

Chapter 2: Community Character (Charlie)

Vision

Vision: The community character of the Western Weber Planning Area is defined by the low-density residential development, undeveloped or underdeveloped lands, relatively rural free-flowing streets, water courses, peace and quiet, and ease and timeliness of access to the jobs and services of adjacent incorporated areas. Low density residential and agricultural uses help define the open nature of the unincorporated areas of Taylor, West Weber, Warren, West Warren, and Reese, while large lot suburban uses help define the nature of the unincorporated area known as Uintah Highlands. While many residents acknowledge that growth is inevitable, there is a clear desire for it to be carefully and deliberately designed in a manner that preserves, complements, and pays tribute to the agrarian roots of the community. To do this, Weber County will promote and encourage the community's character through public space and street design standards, open space preservation, and a diversity of lot sizes and property uses that provide for the living, working, and playing needs of the growing community.

Existing and Projected Conditions

Western Weber area

The unincorporated areas west of the urbanized Wasatch front have significant open lands, most used for farming, pasturing of animals, and other related agricultural pursuits. There is a lot of support from the area's residents to keep the area open and undeveloped. Residents are accustomed to and in general support of the effects of agricultural uses. Agrarian noises, odors, and farm equipment are all part of the agricultural lifestyle that many existing residents love and enjoy. Considering the proximity of the adjacent urbanized area, the relatively dark night sky and lack of light pollution has quite a bit of support from areas residents. There was very little support for filling the existing open lands with large-lot suburban development similar to the development patterns of other areas in southern Weber County or northern Davis County. A number of residents stated that they have moved to the area from those locations specifically to enjoy the pastoral lifestyle that is sustained by the agricultural land uses of others in the area. Finding methods to help extend the life of agricultural uses may encourage existing land owners to continue to farm or ranch the land instead of developing.

The open nature and proximity to the urbanized services and job centers of the Wasatch Front has primed the area for easy development opportunities. Combine this with the fact that under existing zoning regulations a large number of residential development rights already exist but have yet to be built, it is likely that the private market will continue to stimulate the large-lot suburbanization of the area, upending the area's existing pastoral charm and creating the opposite effect of the desires of existing residents.

While a little less vocal, it also appears that quite a few owners of land, many of them owning large tracts of land, desire to find areas in which growth can occur in thoughtfully planned patterns, while leaving other areas less developed. Many expressed the desire to help the private market stimulate a variety of housing options and sizes to provide for all stages of life and a variety of family situations.

This dichotomy between the two schools of thought is not new to the area. The 2003 West Central Weber County General Plan stated that at the time "Public hearing comments also indicated a desire to see a continuation of agricultural landscapes, although many who enjoy the views of agriculture do not own or operate farmland, and do not rely on their land for a future retirement." Despite being an issue at that time, the 2003 plan did little to

address it. The plan recommended the continuation of the same land use patterns that are creating the large-lot suburban neighborhoods deemed unfavorable today. Continuing in this pattern will result in a future community character that is far from the agrarian community of today.

Additionally, the Western Weber Futures public outreach process of 2018 resulted in the collection of the following values of owners of both large and small tracts of land:

Values of Large Land Owners	Values of Small Land Owners
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We need to protect our property rights. • We need to protect our ability to subdivide lots for our posterity to live here. • We need to protect our ability to subdivide lots to supplement farm income. • We need to find a balance between the needs of future populations and our current desire to remain a rural community. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We need to protect the farmland. • We need to preserve our rural way of life. • We need to reduce development potential. • We do not want the total buildout potential of existing one-acre zoning or the suburban problems that it will bring. • We like the existing one-acre lots intermingled with large farm-lots or other open spaces. • We do not like density increases over that allowed by the existing one-acre zoning. If bonus density has to be used, it should only be used to enhance or support the rural nature of the community.

“Density” is often accused of being the culprit that disrupts a community’s character; however, with thoughtful planning and specific design standards, many communities that have found themselves under irreversible development pressure, have found a way to minimize the effect that density has on the character of the community. The key is to embrace that which cannot be and pr changed by accepting that because growth will continue with or without thoughtful and forward-thinking planning, it only makes sense, then, to engage thoughtful and forward-thinking planning. Staying on the front edge of growth by ensuring it complies with the goals, policies, and implementation strategies of a unified plan will help minimize the negative effects and, in some cases, improve the overall quality of life of both existing and future residents. In that vein, the goals, principles, and implementation strategies of this plan are intended to help balance development interests without significant sacrifices to the community’s character.

Currently, there are four distinct smaller areas in which historic development occurred. They are Taylor, West Weber, Warren, and Reese. Other smaller areas, such as Kanesville and Blossom, have since been absorbed into adjacent areas or adjacent growing cities. This plan is not intended to provide the finer details of these small areas, but rather future planning should focus on the community character of each through small area planning.

Uintah Highlands

The Uintah Highlands area has quite a bit less development potential than the unincorporated areas west of the urbanized Wasatch Front. Most of the area was built-out with 15,000 and 20,000 square-foot or greater lot sizes, leaving very little easily-developable lands. The community generally enjoys the lot sizes of the area and would rather not see new residences in their neighborhoods built more closely together.

