This adds convenient connections to walk or ride along a greenway, adding steps to pedometers and enriching health and wellbeing.

### TOP STRATEGIES:

- C1 - Connect people to information about their park system.
- C2 - Increase the ease of access to public lands, making it easier to travel to, between and within them.

### PROGRESS METRICS:

**C1 - Metric:** Percent increase in social media followers across Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram.  
**Goal:** 500% increase from 2021 baseline by 2030.

**C1 - Metric:** Percent increase in total email addresses in Constant Contact (or equivalent) platform.  
**Goal:** 500% increase from 2021 baseline by 2030.

**C1 - Metric:** Percent increase in average monthly website visitors per year.

**Goal:** 500% increase from 2021 baseline by 2030.

**C1 - Metric:** Percent increase in average monthly attendance to community events by PL administrative team  
**Goal:** 500% Increase in community event attendance by PL administrative team, for all Planning Areas, from 2021 baseline by 2030.

**C1 - Metric:** Percent of properties with multi-lingual signage  
**Goal:** Signage includes Spanish language information at 90%

of parks, natural areas and golf courses by 2030.

**C2 - Metric:** Percent of parks that have received an accessibility audit\*.

\*identifies accessibility barriers, a means to remove the barrier, and a transition plan for budgeting, planning and implementing the barrier removal.

**Goal:** 90% of SLC parks have received an accessibility audit by 2030.

**C2 - Metric:** Percent of parks that have fully implemented the removal of accessibility barriers identified in an accessibility audit.

**Goal:** 50% of SLC Regional, Community, Neighborhood, Special Event and Mini Parks have fully implemented the removal of identified accessibility barriers by 2040.

**C2 Metric:** Percent of residents within ¼ mile of a park, multi-use trail or natural land.

**Goal:** 95% of SLC Residents live within ¼ mile of a park, multi-use trail or natural land by 2040.

### GOAL STATEMENT:

Ideal parks are actively used by the community, inclusive for all ages, abilities and cultures and strive to be authentic, or reflective of the neighborhood and community's culture. Parks departments across the country struggle with balancing limited resources and many priorities with achieving these ideals. For cities, there is also a growing awareness of how green space has historically been provided and maintained for different neighborhoods. Cities are collecting data and stories to document the historic inequities in the quantity and quality of green space (e.g., nationwide studies have found that lower income urban areas typically correlate with less tree canopy, less accessible green spaces and lower quality amenities). The Public Lands Department, in alignment with the mayor's 2021 citywide vision, is committed to looking at top-down and bottom-up community-driven solutions to welcoming more people. The department will strive to reflect the diverse culture and history of Salt Lake City neighborhoods in the tapestry of parks and open spaces.

### TOP STRATEGIES:

- W1 - Design and program Neighborhood Parks to highlight the unique natural, historical, cultural and economic identify of the surrounding area and community in which they are located.
- W2 - Support active programming that brings people out to their parks for art, events, programs, recreation and community. This programming should be diverse and adapted to represent the community culture and encourage creation of social connections.

### PROGRESS METRIC:

**W1 - Metric:** Annual total number of community-led programs in Neighborhood Parks, by planning area.  
**Goal:** At least 300 community-led programs in Neighborhood Parks in EACH SLC planning area, annually, by 2030.

**W2 - Metric:** Percent of respondents to annual SLC Resident Survey who report visiting a city park or natural land at least weekly.  
**Goal:** Increase percent of residents who visit parks or natural lands at least weekly by 2% per year, with at least 60% of residents visiting a park or natural land at least weekly by 2030.



# PROTECT:

A COMMITMENT TO STEWARDSHIP



# GROW:

EXPAND OUR PUBLIC LANDS SYSTEM



## GOAL STATEMENT:

Salt Lake City's urban population is growing. The Public Lands Department will balance providing safe green spaces for the public while also protecting iconic, irreplaceable natural resources that keep the city wild. Stewardship demands are profound: diminishing environmental health, increasing need for visitor management, increasing maintenance demands, increasing numbers of unhoused using open space as refuge, and increasing costs to provide infrastructure and services to a growing city. In the Public Lands' domain, the Department will lead the stewardship and care of urban green spaces. The Department will seek out opportunities to partner with advocacy groups and schools to educate on how the public can be stewards of the land and learn its history.

## TOP STRATEGIES:

- P1 - Ensure iconic, irreplaceable assets are not lost or rendered less valuable due to neglect, destruction or development.
- P2 - Leverage the power of the community to help steward SLC's Public Lands.

## PROGRESS METRIC:

- P1 - Metric:** Acres per funded grounds maintenance employee full time equivalent (FTE) for parks by park type.  
**Goal:** No more than 15 acres per funded grounds maintenance FTE for Regional Parks, Special Event Parks, and Urban Natural Areas, and no more than 5 acres per funded grounds maintenance FTE for Neighborhood Parks and Mini Parks, by 2030.
- P1 - Metric:** Park and natural land acres acquired.  
**Goal:** Acquire at least 94 acres of parkland, 60 acres of urban natural lands, and 150 acres of non-urban natural lands, by 2040, to maintain 2017 level of service.
- P2 - Metric:** Number of volunteers engaged & total number of volunteer person-hours annually  
**Goal:** Increase number of volunteers engaged & total number of volunteer person hours by 10% annually, and by 250% by 2030.

## GOAL STATEMENT:

As the Salt Lake City population increases, our public lands receive more visitation and work harder to reduce negative impacts of more "footprints" on our landscapes and public amenities with increased maintenance and renewal. Providing the amount of public properties in relation to population growth needs is increasingly challenging in a city reaching maximum expansion build-out with limited opportunities to acquire large natural areas or small parks in areas of dense development with high land prices. City departments and partners work together to provide green space and recreation opportunities in our rapidly re-developing downtown. We innovate and make smart use of the public properties we have, being strategic with our resources and creating funding sources to expand our urban forest, trails, park system, and natural areas.

## TOP STRATEGIES:

- G1 - Be proactive and strategic about growth of the Public Lands System.
- G2 - Overcome difficult obstacles to growth needs through creativity and through leveraging external assets and resources.

## PROGRESS METRIC:

- G1 - Metric:** Number of parks with annual visitation estimates based on data from automated visitation counters and/or point-in-time counts.  
**Goal:** Annual visitation estimates for 75 parks by 2030.
- G1 - Metric:** Number of respondents to annual public opinion survey for Public Lands.  
**Goal:** Three-year running average is equal to or greater than 2,000 respondents by 2030.
- G2 - Metric:** Number of active, formal partner organizations\*  
\*Organizations with active partnerships agreements (approved by attorneys office & fully executed).  
**Goal:** Thirty formal partnership agreements are active by 2030.

# TRANSFORMATIVE PROJECTS

Ten Transformative Projects were identified through the engagement process to achieve plan goals and heighten Public Lands' impact on the city's livability, equity, and stewardship. The projects are transformative as they will require great effort and/or and shift in Public Lands operations to achieve. The Transformative Projects are organized by the goals and chapters they are most emblematic of, however each project supports multiple plan goals.

SUSTAIN

**1 PUT ENVIRONMENT FIRST**  
Cultivate more biological diversity and conservation in city parks, urban forests, city golf lands and natural areas.

**2 GROW OUR URBAN FOREST**  
Expand awareness of how to be a steward of our urban forest in all publicly-owned landscapes including city parks, street medians, city golf courses, riparian areas and natural areas.

CONNECT

**3 CONNECT MOUNTAINS TO THE LAKE**  
Complete missing links in regional trails and invest in greenways to enhance nature and creeks within the city.

**4 JUST FIVE MINUTES FROM HERE**  
Make it easier to find and explore nearby parks, trails and public spaces to expand the public's experiences in nature and build stewardship principles and practices.

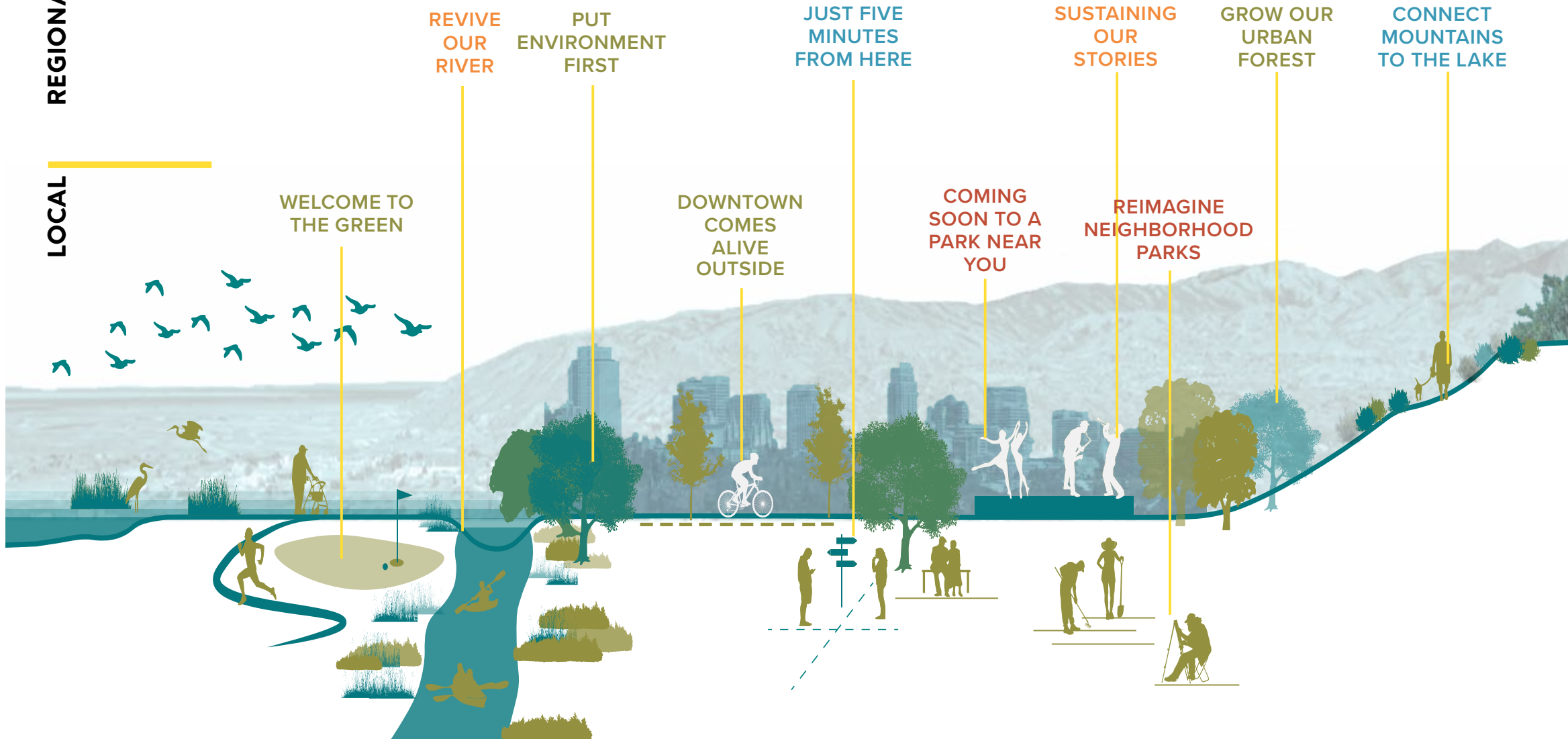
WELCOME

**5 REIMAGINE NEIGHBORHOOD PARKS**  
Transform parks into vibrant community spaces that empower residents to contribute to their neighborhood identity.

