

## **Introduction**

The Southwest Community Plan was adopted by the Salt Lake County Commission April 3, 1996, representing a cooperative effort between the Salt Lake County Planning Staff, the University of Utah Geography Department, and the citizens of the Southwest Community. The intent of the plan was to balance the need to protect the rural character and natural beauty of the Southwest Community with the potential to develop the land into residential communities. It recognized that as key improvements to infrastructure were made, the potential to develop those areas would increase. The plan contained policies to guide new development in ways that would respond to this potential, while accomplishing the broader goals of preservation of the area's rural nature and open spaces. For example, slight increases in density were offered for large scale developments that provided a variety of lot sizes and set aside open spaces and park land. The Rose Creek Estates subdivision (containing parks, equestrian trails, horse properties, and various single family dwelling lot sizes) is a successful example of these policies in action.

While the 1996 plan was written with future development in mind, the growth in the southwest part of the valley has occurred much faster than predicted. This rapid growth, combined with the extension of water and sewer service to areas where they were not previously available, has created increased pressure for development in the Southwest Community—particularly the areas immediately west of Herriman City. As more and more of the rural landscape has been converted to residential subdivisions, the character of the southwest part of the valley appears to be changing. These two factors have caused a need for Salt Lake County to propose an amendment to the Southwest Community Plan to address residential development of the northeast section of the community (see combined land use map).

## **Impacts of Increased Density**

In recent years, the predominant development pattern of single family subdivisions adjacent to the amendment area has been that of 10,000 square foot lots, with the requirement that developers contribute land or other resources for parks and community spaces in order to receive approvals from Herriman City. To rezone the amendment area to allow 10,000 square foot lots throughout would result in an increase in density from 1 unit per acre to approximately 3.5 to 4 units per acre, representing a drastic increase in the area's residential holding capacity. As the area undergoes the transition from rural and agricultural land uses to traditional single family residential subdivisions, it is vital that the impacts of the increased density are taken into consideration in preserving, to the extent possible, the overall vision of the Southwest Community Plan. Factors that must be considered are:

Traffic – The increase in traffic that would accompany more residents in the area brings an increased need to plan street systems that are well connected. Policies should be in place to ensure that the new development which brings more cars to the roads also brings needed road improvements.

Home & Community – An increase in the number of suburban households can cause conflict between families new to the area and the existing residents who have horses or other animals. As the landscape changes from rural agricultural to suburban residential, the circulation pattern for vehicles, pedestrians, bicyclists, and horse riders becomes more complex, and must be planned in greater detail. Other land uses important to quality neighborhoods, such as churches and neighborhood commercial shops also must be planned.

Recreation – The need for parks and recreational facilities projected by Salt Lake County Parks and Recreation is based on standards which look to population data to determine the number, distribution, and type of facilities. Thus, as the population increases due to new developments, the number and type of recreational facilities needed to serve an area changes.

Services – Public services must be carefully planned to meet not only present but future needs as well. Issues such as fire hydrants with adequate flow, emergency response times, and adequate sewer service are critical. Other facilities, such as libraries and schools, must be planned and built as a community grows. According to Jordan School District, the schools in the Herriman/Southwest community reach capacity quickly, due to a higher student-per-household ratio than in other areas of the Salt Lake Valley.

Environment – As residential density increases, the impact on the environment increases as well. Of particular concern is the need for a master storm drain system to convey water during major storm events. Regulating development in such a way as to protect the natural beauty of the area (one of the reasons so many people are attracted to this community) is also important.

### **Community Vision**

As is often the case, there are various strategies that could be used to address the concerns listed above. Ultimately, it is the collective vision of a community that determines which of those solutions best fit the community. The property owners and residents of the community have pointed out several key factors for Salt Lake County to consider in determining appropriate density patterns and development restrictions for the area, such as:

1. Requiring large lot sizes often leads to a lack of “affordable” or “moderate income” housing choices.
2. Appropriate measures (including buffers, where necessary) should be taken to protect current property owners who wish to maintain animals on their property from new residents who may not be accustomed to living near farm animals.
3. Residents of nearby large lot subdivisions, such as Hi-Country I & II should be protected via appropriate buffers along the perimeter.
4. While provision of land for churches, schools, and civic buildings is important, such land should not qualify as “open space.” True “open space” in the form of parks, trails, and natural areas should also be a priority.
5. Consideration should be given to neighborhood retail needs of the community.
6. Prominent ridgelines and sensitive slopes should be protected.
7. Restrictions placed on larger developments should not be so universal as to place undue burden on the small property owner who wishes to subdivide.

