

GRANTSVILLE GENERAL PLAN FOR A SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY

Grantsville, Utah

The Grantsville General Plan for a Sustainable Community is a model plan prepared for a small rural community in Utah. The plan was developed during the 1993-94 school year by a team of university students as a class project. The city of Grantsville is now rewriting its Master Plan in response to the student's work and is including many of the elements relating to community sustainability.

The student effort was performed in consultation with representatives from the local community. Although the report clearly says that this is not equivalent to a professional product, the large team of students spent a considerable amount of time on research and analysis, and the results are highly informative. The goals of the project were to:

- provide guidance to assist in understanding the current and future capabilities of the community;
- provide a guide for Grantsville to become more environmentally sustainable;
- facilitate a viable, marketable, profitable and sustainable economy; and
- achieve a stable, healthy and enjoyable community through sensitive urban design.

The plan outlines specific actions that Grantsville may take to realize sustainability. They include:

- achieving a balance between resources used and resources generated;
- assuring that resources are as clean (or cleaner) at the end of use as at the beginning;
- assuring that the viability, integrity and diversity of natural systems are restored and maintained;
- achieving enhanced local and regional self-reliance;
- creating a sense of community and maintaining historic cultures; and
- assuring that each generation preserves its legacy for future generations.

Project methodology

The project was sponsored by the

Department of Geography of the University of Utah in Salt Lake City. Twenty-six undergraduate and graduate students prepared the plan as part of a two-quarter Community Planning Workshop. The student group included the County Planner for Tooele County, who is also responsible for community planning in Grantsville. Another member of the group was an engineering student, who contributed to the geologic sections of the plan. Both of these individuals were working on advanced university degrees.



The student team worked under the direction of an adjunct professor, who is a professional planner and serves as a Community Development Advisor at the University's Center for Public Policy and Administration. Staff members and elected officials of both the city of Grantsville and the surrounding Tooele County, and members of the Grantsville historic committee and the Grantsville Soil Conservation District Commission, provided information and assistance. Local citizens provided information on community characteristics and desires in a telephone survey of 152 heads of households and in questionnaires completed by 55 high school seniors.

Identifying community characteristics

The team members conducted extensive research into the characteristics of the community as a basis for developing specific recommendations. Data on the population and demographics of the community, which is located about 30 miles southwest of Salt Lake City, indicates that the city has a population of about 1,100 families, containing approximately 4,720 persons. Data used for a social-cultural analysis covered community activities, crime, housing, social services, and public facilities. A comprehensive environmental analysis includes detailed data and discussions on topics such as: seismic conditions, which present significant hazards; ground water hydrology, which affects the supplies of water available for irrigation during the dry summer months; and land and climate characteristics, particularly soil conditions that affect agricultural productivity. The environmental analysis also discusses wildlife habitats, wetlands, air quality, and alternative agricultural approaches.

Additional research provided data and discussions of local public facilities and safety, covering the police and fire departments, health care, provisions for emergency response and evacuation, and natural resource consumption. An analysis of the local economic base identified a work force of 1,965 persons, of which 618 persons or 31 percent of the residents work in the community. The economic analysis identified agriculture as an important local industry and the Tooele Army Depot as an important local employment center. The analysis reported a high level of retail "leakage" as a result of residents traveling to the town of Tooele and Salt Lake City for shopping, medical services, and entertainment. A further analysis of transportation and circulation covered the range of street types, travel destinations, modal splits, and traffic hazards.

The students documented the city's history, from the earliest pioneer days as a way stop for wagon trains, including the famous Donner Party, and an early Mormon community up to the present time. Students conducted a visual survey of the community to identify current visual assets and liabilities and an imageability test in which residents recorded their perceptions of the key visual landmarks in the community.

Plan recommendations

The Grantsville General Plan for a Sustainable Community identifies a series of goals and recommendations for remedial activities to make the community more sustainable. It recommends the adoption of urban growth policies as means of preserving the small, rural character of the town and to preserve the natural environment. These policies focus on encouraging infill development and controlling urban sprawl. Economic recommendations strongly encourage the development of agriculture as the local base industry, utilizing prime farmland within and adjacent to the city limits. The plan urges the community to expand its local retail capacity in order to reduce the levels of retail leakage. The community is encouraged to preserve environmentally sensitive areas and manage local ecosystems in cooperation with other government authorities. The recommended response to local natural hazards includes avoiding development in areas that may be particularly susceptible to earthquake motion, ground liquefaction, and flooding.