**6 COMING SOON TO A PARK NEAR YOU**  
Help our parks, large and small, come alive with activities and events throughout the year.

REGIONAL

LOCAL



PROTECT

**7 REVIVE OUR RIVER**  
Invest in projects and maintenance along the Jordan River Parkway that will promote equity, access, scenic beauty, diverse recreation, and healthy ecology along the parkway.

**8 SUSTAINING OUR STORIES**  
Reveal past and present stories from our diversity of experiences that have shaped this valley, giving focus to underrepresented and indigenous people. Express these stories through landscapes, structure, placemaking and art.

GROW

**9 DOWNTOWN COMES ALIVE OUTSIDE**  
Increase the provision of green and active spaces downtown that will contribute to livability, inclusiveness, and economic vitality.

**10 WELCOME TO THE GREEN**  
Invite appropriate alternative use of our public golf courses for greater benefit.

Figure 14: Ten transformative projects for Reimagine Nature.

CHAPTER

# 3

## SUSTAIN: ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH & SUSTAINABILITY



The urban forest is aging, requiring regeneration to keep SLC shaded and cool while providing critical habitat.

### GOAL STATEMENT

Public Lands will continue to be on the forefront of environmentalism, employing sustainable operations practices such as conserving water resources for greater resilience to climate change and making significant contributions to an equitable and healthier natural environment such as increasing tree cover that improves regional air quality and provides bird habitat.

## SUSTAIN: ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH & SUSTAINABILITY

*“In nature nothing exists alone.”- Rachel Carson, Silent Spring*

### ENVIRONMENTAL CHALLENGES FACING SLC’S PUBLIC LANDS

The idea of sustainability as we know it today evolved out of the environmental movement in the mid-1900s. Implicitly, our ability to sustain environmental health relies on our understanding of landscape ecology: relationships between all life, great and small, on our planet and the cultivation of natural cycles that bind these relationships. For Salt Lake City’s Public Lands, the cycles that bind us to the environment (landscape) include our recreation activities that provide physical and mental wellness to our community: hiking in the Foothills Natural Area, enjoying the scenic views of our city golf courses and natural lands, or commuting to work under the shade of the urban tree canopy.

The environmental health and scenic qualities of these landscapes are threatened with global and local stressors. The rapid loss of biodiversity (or richness of different types of plants and animals) is a global phenomenon. It is estimated that possibly half or more of all current species could be at risk

of extinction in the foreseeable future worldwide.<sup>1</sup> Locally, *Water Strategies for the Great Salt Lake*<sup>2</sup>, reported a historical decline in lake water levels due to human development, water use and sustained drought. Maintaining water in our creeks, the Jordan River and the Great Salt Lake is essential to protecting riparian habitat critical to local wildlife and migratory birds along the Central Flyway. At a citywide scale, recent studies aiming to project the impact of climate change found that by 2050 Salt Lake City’s temperatures could rise ten degrees and feel more like Las Vegas today.<sup>3</sup> Within Public Land’s territories, Salt Lake City’s urban forest has been in decline over the last 20 years.<sup>4</sup> With recent studies citing our evolution into an “indoor species,” spending only minutes a day outside, the physical and plant-based infrastructure that welcomes us outdoors so that we can connect with nature

<sup>1</sup> Alvey, A.A. (2006). *Promoting and preserving biodiversity in the urban forest*. *Urban Forestry & Urban Greening* 5 195-201. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ufug.2006.09.003>.

<sup>2</sup> Clyde, S; DenBleyker, J; Harding, B; & Clyde, S; (2020). *Water Strategies for Great Salt Lake*.

<sup>3</sup> Bastin JF, Clark E, Elliott T, Hart S, van den Hoogen J, et al. (2019). *Understanding climate change from a global analysis of city analogues*. *PLOS ONE* 14(10): e0224120. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0224120>.

<sup>4</sup> Dettenmaier, M; Kuhns, M; McAvoy, D; & Unger, B. <https://forestry.usu.edu/files/utah-forest-facts/trees-and-climate-change.pdf>

is essential (e.g., accessible trails, community vegetable gardens, playgrounds, urban forests, water-efficient irrigation systems, etc.). For the SLC Public Lands system, the *2019 Needs Assessment*<sup>5</sup> found that 63% of those types of assets are in fair to poor condition.

### DESIRES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR SUSTAIN

The opportunities to think globally about climate change and act locally at the scale of SLC’s Public Lands is critically important to the community. With over 12,000 participants in this master plan effort, many provided suggestions on how to sustain and enhance Public Lands’ environmental health. The project survey saw 90% of respondents ranking two transformational projects that are emblematic of the Sustain goal, “Put Environment First” and “Grow Our Urban Forest,” as their top priorities in terms of urgency and importance. Supporting ideas that resonated with many in the community are displayed in the quotes on the following page.

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.slcdocs.com/parks/SLCPLNeedsAssessment.pdf>

**“ENCOURAGE NON-MOTORIZED VISITATION  
TO REDUCE CARBON EMISSIONS.”**



**“LANDSCAPE WITH  
ECOLOGICAL GOALS  
THAT SUPPORT BIRDS  
AND BEES.”**

**BEAUTIFUL PARKS DON’T HAVE TO BE THE  
COLOR GREEN. THE FUTURE WILL BE LESS  
WATER. XERISCAPE CAN BE BEAUTIFUL  
AND ECOLOGICALLY SOUND.”**

**-COMMENTS FROM THE  
2021 PUBLIC SURVEY**



# SUSTAIN: ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH & SUSTAINABILITY

# EQUITY ANALYSIS POPULATION AND ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH

## EQUITY & ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

NRPA's Story Map "Equity in Parks and Recreation" highlights how government policies "increased local park access for some, while significantly limiting it for others, especially by income, education, race and ethnicity."<sup>6</sup> Policies such as segregation, racial covenants and redlining have formed marginalized and historically underserved neighborhoods which suffer greater environmental inequities from industrial pollution and lack of investment.

Today these communities continue to experience inequities formed by policies of the past. Research demonstrates that such neighborhoods have less tree canopy, higher urban temperatures, less permeable ground to absorb stormwater, and greater levels of air and noise pollution. In Salt Lake City, park and trail use during the pandemic increased by most demographic groups but decreased among older adults, females, homeowners, and low-income households

according to research conducted by University of Utah.<sup>7</sup>

Parks and open space create an opportunity to address these inequities through environmental improvements that create more equitable access to nature and provide benefits which lead to greater health outcomes. The 2019 *Public Lands Needs Assessment*<sup>8</sup> took the first steps toward understanding equity in access to nature by identifying high needs areas which mapped factors such as gaps in park access, age, and income. This assessment can be expanded upon to highlight communities that continue to experience environmental inequity.

Figure 15 Equity Map was created combining environmental and demographic maps of equity disparity indicators to identify priority areas for provision and improvement of parks, natural areas, and trails. The indicators can be weighted by importance to prioritize investment in locations that advance equity goals.

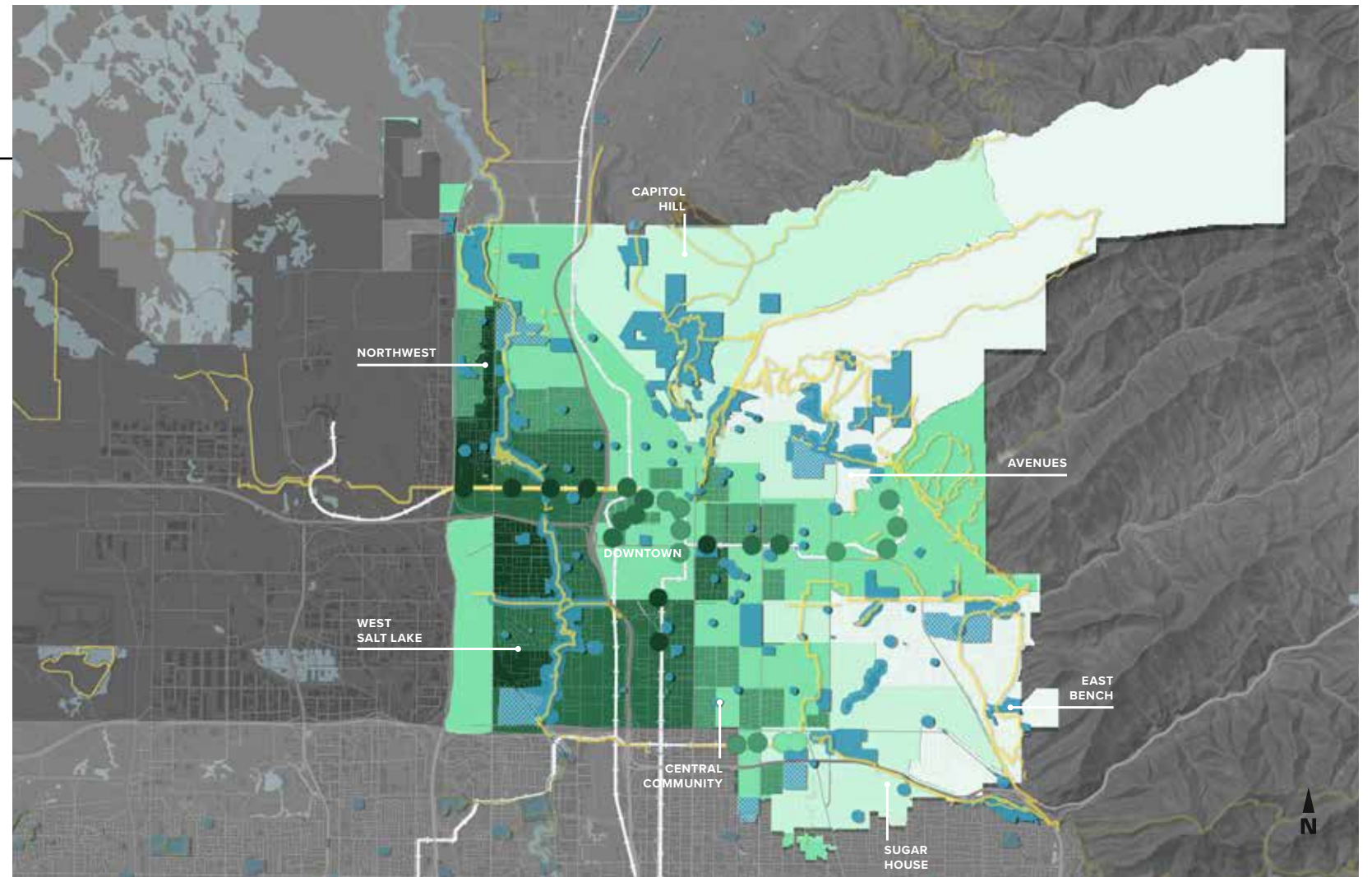
<sup>7</sup> JAPA 2021 "Who visited parks and trails more or less during COVID-19 pandemic, and why? Garcia, Ivis; Park, Keunhyun; Keuntae, Kim.

