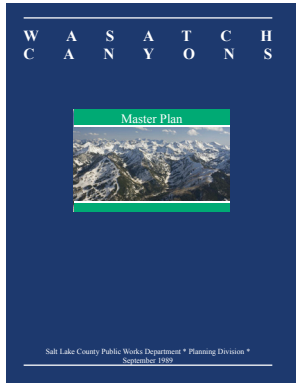


Wasatch Canyons Tomorrow Introduction



1989 Plan



In 1989, the Salt Lake County Public Works Department drafted a master plan for the Wasatch Canyons. The plan focused on:

Background Information

- User data, carrying capacity, etc.

Highways and Transportation

- Highways, mountain transportation/ski interconnections, etc.

Area General Policies

- Watershed Issues, private land acquisition, etc.

Canyon Plans

- Individual canyon plans, residential areas, summer recreation, public safety, etc.

Land Use Policies

- Ski area expansion, zoning, winter recreation, etc.

The Wasatch Mountains rise majestically over the eastern edge of the Salt Lake Valley, our region's geographical hallmark. Historically, the mountains sustained early settlers, providing needed timber, irrigation water, drinking water and ore. They still sustain us today. The Wasatch Mountains serve both public and private purposes. Nearly a million people live in their embrace. In an arid climate, they provide much of our drinking water. They are home to many canyon residents. Their towering peaks catch the greatest snow on earth, supporting a world-class ski industry that feeds our economy. They are our backyard, a place where we can find peace in quiet backcountry or engage in active recreational activities such as hiking, biking, climbing, fishing, skiing, picnicking and camping. In fact, the Unita-Wasatch-Cache National Forest is among the five most-visited forests in the nation. The mountains adorn our tourism campaigns, postcards, and the logos of businesses, cities and sports teams. To a large degree, the Wasatch Mountains define our region. We are now presented with the task of defining the future of these treasured mountains.

By some credible estimates, there will be 3 million people in the Salt Lake Valley by the turn of the next century. Inevitably, this growth will further stress mountain resources. Each canyon in the study area is environmentally sensitive and limited in its ability to sustain use-impacts. Looking ahead, one can imagine a range of future possibilities for the Wasatch Canyons from natural areas, to amenity-rich resorts, to something in between. We cannot escape the fact, however, that our decisions or failure to make decisions will determine that future.

Finding a balance on the desired future is not easy. Needs and uses vary. Cyclists enjoy the beauty and challenge of riding in the canyons, but find the narrow roads fraught with peril. Others foresee expanding our world-class ski resorts and terrain to rival any in the world, generating substantial economic activity. Some private landowners have dreams of developing their land and feel that their property rights are overly constrained. Yet many residents warn that increased development and use will degrade the quality and quantity of our water supply. Many people enjoy escaping the valley, but find cherished solitude ever more elusive. Most are concerned with increasingly congested mountain roads, but differ over the appropriate solution. Add to these a host of other issues: invasive weeds, fiscal impacts, dogs, access to backcountry skiing, climate change impacts, connections to Summit County, wildlife impacts, and more.

Despite differing perspectives, four things are clear. First, our water supply is the lifeblood of our community. The Wasatch Canyons provide most of our water now and will continue to do so in the future. Our activities in the watershed must give careful consideration to how water supplies and quality are affected. Second, there is broad consensus that our mountain canyons are a highly valued resource worthy of our care and attention. Third, defining strategies to solve canyon challenges will be found through continuing open communication, sound research, and simple hard work. And fourth, because of continuing population growth, we likely will have to modify some past policies over time to maintain desired conditions. Doing what we have done in the past will not necessarily keep the canyons as they are in perpetuity. Our collective challenge is to identify what we most value about the canyons and explore solutions that protect those values.