## **Strategies**

The goals and policies of the current Southwest Community Plan have been most effectively implemented when large developments that incorporate a variety of elements have been proposed. The future development of the Rose Flats area (the area south of Herriman Highway) will largely consist of the re-subdivision of land which was previously divided into 1, 5, or 10 acre lots. Because past planning efforts have been based on a limited residential holding capacity, the transition from large lot agricultural properties to single family subdivision lots should only occur if appropriate measures are in place to mitigate the impacts of growth. However, the strategies used to foster developments which contribute to the needs of the community must be designed and implemented in a way that is fair to both the large and small developer and which will encourage cooperative efforts among various property owners to produce a cohesive community, with an overall density of approximately 3 units per acre. The Butterfield Creek area (north of Herriman Highway) should be developed as one or more planned communities with an overall density between 3 and 5 units per acre.

## **Goals and policies**

- Goal 1: Create a cohesive community, including provisions for neighborhood centers, civic buildings, open spaces, and appropriate transitions between new single family dwelling lots and existing large lots with animal and agricultural land uses in respect of the rights and privacy of existing residents.
- Policy 1 – Density increases within the Low Density Residential area from 2.5 to (up to) 4.0 units per acre should be allowed for proposals which incorporate the goals and policies of this plan into the design; including road connectivity, community spaces, a variety of lots sizes, and large lots or open space corridors as buffers between new lots and existing agricultural and horse properties to protect the privacy and other rights of the residents.
- Policy 2 – Density increases within the Neighborhood/Planned Community Residential area from 3 to (up to) 5 units per acre should be allowed if large master planned communities are proposed which include provisions for neighborhood and community centers, schools, parks, trails (including a regional trail along Butterfield Creek), civic buildings, and transportation systems.
- Policy 3 – The assembly of smaller parcels into larger subdivision development proposals should be encouraged through incentives such as density bonuses.
- Goal 2: Create a transportation network of connected streets, pedestrian trails, bike paths, and equestrian trails.
- Policy 1 – A collector road connecting Rose Canyon Road to U-111 should be planned for and constructed as the Rose Flats area is developed.
- Policy 2 – In keeping with the Salt Lake County Parks and Recreation Trails Master Plan, a trail along the Butterfield Creek corridor or similar east-west route, with connecting trail to Rose Canyon Road, should be constructed as the area is developed.

Policy 3 – In general, connective street patterns which limit the use of cul-de-sacs and dead-end streets should be used.

Policy 4 – All roads should be paved and should include full improvements for safe complete streets, such as curb and gutter, street lighting, sidewalks, etc.

Policy 5 – While exact alignments and road widths will be determined as master plans for development are reviewed and approved in the Neighborhood/Planned Community Residential area, at least two north/south collector roads extending from U-111 towards the West Bench planning area should be part of the overall development plan.

Goal 3: Create a system of community spaces to provide buffers and to accommodate the needs of the residents of the area.

Policy 1 – Following the guidelines of the County Parks and Recreation Master Plan, land for parks should be planned for as part of the development review process for new subdivisions.

Policy 2 – The school district should be consulted and the need for school site planning and development shall be considered as part of the development review process.

Policy 3 – Other community gather places, such as government facilities, community centers, churches, etc. should be accommodated through cooperative discussion with developers, government agencies, non-profit and religious groups.

Goal 4: Allow development in pace with the provision of critical services.

Policy 1 – Develop a plan for a master storm drain system, and ensure that all new development contributes towards the cost of that system.

Policy 2 – As a requirement for subdivision or planned unit development plat approval, obtain approvals from water and sewer service providers to ensure that development occurs in pace with capacity of those systems.

Policy 3 – Involve in the review process the Unified Fire Authority, Sheriff's Department, school district, and other critical service providers.

Goal 5: Protect the natural environment and inherent beauty of the area.

Policy 1 – Avoid excessive grading on the hillsides.

Policy 2 – Coordinate and plan the design of roads, trails, and open space to be sensitive to wildlife.

Policy 3 – Locate local serving utility lines underground.

Goal 6: Provide appropriate neighborhood retail areas to serve the needs of the community.