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.slcdocs.com/parks/SLCPLNeedsAssessment.pdf>

### LEGEND

- HIGHEST EQUITY PRIORITY
- VERY HIGH EQUITY PRIORITY
- HIGH EQUITY PRIORITY
- MEDIUM EQUITY PRIORITY
- LOW EQUITY PRIORITY
- VERY LOW EQUITY PRIORITY
- PARKS AND NATURAL LANDS
- GOLF COURSES
- CEMETERY
- EXISTING TRAILS
- UTA TRAX STATIONS (COLOR SHADE INDICATES EQUITY PRIORITY)

*The Highest Equity Priority Areas (darkest green shade) depict the greatest number of these indicators are concentrated in this location.*



### EQUITY MAP INDICATORS

#### Socio-Economic

##### CDC Social Vulnerability Index

- Below Poverty
- Unemployed
- Household Income
- No High School Diploma
- Aged 65 or Older
- Aged 17 or Younger
- Civilian with a Disability
- Single-Parent Households
- Minority
- Aged 5 or Older who Speaks English "Less than Well"
- Multi-Unit Structures
- Mobile Homes
- Crowding
- No Vehicle
- Group Quarters

#### Population

##### US Census Bureau (2020 Census Redistricting Data)

- Population Density

##### TAZ Population Projections for 2050 (WFRC)

- Areas of Population Growth Projection

#### Environment

##### EPA Environmental Justice Index

- Air Toxins Respiratory Health Index

##### CDC Places Health Data

- Poor Mental Health
- Lack of Physical Activity

##### NLCD Tree Canopy Cover

- Low Percent Tree Canopy

Figure 15: Equity Analysis Map.

<sup>6</sup> <https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/5727e40084614c559bf0440dc5a21f7f>

# SUSTAIN: STRATEGIES & POLICIES OVERVIEW

The following recommended strategies and policies are high-level guidance for Public Lands operations and maintenance that direct how Public Lands will achieve the plan goal of sustain over the next decade. The community identified two

keystone, transformational projects to support the overall goal of sustain. Working in tandem with the overall strategies and policies in this table, these projects root the 20-year vision with on-the-ground improvements that will contribute to the sustainability

of Salt Lake City’s quality of life for humans, plants and animals. Additional detail for implementation is provided in “Chapter 8 Action Strategies” of this document.



City of Reno pesticide-free parks program.

Photo: <http://www.ourtownreno.com/keeping-reno-rad/2020/4/16/robb-dunmore-renewing-a-charge-to-get-reno-truly-pesticide-free>



Xerces Society low-water pollinator gardens on golf courses.

Photo: <https://www.golfcourseindustry.com/article/habitat-for-humanity/>



Pima County native plant program and nursery.

<https://webcms.pima.gov/cms/One.aspx?pageld=220052>

SUSTAIN: HIGH-LEVEL STRATEGIES AND POLICIES	
<b>Strategy S-1</b>	<b>Position Public Lands to improve Salt Lake City’s climate resiliency goals.</b>
Supporting Policy 1.1	Create a Climate-Resilience Plan which establishes environmental metrics combined with robust data collection and monitoring to guide adaptive management that benefits climate resiliency.
Supporting Policy 1.2	Emphasize water conservation and stormwater management in Public Lands capital projects and infrastructure upgrades.
Supporting Policy 1.3	Develop an Operations Management Standards Plan which continues to reduce the climate impact of Public Lands operations through efficient practices, equipment upgrades, and staff training.
<b>Strategy S-2</b>	<b>Position Public Lands as a City leader for driving improvements in environmental health and environmental justice.</b>
Supporting Policy 2.1	Develop an Urban Forestry Master Plan that will increase tree canopy across the city, with a focus on equitable distribution of tree cover.
Supporting Policy 2.2	Increase the scope and capacity of the Native Plants & Biodiversity Program and incorporate biodiversity and native plants into every compatible city project.
Supporting Policy 2.3	Collaborate across jurisdictional boundaries to restore the quality of SLC’s land, water and air.
Supporting Policy 2.4	Prioritize investments to address equity and environmental justice as guided by equity mapping, such as Figure 15 Equity Map.

## CASE STUDIES SUPPORTIVE RESEARCH FINDINGS

Parks and public lands throughout the country are increasingly focused on “green/sustainable” initiatives and practices and are expanding their roles in addressing ways to mitigate climate change. The following are some study findings and examples for SLC to consider.

- The City of Reno, Nevada has formed a pesticide-free parks program, implementing best practices in maintenance and design to reduce the use of pesticides. It has successfully created ten pesticide free neighborhood parks and two pesticide free downtown parks.

- The Xerces Society published design guidelines in their report *Making Room for Native Pollinators on Golf Courses*.<sup>9</sup> Once established, xeric pollinator plantings require less water than turf or traditional horticultural plantings.
- As part of an overarching Sonoran Desert Conservation Plan, Pima County, Arizona created a native plant program to preserve biological heritage and mitigate damage to the local ecosystem caused by urban development.

<sup>9</sup> Shepard, M. (2002). [https://xerces.org/sites/default/files/2018-05/06-001\\_02\\_XercesSoc\\_Making-Room-for-Native-Pollinators.pdf](https://xerces.org/sites/default/files/2018-05/06-001_02_XercesSoc_Making-Room-for-Native-Pollinators.pdf)

The program’s nursery propagates plant material for public projects, serving multiple County departments, while providing volunteer and educational opportunities for residents.

- The Gund Institute for Ecological Economies at the University of Vermont calculated that \$1 of investment in public lands returns 100-fold in natural benefits.

# CULTIVATE MORE BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY AND CONSERVATION IN CITY PARKS, URBAN FORESTS, CITY GOLF LANDS AND NATURAL AREAS

## 1. PUT ENVIRONMENT FIRST

### Projects Include:

- Increase landscape resiliency to climate change by reclaiming degraded landscapes with beneficial plants, adopting healthy soil-building practices, practicing water conservation best management, increasing habitat for birds and wildlife and hosting education and engagement on environmental practices.
- Create a Public Lands native plant farm for plant propagation.
- Foster a robust native ecosystem program that improves habitat through planting native and pollinator friendly plants and includes volunteer and educational opportunities operated out of Public Lands' greenhouses and plant farms.



Creating wetland habitat with native plants at Farimont Pond.



Creating Parks & Natural Lands for  
**NATIVE PLANT POLLINATORS**  
& programming to cultivate community  
**STEWARDSHIP**

## SUSTAIN: PUT ENVIRONMENT FIRST

---

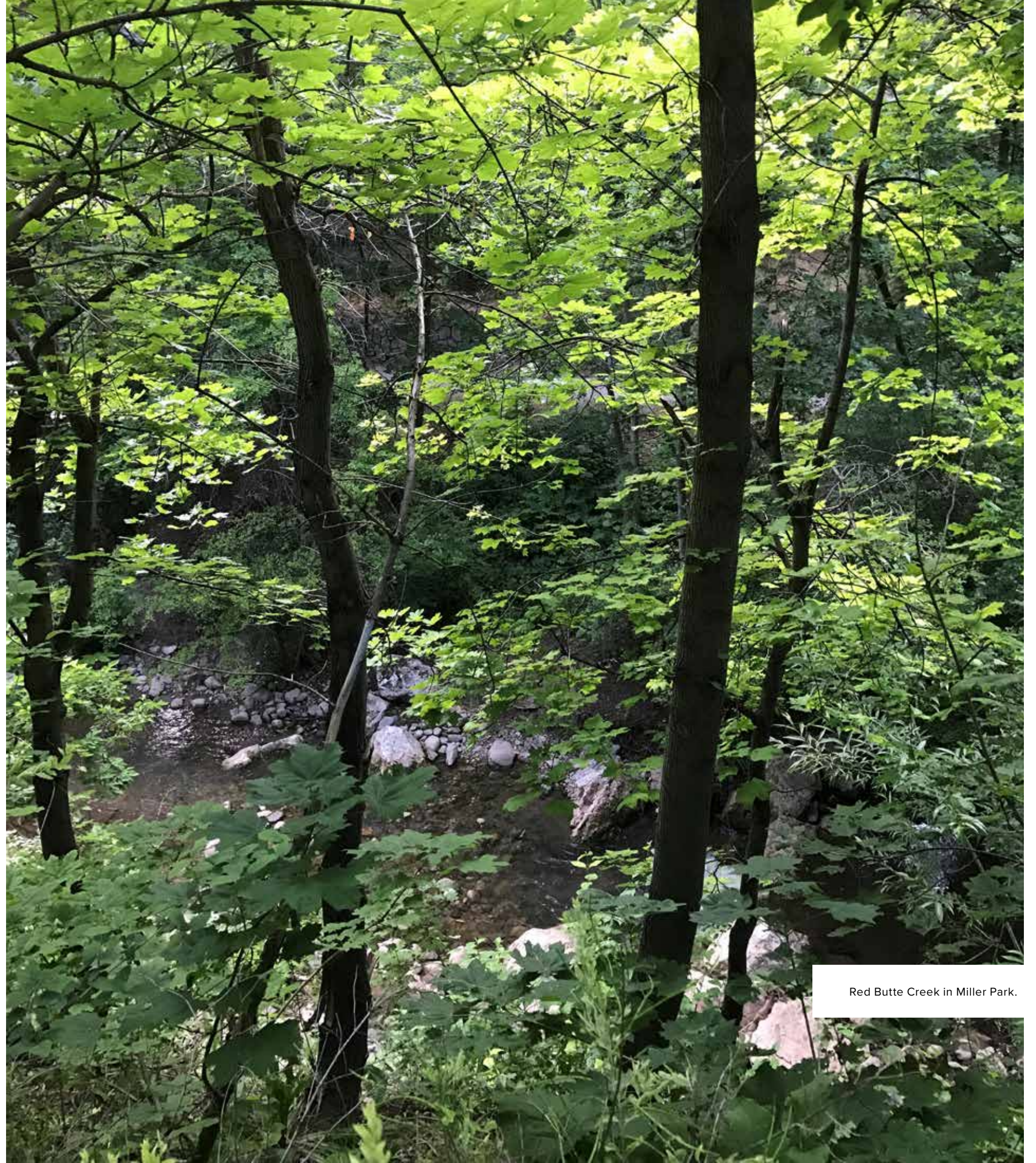
### INCREASING RESILIENCY AND ECOSYSTEM HEALTH

Public Lands staff, the Parks, Natural Lands, Urban Forestry and Trails Advisory Board (PNUT), and the Salt Lake City community clearly called out for this master plan to underline the importance of protecting the environment.

Putting the environment first is about assessing Public Lands natural resources of water, air, soil, plants and wildlife and understanding the pressures climate change and increasing urbanization have on those elements. This project is about understanding the ecosystem health of the thousands of acres of natural lands, city parks, city golf and over 86,500 urban forest trees the City stewards.

This project is at once grand, looking at the city's green space as a regional ecosystem tied to interdepartmental climate measures laid out in the City's *Climate Positive 2040* plan, and precise, understanding the perennial flower species that will thrive in the arid environment while supporting bird and bee populations. It will increase resiliency in the face of a changing climate by conserving limited water resources through Drought Management, Water Budget and Climate Resiliency Plans.