State of Utah Population:

(Utah GOPB)



2010: 2,927,643



2040: 5,171,391 (76% increase)

Salt Lake County Population:

(Utah GOPB):



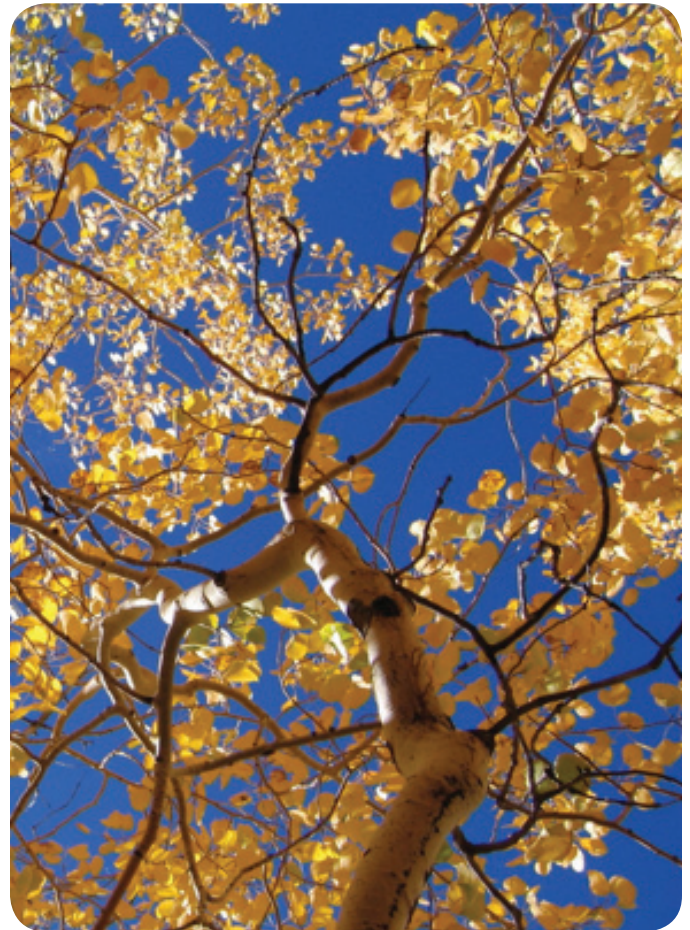
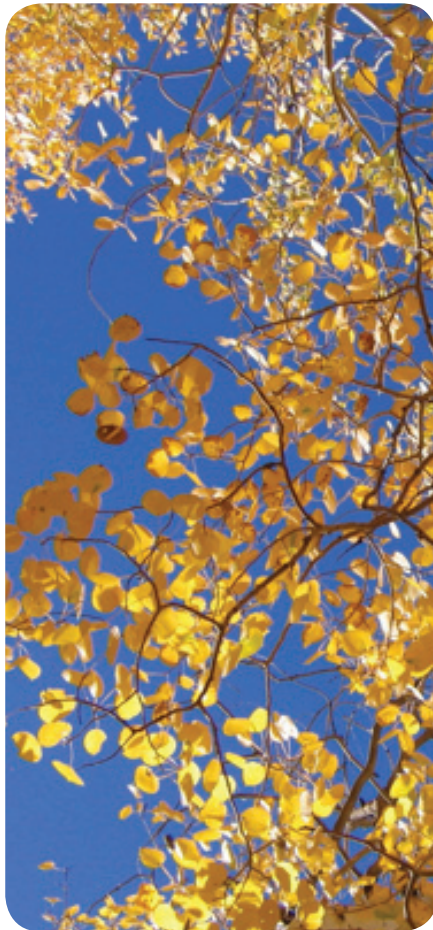
2010: 1,079,679



2040: 1,672,627 (55% increase)

Wasatch Canyons Tomorrow employed a public process to identify contemporary concerns and to educate the public on canyon issues. The recommendations in this report are the product of the public process. They are not necessarily recommendations from Envision Utah or the Project partners. Adoption of recommendations contained in this report will require approval by appropriate agencies. Recommendations within the jurisdiction of Salt Lake County are subject to review by the Salt Lake County Council and County Mayor through a separate Master Planning process prescribed in the County Code. Some of these recommendations may be implemented quickly; others may be considered later in the life of the County-adopted Master Plan. This process may also provide insight to transportation agencies, the Uinta-Wasatch-Cache National Forest, and Salt Lake City Public Utilities, as they plan and address issues within their respective jurisdictions.