Policy 1 – Neighborhood centers, including neighborhood serving commercial uses, should be considered as a viable land use in close proximity to key intersections of collector and arterial roads or as key components around which to base a planned community.

Policy 2 – Commercial development should incorporate design elements (building mass, design, colors and materials, etc.) to keep each project to a neighborhood scale.

Policy 3 - Neighborhood commercial development should be limited to those uses which serve the local population, such as grocery, café/restaurant, and personal services.

### **Implementation**

The following implementation strategies should be used by Salt Lake County to carry out the vision and goals of this plan amendment of the Southwest Community Plan:

1. Ongoing Needs Assessment:

Salt Lake County should periodically review the status of the Southwest Community with regard to the need for government services, critical facilities, parks, recreation, traffic, and education. Information from this assessment process should be combined with the information in this plan and become a major factor in the review of all rezone and development applications.

2. Neighborhood Planning

In order to encourage development plans which effectively address the needs of the community and which will be in harmony with the goals and policies of this plan, a density bonus system should be used. Zoning should be established which sets a base density and allows density bonuses to be offered to developers who are willing to: combine smaller parcels together to create more comprehensively planned subdivisions, dedicate and improve collector roads and trail systems, provide buffers between new lots and existing large lot/horse properties, and/or dedicate ground for parks, schools, and community facilities.

In establishing the base density and bonus amounts, the County shall consider the following:

a. Densities for specific developments within the Low Density Residential area may vary between 2.5 and 4.0 units per acre, based on the extent to which the development plan complies with the goals and policies of this plan.

b. The Neighborhood/Planned Community Residential should accommodate higher densities, between 3 and 5 units per acre, as a transition between West Bench and Southwest Community provided that a large scale (approximately 100-200 acres) master plan is prepared and presented for each community which incorporates the appropriate elements listed above. Each master planned area may be developed over time in a number of phases or amended as needed, provided that each phase or amendment is in harmony with this plan.

c. Density shall be based on the gross acreage prior to subdivision and shall include all land within a subdivision boundary, including roads, common areas, and land designated for schools, parks, church sites, open space, or other such uses.

d. The service capacity of water, sewer, and other critical services shall not be exceeded by setting density limits too high.

e. A density bonus system should be instituted as part of all re-zone approvals using zoning conditions (zc) to set a base density, with bonuses listed for specific development characteristics. The base density should be set at the low end of the density range, and bonuses listed as shown below:

*Base density: 2.5 units per acre*

*Density bonus #1: a bonus of .3 units per acre shall be allowed for developments of 15 acres or larger which designate 25% of the total development for parks, open space, church sites or a school site, and which are sold to another entity or are preserved as common area within the subdivision to be maintained by a home owners association. The density bonus is doubled (.6 units per acre) for developments over 30 acres. If recreational facilities are built as part of the development, the 25% may be reduced as low as 15% if it is shown that the facilities fill a critical parks and recreation need of the community.*

*Density bonus #2: an additional .3 units per acre shall be allowed for developments of 15 acres or larger which qualify for the above density bonus, but which dedicate, by deed or permanent public easement, rather than sell the land for parks, open space, church sites or school site.*

*Density bonus #3: a bonus of .2 units per acre shall be allowed for dedication and installation of each 300 lineal feet of half-width of the collector road as called for in the Transportation Plan map of the amendment to the Southwest Community Plan (to a maximum of .6 units per acre total).*

*Density bonus #4: a bonus of .4 units per acre shall be allowed for developments which create a buffer of larger lots (½ acre minimum) or open space with trails adjacent to neighboring large lots with animal/agricultural land uses, such as ranches and/or farm land used for the raising of crops or the keeping, grazing, and/or raising of farm animals. Open space used for density bonus 1 or 2 above may not be used toward this bonus.*

*Notwithstanding the above, in no case shall the total density (with bonuses included) exceed 4.0 units per acre*

### 3. Creative Approach

Salt Lake County should take advantage of the flexibility allowed through its planned unit development ordinance to foster creative design of subdivisions in the planning area. Density shifts, variations in lots size, the creation of open space, and the institution of appropriate buffers are tools made available through the planned unit development review process. Appropriate easements and restrictive covenants can also be used to provide a cohesive community with well-planned transitions between new residential lots and existing animal/agricultural land uses.