The transformative project "Put Environment First" will need support from staff, volunteers and the community to leverage existing partnerships, learn new ways to partner together to steward lands, and make prioritized decisions on where to invest limited resources that have the greatest environmental return on investment.



Red Butte Creek in Miller Park.



Figure 16: Reimagined Put Environment First Exhibit.

Goatheads create conflicts with recreation



Phragmites blocks views and access to river

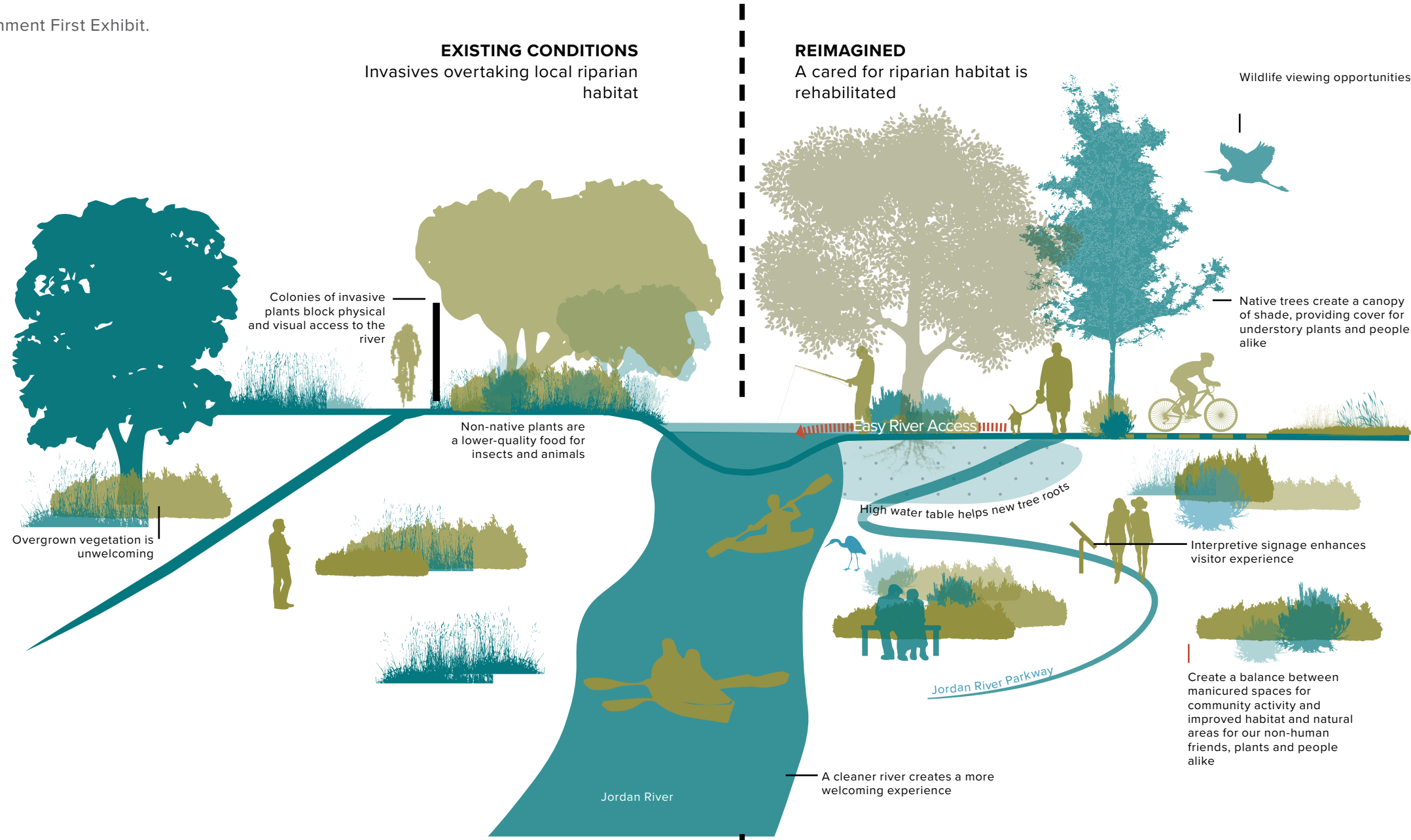


Russian Olive outcompetes native plants



## REHABILITATING WITH NATURAL ASSETS

Public Lands' Natural Areas are ideal locations to put the environment first by restoring native plants that benefit the local ecosystem.



Riparian corridors, such as the Jordan River, are ideal locations for planting new tree additions to the urban forest. The surrounding high water table helps supplement irrigation needed to establish tree root systems in the dry western climate.

Shade from increased tree canopy assists in restoring other native riparian species such as Wood's Rose and Golden Currant, providing cooler temperatures that help plants absorb water efficiently.

Establishing native plants along the river helps to combat invasive species, such as Phragmites, which overtake local ecosystems. Invasives accelerate the disappearance of riparian habitat, reducing food sources for species, such as migrating neo-tropical birds, that depend on the Jordan River.

Invasives often form crowded colonies, blocking physical and visual access to enjoyment of our local rivers and creeks. A well-cared for and established natural environment provides opportunities for more recreational and visual access to the water's edge while also creating essential habitat for birds and pollinators.

Narrowleaf Cottonwoods thrive along riverbanks, increasing the urban forest



New tree canopy provides understory shade to establish plants such as Golden Currant



Migratory birds in the Central flyway depend on Utah riparian habitat

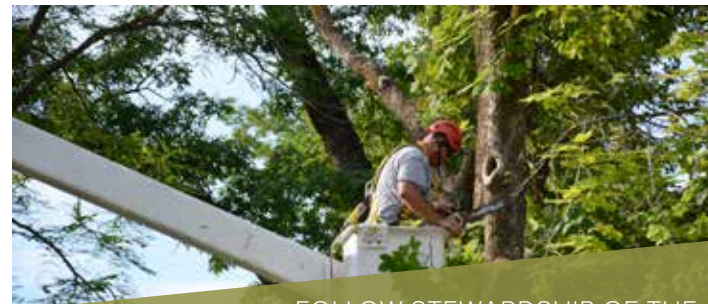
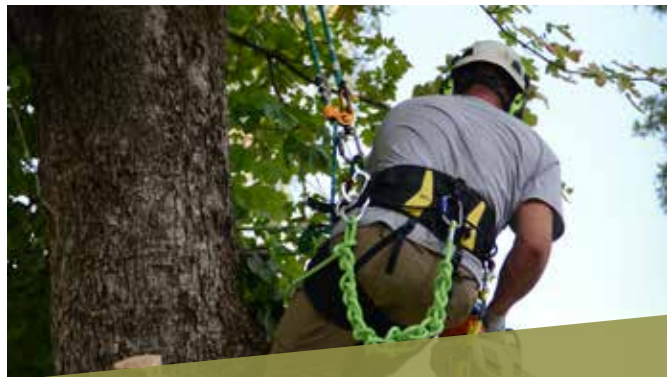


# EXPAND AWARENESS OF HOW TO BE A STEWARD OF OUR URBAN FOREST IN ALL PUBLICLY-OWNED LANDSCAPES INCLUDING CITY PARKS, STREET MEDIANS, CITY GOLF COURSES, RIPARIAN AREAS & NATURAL AREAS

## 2. GROW OUR URBAN FOREST

### Projects Include:

- Launch a public awareness campaign to support new trees that are adapted to Salt Lake City's arid climate and educate on waterwise and tree care best practices.
- As part of an Urban Forest Master Plan, implement projects that increase urban forest canopy and identify strategies to overcome equity barriers. Acknowledging the limited time and water resources on the westside, consolidate tree planting projects with supporting low-water irrigation improvements and regionally appropriate tree selection. This provides extra support to ensure both the trees and the neighborhood benefits from a large-scale, collective effort as well as supporting other goals within the Reimagine Nature master plan.
- Maximize planting of appropriate trees on all publicly owned landscapes such as golf courses, parks and street medians and leverage investment in tree planting with Salt Lake transportation projects.
- Invest in the equipment and resources to responsibly reuse wood from trees removed from our urban forest to create usable wood products such as mulch for our park's playgrounds and gardens.
- Identify successful specimen trees and explore cultivating new cultivars that are climate adaptive.

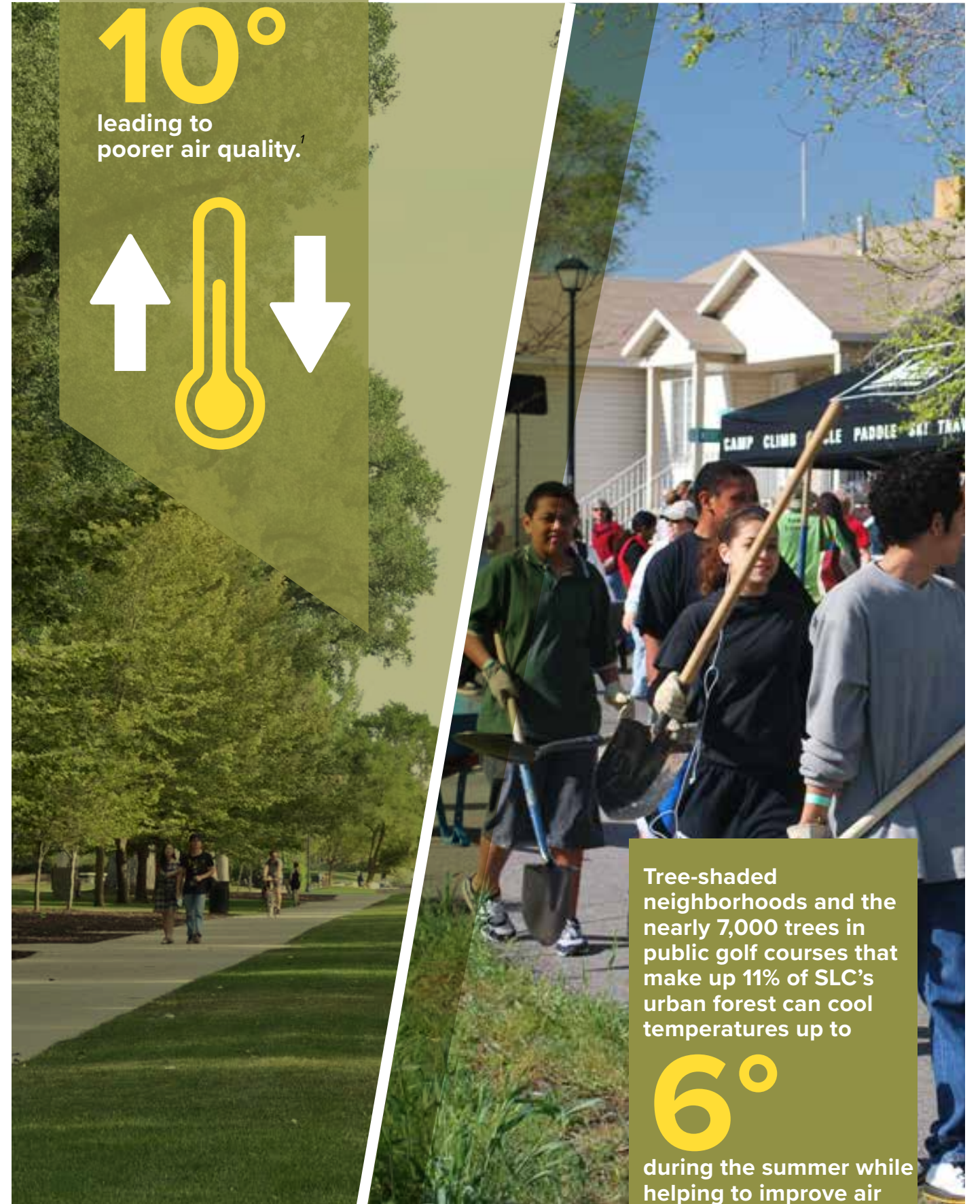
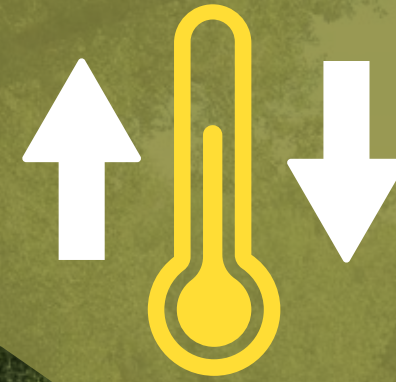