The County should expect future development pressure to focus on open lands that are not as easy to develop. Continued support for exemplary hillside development requirements is imperative.

A greater focus from the public in the Uintah Highlands includes concerns over the safety and efficacy of existing streets, sidewalks, and drainage facilities, as well as needing better access to parks, trails, and recreational opportunities.

Goals, Principles & Implementation Actions

Community Character Goal 1: A goal of Weber County is to foster a future in which the specific characteristics and differences of each small area within the Western Weber Planning Area are supported and maintained as development occurs.

Community Character Principle 1.1: Promote and support the unique community characteristics of each small-area.

Community Character Action Item 1.1.1: Conduct small-area planning that focuses on and addresses the specific community characteristics and unique needs of each small area within the Western Weber Planning Area.

Community Character Action Item 1.1.2: Update one small-area's plan annually in a consistent rotation that ensures each plan is routinely reevaluated and readdressed in a traditional planning cycle.

Community Character Action Item 1.1.3: Initially, the small-area plans should address and explore the boundaries between the following small-areas: Uintah Highlands, Taylor, West Weber, Warren, Reese, and the nonresidential areas west of 8300 West. In time other or diverging small-areas may emerge that should be treated differently due to their unique community characteristics.

Community Character Action Item 1.1.4: Consider creating a form-based code as part of small-area planning.

Community Character Principle 1.2: Promulgate the historical and cultural roots of each small area and find opportunities to incorporate the area's heritage into the built environment.

Community Character Action Item 1.2.1: Pursue and explore opportunities to display the founding story of each small area plan or unique area within each small area plan.

Community Character Action Item 1.2.2: As part of small area planning, inventory historic buildings, farms, and other places. Work with landowners to explore ways to expose and/or preserve the heritage of the place.

Community Character Action Item 1.2.3: Support and utilize the Weber County Heritage Foundation and other historic research and preservation groups to document, highlight, and placard historic places.

Community Character Action Item 1.2.4: Pursue preservation of, funding for, and design and reconstruction of historic train stations or historic train station museums along the historic Union Pacific Railroad, such as the Reese Station and the West Weber Station.

Community Character Goal 2: A goal of Weber County is to support and encourage the longevity of agricultural opportunities in the Taylor, West Weber, Warren, and Reese small areas.

Community Character Principle 2.1: Encourage open space preservation of crop-producing lands in both agricultural and, where appropriate, residential areas.

Community Character Action Item 2.1.1: Amend the cluster subdivision code as provided in **Land Use Action Item x.x.x.**

Community Character Action Item 2.1.2: Support existing and future agritourism operations as a means to supplement farm income.

Community Character Action Item 2.1.3: Explore other means by which local agricultural operations may remain financially feasible, such as expanding onsite land-use allowances that will help supplement farm income, provided the uses are not disharmonious to surrounding land uses.

Community Character Principle 2.2: Provide support for the importance of local food production and local farm-to-table benefits for Weber County's food economy in support of local farms and reduced environmental impacts.

Community Character Action Item 2.2.1: Pursue opportunities to support and create farm-to-table operations such as farmer's markets and roadside produce stands in appropriate areas. When determining appropriate areas, evaluate whether there are local food deserts that might be best served by one of these operations.

Community Character Principle 2.3: Prepare for the possible need for local agricultural operations as a means of reducing local reliance on non-local food sources in the event of national or global catastrophe.

Community Character Goal 3: A goal of Weber County is to reduce the unincorporated area's contribution to sky-glow and reduce the impact excess and unnecessary lighting has on neighborhoods and community.

Community Character Principle 3.1: Preserve the darkness of the night sky.

Community Character Action Item 3.1.1: Create lighting standards that require all new outdoor lighting to be directed downward and away from the night sky.

Community Character Principle 3.2: Protect community from nuisance light glare.

Community Character Action Item 3.2.1: Create good-neighbor lighting standards that require all new lighting devices to be shielded in a manner that casts no light onto adjacent properties where the light is unwanted.

Community Character Action Item 3.2.2: Where public or community lighting, such as street lighting, is deemed necessary or desired, ensure the lighting devices follow the **Community Character Action Items of 3.1.1 and 3.2.1.**

Community Character Goal 4: A goal of Weber County is to preserve the character of current neighborhoods by encouraging new residences to have similar separation distances along street rights-of-way.

Community Character Principle 4.1: Support maintaining the appearance of existing developed areas with lot design standards.

Community Character Action Item 4.1.1: In areas where minimum lot area changes, consider minimum side setback standards that are the same or substantially similar to those in effect in the prior zone.

Community Character Action Item 4.1.2: In areas where minimum lot area changes, consider minimum lot width and frontage standards that are the same or substantially similar to those in effect in the prior zone.

Community Character Goal 5: Ensure development activities are safe from geologic hazards.

Community Character Principle 5.1: In the Uintah Highlands area, ensure new development does not pose a geologic risk to itself, or past or potential future development.

Community Character Principle 5.1: Continue to pursue geologic hazards assessments for new developments in areas that are within a geologic hazards study area.