More detailed recommendations for agricultural development discuss a series of farm and cropland management alternatives based on the construction of new

irrigation systems. The plan recommends using approximately 1,400 acres of local agricultural land for growing high value specialty crops for local consumption, including a variety of fruits and vegetables. Aquaculture (raising fish for commercial use) is recommended as an alternative agricultural activity.

The plan includes specific recommendations for providing more affordable housing, reducing crime, and increasing the availability of community recreational activities and social services, as well as considerations related to the development of public facilities and the local culinary water system, improvement of emergency preparedness, and methods for handling solid and hazardous wastes and community recycling and composting.

Recommendations for physical improvements in the community are presented in the plan. The city can enhance its transportation functions by improving signage at community entryways, constructing a new median island on Main Street, the major thoroughfare, renewing tree plantings on neighborhood streets, constructing bicycle and pedestrian trails, and providing additional public transit to adjacent communities. The creation of an historic district in the town center, including the development of appropriate design guidelines, and the preservation and nomination for the national historic register of significant properties is recommended. Specific urban design recommendations include establishing urban growth boundaries, the use of infill development within the town center, and providing design features to reinforce the community's identity.

A separate implementation section includes specific recommendations for revising the city's General Plan and zoning ordinance, developing a Capital Improvements Plan, reconstruction of the local transportation systems, the use of land trusts and transfers of development rights to preserve farmland, the creation of an agricultural cooperative to facilitate the expansion of local farming operations, and specific measures to promote historic preservation. The appendix contains detailed descriptions of local soil characteristics, a description of approaches for insurance mitigation of natural hazards, and an analysis of pollution and energy savings from mass transit. A bibliography provides a list of useful references, as well as a listing of names of useful persons and organizations to contact for information and technical assistance.

In addition to their report on the general

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Scope: Local/county, rural township
Inception Date: September 1993
Participants: University students and faculty advisor, community residents, high school students, farmers, historic committee, Soil Conservation District Commission,
Project type: Community planning/growth planning
Methods used: Research, survey, report
Lessons learned: An accurate assessment of local conditions is necessary to develop approaches to sustainability.

plan, the student team developed a 1 inch to 50 foot base map for Grantsville, with a series of overlays identifying public utilities and current land use. This map is available for use in future community planning activities.

The proposed plan was well-received by the local community. The Grantsville Planning Commission held a series of facilitated follow-up meetings with representatives from different sectors of the community. The city planners are using the information generated in these meetings, along with the original student plan, as a basis for the development of a new city General Plan. The new plan will be presented to the Grantsville Planning Commission and City Council.

Although the project did not have high levels of community participation, it presents

a potential model for university/community partnerships for sustainable community development.

—Community Sustainability Resource Institute

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The Grantsville General Plan has had mixed success. Key elements relating to sustainability, raised in the plan prepared by the students, were adopted by the Grantsville city council and formally included in the town's Master Plan. In its first major test, however, its recommendations were abandoned and a new suburban housing subdivision—in an area that has been planned for agriculture—was approved. The future adherence to the plan's agricultural recommendations will depend on several factors. Much of the remaining undeveloped land within the city is owned by the Soil Conservation District. If the District can be persuaded to hold the line, agricultural lands may still be protected.

Improvements to Main Street, including the construction of a median island, were rejected, because the city council did not want to restrict the movement of trucks through the city. This was based on a common assumption that any restriction on truck traffic will encourage truckers to find alternate routes, resulting in an economic loss to the community.

Other less controversial aspects of the plan have been implemented. These include encouraging in-fill housing and similar construction activities, and providing additional equestrian facilities. The latter involved expanding equestrian trails within the city and adding public stables and riding areas.

There has also been additional economic development in the downtown area. This includes some physical improvements in the downtown core. And there have been efforts to provide additional low-income housing in the community, in cooperation with the Utah League of Cities and Towns.

The city has also reacted to a deterioration in the local storm sewer system. New impact fees have been adopted for storm water management and rehabilitation.

Only time will tell the ultimate influence of the plan on the town of Grantsville.

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