FOLLOW STEWARDSHIP OF THE **URBAN FOREST** TO **PROMOTE** TREE HEALTH AND CARE

By 2050 our temps could rise

# 10°

leading to poorer air quality.<sup>1</sup>



Tree-shaded neighborhoods and the nearly 7,000 trees in public golf courses that make up 11% of SLC's urban forest can cool temperatures up to

# 6°

during the summer while helping to improve air quality.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Bastin JF, Clark E, Elliott T, Hart S, van den Hoogen J, et al. (2019). Understanding climate change from a global analysis of city analogues. PLOS ONE 14(10): e0224120. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0224120>.

<sup>2</sup> Dettenmaier, M; Kuhns, M; McAvoy, D; & Unger, B. <https://forestry.usu.edu/files/utah-forest-facts/trees-and-climate-change.pdf>

## SUSTAIN: GROW THE URBAN FOREST

### INCREASING NEIGHBORHOOD AND CITY-WIDE RESILIENCE

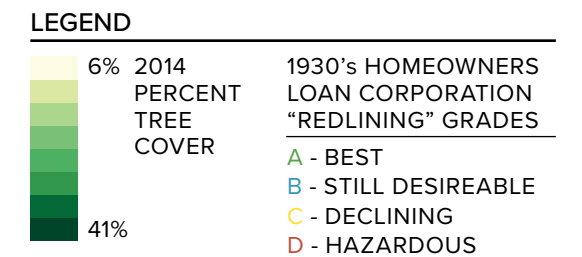
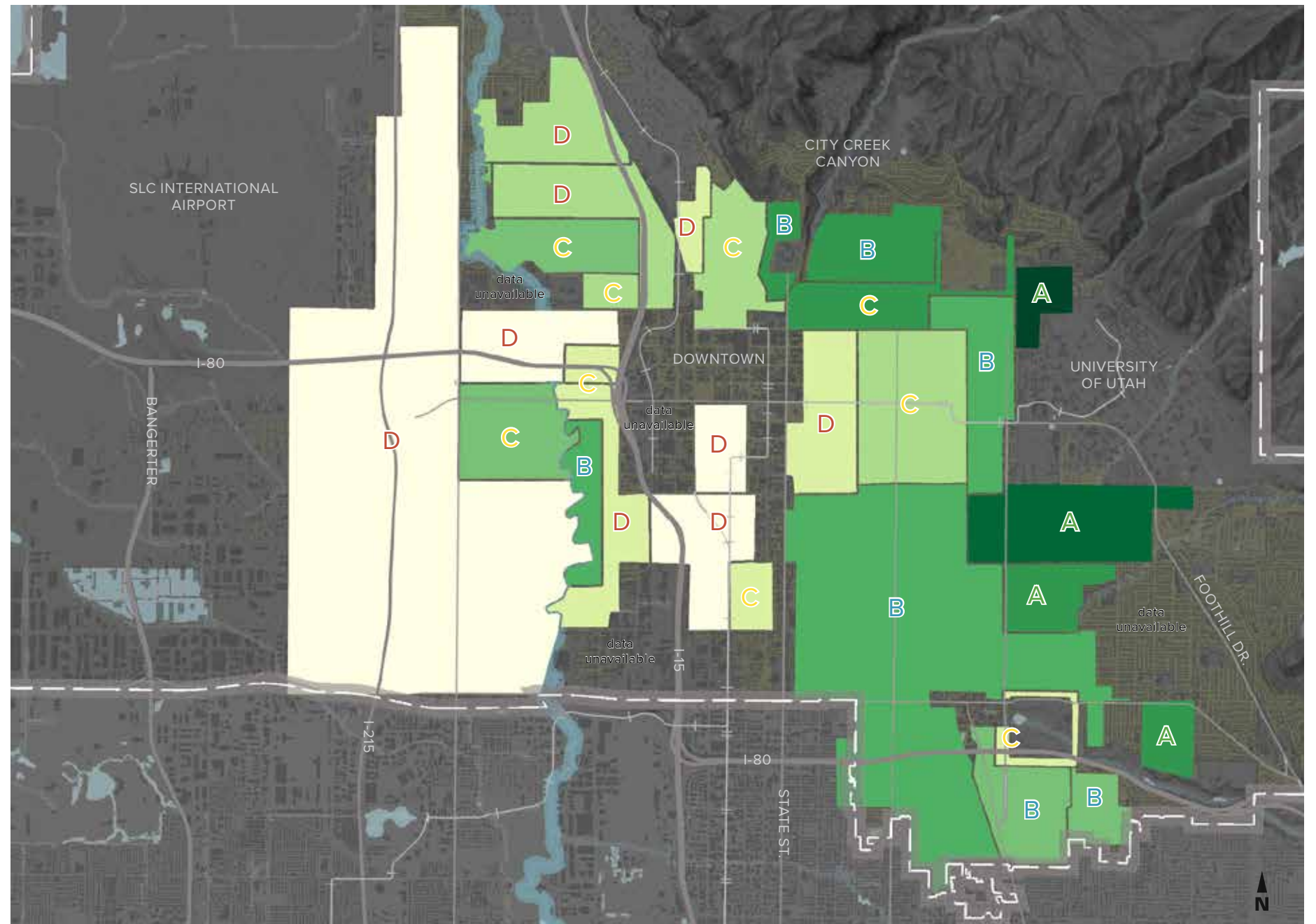
Areas with little to no tree canopy are more common throughout the City’s westside, downtown and central neighborhoods, contributing to hotter temperatures and lower air quality. Some reduced canopy is an effect of historic inequities such as the Home Owners’ Loan Corporation 1930’s redlining practices, overlaid on the map in Figure 17. The westside also has a smaller residential area and larger industrial area, both of which contributes to overall lower tree canopy on the westside of the city. The westside industrial area will see more housing development in the future. There is an opportunity to increase tree canopy in areas of the city that don’t currently have trees to make these places more livable but there are challenges to achieving that. Lower income residents are more reluctant to request a city tree over concerns of the long-term water and tree care costs. Developing an approach to overcome these real cost barriers in lower income neighborhoods is an important factor in increasing and sustaining healthy tree canopy. Property owners and landlords may not be focused on the long-term

benefits that trees provide to their properties. In the downtown area, many uses compete for the limited public right-of-way allocated for trees and pedestrians. Identifying ways to prioritize trees in the downtown will increase the comfort of the public realm. This can include focus on the role park strips play as important spaces for trees, in addition to providing city resiliency by reducing heat and absorbing storm water.

While the traditional focus of forming tree-lined streets is important, planting trees in Public Land’ parks, golf courses and natural areas creates significant impacts to enhanced neighborhood resiliency. In these cared-for, often irrigated spaces, trees can have higher survival rates and mature, providing increased environmental benefits. These spaces also allow for trees to be planted in dense groupings, making them stronger and more resilient to damaging wind storms such as 2020’s derecho.

Critical to success is allocating dedicated resources to the long-term care of the urban forest infrastructure that is installed. This will rely on both public employees and private property owners who are committed to and educated regarding the stewardship of these trees.

## REDLINING AND THE URBAN FOREST



**Figure 17:** Tree Canopy and Historic Homeowner’s Loan Corporation Redlining Grades.  
\*Map adapted from upcoming SLC Urban Forest Action Plan research.

## CASE STUDIES- SUPPORTIVE RESEARCH FINDINGS

According to the Baltimore Wood Reuse Project, “wood is an abundant, renewable resource—we should use it more.”<sup>1</sup>

The project has created a successful model for recycling wood waste from Urban Forest operations, keeping it out of limited landfills and creating sustainable, locally sourced products such as bark mulch that can be reused in City parks and open spaces. Program partners repurpose the wood as materials for sustainable building, mulch, and artisan furniture and art.

Other successful outcomes have included creating jobs for those with barriers to employment and reducing operations and maintenance costs. Applying the model in Salt Lake City would provide opportunities for Urban Forestry to increase sustainable operations practices and reduce carbon footprints while creating green, equitable job opportunities.

<sup>1</sup> Baltimore Wood Project — Rethinking Wood in the City



Photo Source: (Above) <http://baltimorewoodproject.org/> (Below) Wood waste from the Urban Forestry can be reused for other purposes.



Tree Recycling: Wood from downed trees can be reused as mulch or urban artwork.



Low-water trees: Common Hackberry adds to the tree canopy while conserving water in SLC's dry climate.



Tree Protection: Policy changes could better protect valuable mature trees during construction.



## CASE STUDIES- SUPPORTIVE RESEARCH FINDINGS

The city of Denver works with the Downtown Denver Partnership to collaborate on supporting urban tree health and new planting. Like Salt Lake City, Denver residents and business owners are responsible for the maintenance of trees near the sidewalks and streets. While many programs provided free or low-cost trees to residents and businesses, the average life of new tree plants was only seven to twelve years due to the dry and hot conditions created by sun-warmed concrete and asphalt and worn-down irrigation infrastructure. In order to promote tree longevity and the benefits of a mature, shady tree canopy, the city and partners embraced multi-pronged efforts from awareness campaigns to maintenance support through the Urban Forest Initiative. As part of this initiative, city leaders formed a Downtown Denver Business Improvement District that funds the Tree Health Program to support commercial property owners in tree care (fertilization, pest management, watering) of over 1,800 downtown trees.

## 4

# CONNECT: ACCESSIBLE & CONNECTED GREEN SPACES

## GOAL STATEMENT

Well-maintained, welcoming trails, streets, public transportation, and sidewalks are interconnected as the city's circulatory system. This system connects pedestrians, cyclists, and riders to the city's green spaces and outstanding natural landscapes of Salt Lake City's Public Lands: mountains, foothills, valley, wetlands, and lakes. The City will continue to enhance these systems and increase connectors to include everyday destinations ranging from the daycare, library, grocery store, pharmacy and museum. This adds convenient access to walk or ride along a greenway, adding steps to pedometers and enriching health and wellbeing.

The goal of *Connect* seeks to link SLC's natural assets: the greenway corridors, natural areas, mountains and the Great Salt Lake.

## CONNECT: ACCESSIBLE & CONNECTED GREEN SPACES

---

### CHALLENGES TO ACCESSING GREEN SPACE

Salt Lake City's Great Basin Valley, Wasatch foothills and Great Salt Lake shore uplands inspired the 1992 SALT LAKE CITY OPEN SPACE PLAN that recognized how disconnected these spaces were to the urban park systems at the time. Since 1992, progress has been made to connect parks and stormwater properties to natural open spaces through a network of green corridors. The Reimagine Nature Master Plan goal of "Connect" ties back to this earlier planning effort and positions Public Lands to continue to be the city's "back yard" of conserved mountains, foothills, creeks and wetlands. Work-in-progress that supports this goal includes strategic open space preservation, stream restoration, park acquisition and partnerships to maintain and connect wildlife habitat corridors.

An overall sense of environmental unease and costly recovery efforts confronts Salt Lake City with record hot weather, longer droughts, increased wildfire frequency, damaging storms, more poor

air quality days and loss of the diversity of plants and wildlife in our landscapes.

Counter these depressing stressors with findings on the benefits of spending time outside: blood pressure drops within minutes of just seeing a tree. So why aren't more people spending time outdoors? Over the last decade of parks and open space surveys, North American city dwellers identified frequently recurring barriers to accessing green space: lack of leisure time, lack of affordable transportation (e.g., complete sidewalks, bus, etc.) or inability to travel to a space, and lack of knowledge about where to go to enjoy the outdoors.

#### 10-MINUTE WALK

Our time is precious; the modern world's busy demands of work, learning and commuting consume most of our waking hours and impact our available time for recreation outdoors. Children in the U.S. spend only four to seven minutes a day outside and obesity levels in Salt Lake City have risen since 2013. For cities across North America, urban dwellers, health care providers

and environmentalists consistently advocate for visions of an equitable network of city trails, sidewalks, bike lanes and green streets, providing all residents access to parks, work, shopping, and culture within a 5-to-10-minute safe walk of their households. City Parks Alliance and Trust for Public Land, leaders in urban green space research, endorse the 10-minute walk distance as a baseline standard for the United States because studies have shown the tremendous benefit of close-to-home green space to counter threats to our physical wellness and mental well-being. For the SLC Public Lands system, the 2019 NEEDS ASSESSMENT found that most residents are within a 10-minute walk of green spaces, with some areas (markedly on the westside) that need more parks and/or more investment in park renewal.

#### AFFORDABLE, ACCESSIBLE TRANSPORTATION

The daytime population of downtown Salt Lake City nearly doubles during the week with the average commute time of 20-25 minutes. Imagine if that commute

**"IT IS ONE GREAT PURPOSE OF [CENTRAL] PARK TO SUPPLY TO THE HUNDREDS OF THOUSANDS OF TIRED WORKERS, WHO HAVE NO OPPORTUNITY TO SPEND THEIR SUMMERS IN THE COUNTRY, A SPECIMEN OF GOD'S HANDIWORK THAT SHALL BE TO THEM, INEXPENSIVELY, WHAT A MONTH OF TWO IN THE WHITE MOUNTAINS OR THE ADIRONDACKS IS, AT GREAT COST, TO THOSE IN EASIER CIRCUMSTANCES."**

—Frederick Law Olmstead,  
*Letter to New York City Board of Commissioners, 1858.*

**"[THE LAND] HOLDS SO MUCH OF OUR CULTURE, OUR HISTORY AND OUR KNOWLEDGE...IN THE FACE OF CLIMATE CHANGE AND EVERYTHING THAT'S COMING, THESE LESSONS AND ANSWERS ON HOW TO LIVE WITH THE LANDSCAPES THAT ALL OF OUR TRIBES HAVE EVOLVED WITH, THOSE ANSWERS ARE ALL EMBEDDED IN THIS LAND."**

— Ahjani Yepa, Utah Dine Bikeyah,  
*Inside Climate News,*  
*April 21, 2021*



## CONNECT: ACCESSIBLE & CONNECTED GREEN SPACES

---

changed from auto-driven to more active ways to reach work and school that also connect residents to parks and green spaces. People would add beneficial time outside in nature to their daily lives. Utah's *Unified Transportation Plan* calls for a third of the state's future transportation investments to be invested in transit (defined as mobility transportation including bicycles, walking, vanpool, buses, light rail, commuter rail, street cars, etc.). Leveraging these investments with the city's growing green network and ensuring that people of all abilities (people with cognitive disabilities, elders with declining mobility, to parents schlepping a 36"-wide stroller) can access routes is critical for equity. Beyond providing access, many forms of active transportation are free to low-cost-an important factor as 45% of Salt Lake City metro renters are cost burdened. Low-income and subsequent burdens of housing and transportation costs can limit the amount of leisure time and transportation options people have to enjoy public lands. The challenge is thus twofold: one of connecting more ways of walking and cycling for everyone in Salt

Lake City while prioritizing those routes that provide access to urban parks, natural areas, and trees within the city that also connect to the larger landscapes of mountains, foothills, basins, wetlands and lakes.

### AWARENESS

The third most common barrier to getting outside is lack of knowledge: where are places to recreate, how to get there, what to expect when they get there, and who to recreate with. This awareness also has implications for long-term stewardship. The writer Vladimir Nabokov muses, "Reality is a very subjective affair. I can only define it as a kind of gradual accumulation of information; and as specialization. If we take a lily, for instance, or any other kind of natural object, a lily is more real to a naturalist than it is to an ordinary person. But it is still more real to a botanist." Magical landscapes of trees, rock, creeks, marsh and salty lake where plants and wildlife abound in the Salt Lake City region. But if the public doesn't understand what is there and how to leave no trace, they will be unlikely to understand how to be stewards of the land (how to

enhance the health of the urban greenspaces and surrounding wilderness through political advocacy, financial support, stewardship, land conservation and reducing individual environmental footprint). Or to put it simply, we don't know what we don't know. Public education strategies and wayfinding can help cities connect people to experiences in nature, improving public health while growing caring stewards of plants, animals, and landscapes.

### DESIRES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR CONNECT

Creating opportunities to connect people to public lands resonated strongly with participants in the master plan process. During the most recent community survey, 90% of respondents said they are satisfied with the transformative project "Connect Mountains to Lakes" and 75% supported "Just 5 Minutes from Here," a campaign to share information on how people can access and learn about public lands. Enriching the discussion about connecting people to place are quotes from participants, listed to the right.

**"MORE EMPHASIS ON MAKING AREAS BIKE AND BUS FRIENDLY TO REDUCE THE NEED TO DRIVE TO PARKS."**

**"ACCESS IS AWESOME, AND WE WANT PEOPLE TO GET OUT INTO THESE SPACES BUT HAVING HUMANS IN THESE AREAS CAN IMPACT WHAT THE HABITAT LOOKS LIKE, SO JUST BALANCING THOSE NEEDS AND BEING ABLE TO PROTECT LAND IN CERTAIN WAYS FOR WILDLIFE IS SOMETHING TO THINK ABOUT."**

**"UNCOVER AND RESTORE THE BURIED AND IMPAIRED CREEKS IN THE SALT LAKE VALLEY."**

**-COMMENTS FROM THE 2021 PUBLIC SURVEY**



# TRANSIT ACCESS TO PARKS IN SALT LAKE CITY

## LEGEND

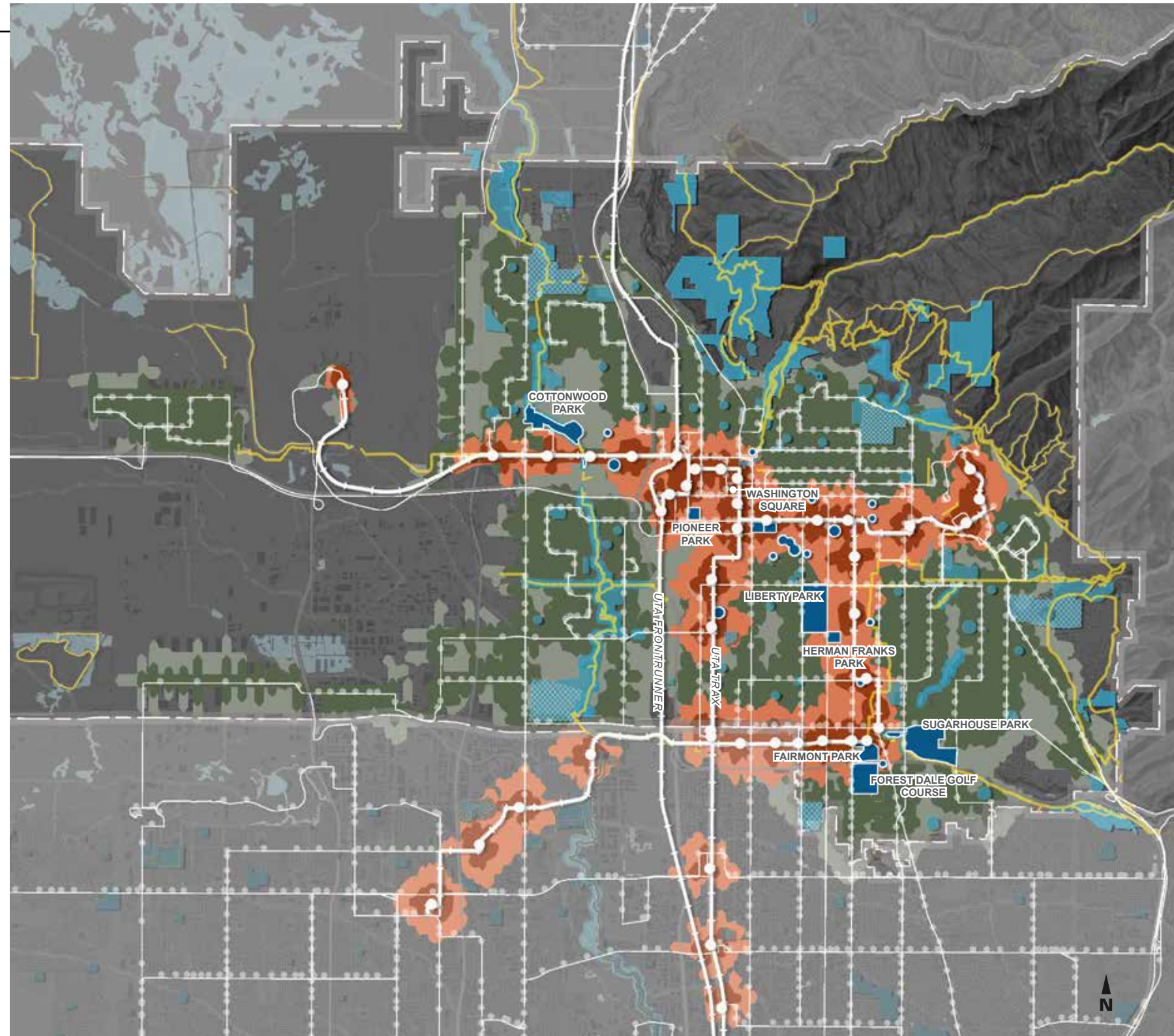


**“CAR FREE SUNDAYS IN LIBERTY PARK, INCORPORATE PARKS AND TRAILS INTO PUBLIC TRANSIT INITIATIVES MAYBE A SPECIAL RECREATION LOOP.”**

**“NONE OF THIS WORKS WITHOUT A PLAN FOR EQUITABLE PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION AND A BROADER CITY/COUNTY/STATE FOCUS ON AIR QUALITY AND OTHER ENVIRONMENTAL SAFETY CONCERNS.”**

**“FOCUS ON ACCESSIBLE BY PUBLIC TRANSPORT OR BIKE INSTEAD OF MORE PARKING FOR CARS.”**

**-COMMENTS FROM THE 2021 PUBLIC SURVEY**



**Figure 18:** Transit and Park Access Analysis Map.

## TRANSIT CONNECTING PARKS

Respondents to the Reimagine Nature survey continually cited the need for increased access by public transit for equity of access, low-carbon solutions, and to resolve the issue of lack of parking.

According to the 2019 Needs Assessment, The Central Community has the lowest park LOS and is expected to experience the most future growth in the city. The addition of Fleet Block as a public green space could fill this gap and increase options to access parks by rail with proximity to the nearby TRAX station. As the City develops, consideration should be given to the relationship of parks and transit and affordable, environmentally friendly options for park accessibility.

Figure 18 Access Analysis Map highlights existing parks within walking distance to rail station locations. Dark red areas are within a five minute walk of TRAX stations and dark green shows areas within a five minute walk of a bus stop. Adding or enhancing parks and trails within these areas should be prioritized for more equitable access. Imagine being able to visit a different park every week just by stepping off a different bus or rail stop.



# CONNECT: STRATEGIES AND POLICIES OVERVIEW

The following recommended strategies and policies are high-level guidance for Public Lands operations and maintenance that direct how Public Lands will achieve the plan goal of “connect” over the next decade. The community identified two

transformational projects to support the overall goal of connect. Working in tandem with the strategies and policies in this table, these projects root the 20-year vision with on-the-ground improvements. Additional detail

for implementation is provided in Chapter 8 Action Strategies.

## CONNECT: HIGH-LEVEL STRATEGIES AND POLICIES

<b>Strategy C-1</b>	<b>Connect people to information about their park system to increase visitation.</b>
Supporting Policy 1.1	Help the public navigate to and around their public lands system with intuitive physical wayfinding and digital information.
Supporting Policy 1.2	Provide information that helps the public interpret and appreciate their parks and natural lands, with the use of diverse, interesting programming and activities, education and messaging, physical and digital interpretive content, and park ambassadors.
Supporting Policy 1.3	Facilitate access to information about use of SLC’s public lands by people experiencing homelessness, including available services and resources, hotlines, community partners, and opportunities to engage in cross-community dialogue to help make SLC parks welcoming and safe for sheltered and unsheltered alike.
<b>Strategy C-2</b>	<b>Increase the ease of access to public lands, making it easier to travel to, between and within them.</b>
Supporting Policy 2.1	Promote walking and active transportation by connecting our parks & natural spaces to the City’s alternative transportation network, including bus, TRAX, SLC Green Bike, and on-street / off-street trails.
Supporting Policy 2.2	Invest in greening the urban trail network through tree plantings, stream daylighting, and other methods to interconnect parks with park-like trails.
Supporting Policy 2.3	Incorporate careful consideration of physical limitations, language barriers, and other accessibility accommodations into all Public Lands projects.



Plantings of native species improve biodiversity along the greenway.



A naturalized section of the Tsunga Wash increases riparian habitat while providing stormwater infrastructure.



The new greenway trail parallels a section of the Tsunga Wash.

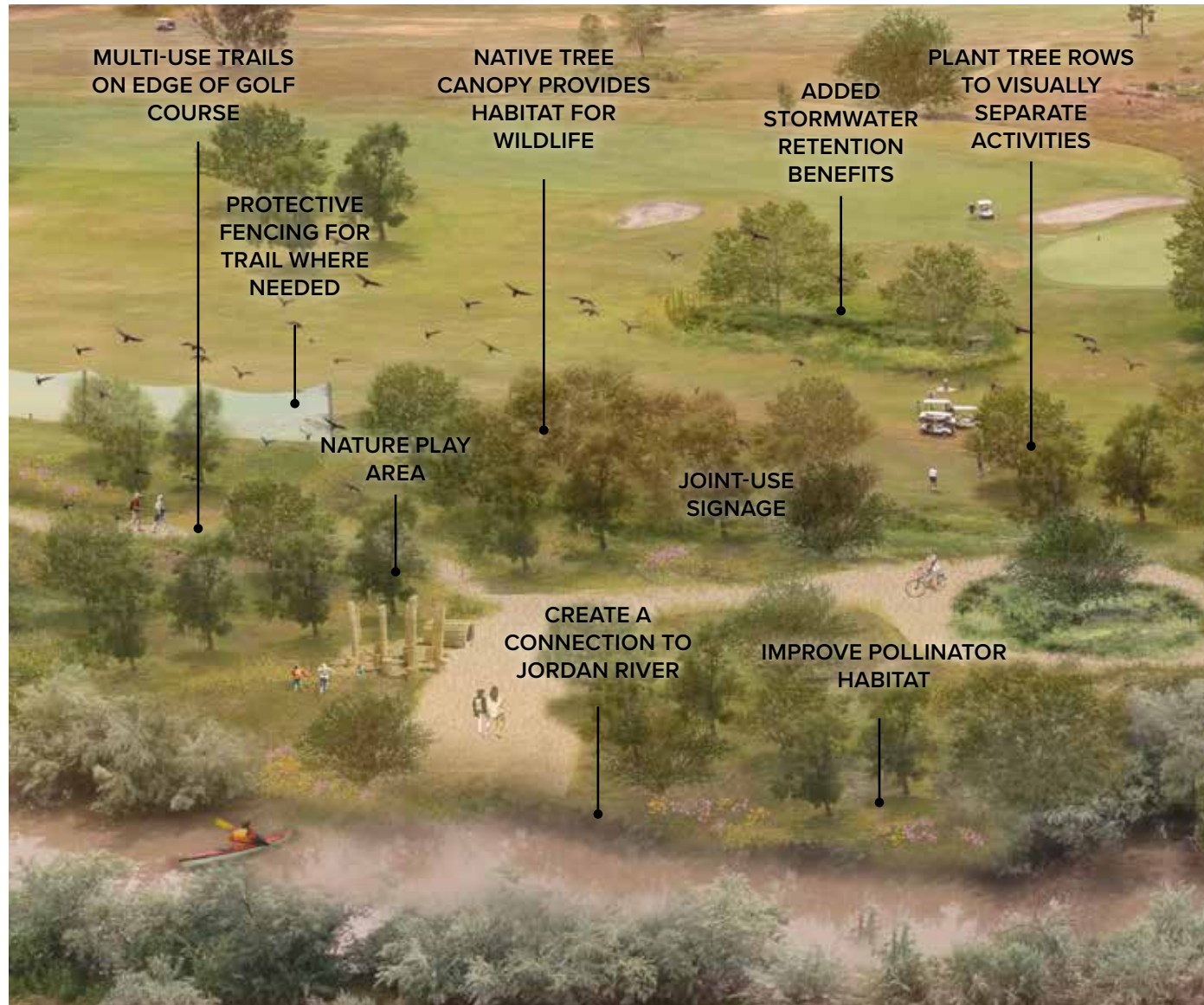
Photo credits: <https://rposd.lacounty.gov/portfolio/tujunga-wash-greenway/>

## CASE STUDY:

**TUJUNGA WASH GREENWAY AND STREAM RESTORATION PROJECT**  
Completed in 2007, the 1.2-mile Tujunga Wash Greenway and Stream Restoration Project in Los Angeles, California annually infiltrates up to 118 million gallons of stormwater, increases park space per person by 21% and used all native plants during restoration (saving 70-80% potential water use using conventional methods). The Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority partnered with the region’s flood control district and public works to complete the 50 to 60-foot wide greenway that includes 15 acres of riparian habitat, 10-foot wide recreation trails on both sides of the channel and 8 ecological areas with over 1,000 trees.

The Landscape Architecture Foundations’ *Landscape Performance Series* case study on this project underlined the following lessons learned from the Tujunga Wash Greenway to keep in mind for this transformational project:

- Ongoing public education on the seasonal changes of the stream and landscape is essential to build environmental awareness;
- In man-made streambeds, efficient sediment removal maintenance is key for flow;
- Leverage smaller phases as a prototype for establishing baseline measurement and data collection regimes; and
- Establish real-time environmental monitoring for habitat management and hydrological performance.



**Figure 19:** Reimagined Golf Courses Exhibit. Design strategies can enhance compatibility between activities, allowing single-use spaces, such as golf courses, to host additional trail and recreation opportunities and provide comprehensive access for all.

### Case Studies - Portland, Oregon Golf Courses with Public Trails

Three publicly owned golf courses in Portland, Oregon offer miles of walking trails to the public. The trails range from neighborhood-serving jogging trails to regional, paved shared-use paths. At Glendoveer Golf Course, 50,000

rounds of golf are played annually, and more than 100,000 walkers concurrently use a 2-mile fitness trail, in part due to the park deficient adjacent neighborhood. The American Trails organization reports in their case study of this course that no trail users have been hit by errant golf balls. Lessons learned include expanding the 40-parking spot trailhead

used by hikers and pedestrians to access the course and education around golf-trail etiquette and un-leashed dogs. Another good example in Portland is Heron Lakes Golf Course where a 200-yard stretch of the course is used to help fill a trail gap for a larger 40-mile loop.

## SALT LAKE CITY AND BOULDER, COLORADO OFFER TWO WAYS “JUST 5 MINUTES FROM HERE” COULD TAKE INSPIRATION.

### Case Studies - Salt Lake City Children’s Outdoor Bill of Rights

Public Lands worked with diverse youth service providers in SLC to create a CHILDREN’S OUTDOOR BILL OF RIGHTS (#slcoutdoorchildren) and list of outdoor that every child growing up in Salt Lake City should have access to during their childhood for the sake of their physical, mental, social, and ecological health. The Children & Nature Network provides more resources. Activities include:

- Seeing the Great Salt Lake
- Catching a bug
- Splash in a stream
- Identify a wild plant
- Reward stickers and journals for documenting experiences.



The “Just 5 Minutes from Here” wayfinding and informational campaign could leverage these activities and identify destinations to complete the outdoor activities and learn more about stewardship and ecologies of public lands.

### Case Studies - Boulder Public Library and Boulder Creek Path

As the main branch of Boulder Public Library became slated for renewal, the City found that building a new location adjacent to the Boulder Creek Path and greenway would be a more cost-effective option. This also co-located a cultural destination (library) to the city’s downtown greenway and provided the public

access to both experiences. An enclosed walkway bridges the creek between the two library sections and connects to 8.8 miles of trails to other key destinations. Creekside Playground was added adjacent to the library. These places are made more accessible with support from Child-Friendly City Maps produced by youth and activities databases on [growingupboulder.org](http://growingupboulder.org).



**Boulder’s Child-Friendly City Map**



Park-like features surround the City of Boulder, Colorado Main Library. Photo credits: [https://atlaslab.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/4\\_AtlasLab\\_BoulderCivicArea.01.01.jpg](https://atlaslab.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/4_AtlasLab_BoulderCivicArea.01.01.jpg)

**Figure 20:** Connecting Green Spaces Concept Illustration



**BIG MOVES & STRATEGIES**

**IMPROVE CONNECTIONS TO ACTIVE TRANSPORTATION**

Utilize all of public lands parks, golf courses and natural spaces to connect the city's human powered transportation network.

**UTILIZE SPACE**

Find environmental and recreational uses for underutilized public spaces including wide medians, public utility lands and where appropriate, spaces on golf courses.

**ENHANCE THE ENVIRONMENT**

Utilize spaces such as golf courses to increase the urban forest and restore native habitat.

# COMPLETE MISSING LINKS IN REGIONAL TRAILS AND INVEST IN GREENWAYS TO ENHANCE NATURE AND CREEKS WITHIN THE CITY.

## 3. CONNECT MOUNTAINS TO THE LAKE

Projects Include:

- Connect trails from the Eastern side of the Wasatch Mountains to the Foothills Natural Area, The 9 Line Trail to the Jordan River Parkway trail and West to the Salt Lake Marina and mountains.
- Begin to implement the Seven Greenways Vision, creating a regional system of high-quality greenways along Red Butte, Parleys, Emigration and City Creeks, including locations to uncover creeks, add trails, improve natural habitat, and provide for recreation.
- Implement all remaining proposed trails including the McClelland Trail, Folsom Trail, Surplus Canal Trails, and Foothills Trail.

CONNECT OUR  
**PARKS AND NATURAL SPACES** TO THE CITY'S  
**HUMAN POWERED**  
TRANSPORTATION NETWORK



CONNECT SLC'S  
**TRAILS & PARKS** TO  
THE CITY'S BACKYARD  
**NATURAL ASSETS**

## CONNECT: CONNECT MOUNTAINS TO THE LAKE

---

Salt Lake City became a city in large part due to the scenic beauty of the mountains and lake embracing the valley. The 70.7 miles of existing Public Lands trails and 129 miles of planned trails enable many to enjoy walking and cycling access to shady natural areas and parks. But for many areas of the city, access to waterways, the lake and mountains is limited. To address this, “Connect Mountains to the Lake” envisions a vast network of running and walking paths, cycling routes and green corridors.

Imagine being able to connect from the downtown core to the Great Salt Lake or Wasatch Mountain trails. Or, for daily commutes, imagine having safe and welcoming trails that provide opportunities to integrate exercise into the daily commute, making pulses race and filling senses with scenic beauty. “Connect Mountains to the Lake” would promote enhanced connections between

neighborhoods and natural lands, particularly to the Foothills Natural Area. This project also supports protection and greater access of the Foothills Natural Area, a recent plan calls for 65 miles of new trails to help connect this natural treasure to more pedestrians, hikers and cyclists. Protecting the foothills with sustainable, well-connected trails that direct visitation to concentrated areas has an added benefit of protecting undisturbed wildlife habitat.

Beyond the benefit to health and wellness, these connected corridors provide pathways for the movement of birds, mammals and fish and create opportunity for rainwater management that supports ecosystem health. Building and expanding greenways helps increase pervious surfaces that can help clean and manage storm water runoff all the while supporting mature tree canopy that provides shade and habitat.



Views out to the Great Salt Lake from the Foothills.

**Figure 21:** Reimagine Mountains to Lake Connectivity Exhibit.  
EXISTING AND PROPOSED TRAIL CONNECTIONS IN SALT LAKE CITY

**1** Surplus Canal Trail  
(Proposed)



**2** Folsom Trail  
(In Progress)



**3** 9-Line Trail  
(In Progress)



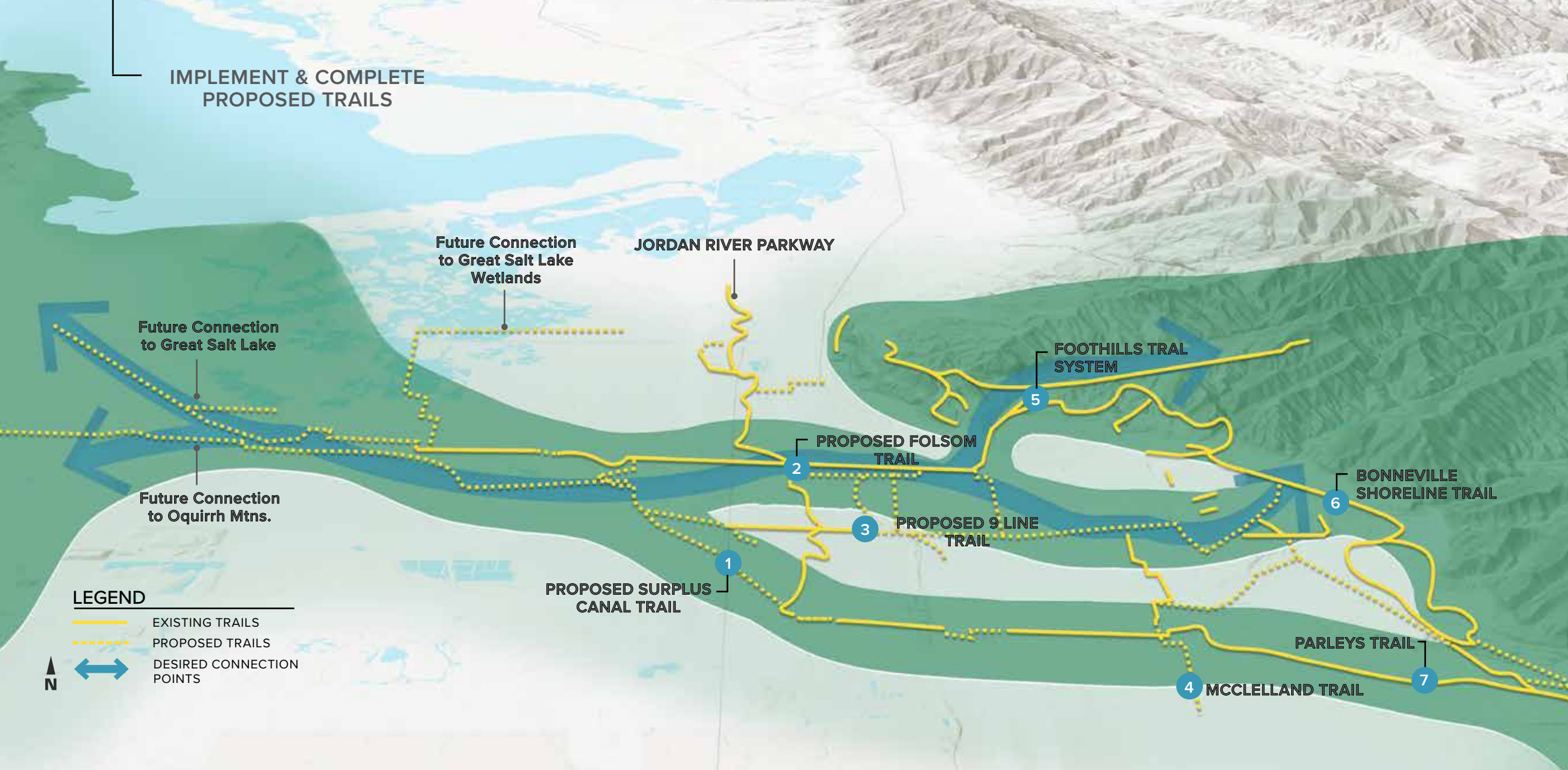
**4** McClelland Trail  
(Portions Completed)



**5** Foothills Trails  
(Proposed Improvements)



**6** Bonneville Shoreline  
(Existing Regional Trail)



**A NATURAL CITY:  
VISION OF THE 1992  
OPEN SPACE PLAN**

The Salt Lake City 1992 Open Space Plan paints a picture of the City through its natural assets. The plan seeks to better connect the City's park system to the natural environment, overcoming manmade barriers and unifying the City by connecting the Wastach foothills, benches, valley floor, creeks, Jordan River and Great Salt Lake wetlands.

SLC Public Lands has come a long way to achieving the 1992 goals, with many trails underway or completed, enhancing access to nature and joining natural features. The goal "connect" seeks to further these objectives, completing proposed trails throughout the City while emphasizing opportunities for enhanced natural areas, greenways and connections to the Jordan River.

# MAKE IT EASIER TO FIND AND EXPLORE NEARBY PARKS, TRAILS AND PUBLIC SPACES TO EXPAND THE PUBLIC'S EXPERIENCES IN NATURE AND BUILD STEWARDSHIP PRINCIPLES AND PRACTICES.

UTILIZING ALL COMMUNITY OUTDOOR **PUBLIC SPACES**



## 4. JUST FIVE MINUTES FROM HERE

Projects Include:

- Initiate an information campaign and tools for learning about parks, tree-care, public activities in green spaces and city golf courses, environmental education, and recreation opportunities.
- Promote other public green space use like libraries, school grounds and the City cemetery as part of a connected system.
- Establish a multi-lingual signage and wayfinding program that reflects Salt Lake City's diversity.

## CONNECT: JUST FIVE MINUTES FROM HERE

Navigating Salt Lake City's roads is fairly straightforward using the north, south, east and west grid system and 660' x 660' blocks. The 70.7-miles of Public Lands trails interface with these roads at trailheads and within green destinations of parks and natural areas. Within this network, hundreds of cultural destinations and stories await hikers, cyclists and pedestrians. Lessons of natural history, environmental stewardship and origin stories of parks are waiting to be told in the 120 languages currently spoken in Utah (Source: U.S. Census).

National best practices also point to the advantage of linking cultural destinations of libraries, safe routes to schools and active recreational destinations to a city's trail network. In Salt Lake City, many of these connections exist, just five minutes from people's day to day lives and can be highlighted

through signage, outreach education and digital campaigns. Co-locating cultural, natural and recreational destinations makes it easier for us to combine the trip to the library with a healthy family walk, enriching our day-to-day lives.

Conversations with Salt Lake City residents who speak English as a second language reveal that including multi-lingual communications in signage and digitally helps make public lands feel more welcoming and inclusive. An added benefit to increased awareness of what is in public lands, is the opportunity to share how to take care of public lands and support tree canopy health, clean water and fresh air.



Signage along the Jordan River Trail points toward city nodes.



**Figure 22:** Reimagine System Connectivity Exhibit.  
 CHOOSE YOUR OWN ADVENTURE USING ALL PUBLIC SPACES:  
 2 POSSIBLE ADVENTURES FROM THE REGIONAL ATHLETIC  
 COMPLEX



**3B ON YOUR WAY, STOP BY TO VOLUNTEER AT THE NATIVE PLANTS NURSERY** → **3C VISIT A FRIEND AT THE SCHOOL PLAYGROUND** → **3D LEARN ABOUT THE HISTORIC WARM SPRINGS** → **3E ENJOY THE SUNSET AND VIEWS OF THE CITY ON YOUR HIKE**