What follows is the product of extensive research; dozens of site visits to understand terrain, conditions, conflicts and challenges; and, most importantly, a community conversation in which thousands shared their experiences, ideas, and dreams. May future generations benefit from this effort.



Scope and Study Boundaries

This report builds on existing plans, including the 1989 Salt Lake County Canyons Master Plan, 2003 Wasatch-Cache National Forest Plan, 2009 Salt Lake Countywide Water Quality Stewardship Plan, 1999 Salt Lake City Watershed Management Plan, 2003 Town of Alta General Plan, Emigration Canyon Trails Master Plan, Wasatch Front Regional Council Long-Range Plan, and others.

The *Wasatch Canyons Tomorrow* study-area includes the seven major canyons on the eastern side of Salt Lake County and their smaller adjoining canyons. These include Little Cottonwood, Big Cottonwood, Millcreek, Parleys, Emigration, Red Butte and City Creek Canyons as well as smaller canyons such as Bell Canyon, Neffs Canyon, Lambs and Deaf Smith Canyon. The study area is multi-jurisdictional in its governance, with most of the lands under federal ownership and managed by the US Forest Service.



Executive Summary

The *Wasatch Canyons Tomorrow* process was designed to create a broadly supported public vision and guiding principles for the future of the Wasatch Canyons within Salt Lake County. This document addresses challenging issues, and outlines approaches to those issues that minimize the impacts of growth on our treasured canyons. The State of Utah, Salt Lake County and Salt Lake City jointly sponsored this process, in partnership with the Uinta-Wasatch-Cache National Forest. Salt Lake County acted as the lead partner with Envision Utah serving as the process facilitator.

Envision Utah conducted a public process to assess what the citizens of Utah value about the Wasatch Canyons. Extensive public outreach efforts for the *Wasatch Canyons Tomorrow* project included open houses, workshops and on-line surveys. After a kick-off meeting to announce the project, the public participated in workshops hosted throughout Salt Lake County. Stakeholders and technical experts served on Steering and Technical Committees to ensure process integrity and that the recommendations accurately reflect public input. The recommendations included in this document will act as guiding principles for the revision of the Salt Lake County Master Plan. While these recommendations represent a broadly supported vision, they are not binding, and Salt Lake County and other entities with jurisdiction in the canyons may review them further for technical, legal, environmental and financial feasibility.

According to the Utah Governor's Office of Planning and Budget, the State of Utah is projected to grow from about 3 million people in the year 2010 to over 5 million people in the year 2040. Likewise, Salt Lake County's population is expected to grow dramatically in the next 30 years. With the growth in population, the pressures and demands on the canyons and their natural resources, especially water supply, will be greater.

Land Use

Throughout the *Wasatch Canyons Tomorrow* process, the public expressed a desire to adopt strategies for efficient development in suitable areas and away from critical lands for watershed, recreation, wildlife and scenery.

Land-Use Goal Statement:

Prioritize protection of high-priority lands (such as watershed, viewshed, recreation areas, and wildlife habitat), while respecting private property rights.

The following publicly supported recommendations support the land-use goal statement:

1. Enforce existing provisions of the Foothill and Canyon Overlay Zone (FCOZ). Restrict variances that circumvent these protections.
2. Increase funding for the purchase of high-priority lands.
3. Work with the State Water Quality Board to fund revolving loans to incentivize upgrading septic systems or to pay for connections to sewer lines.
4. Study strategies to incentivize development in appropriate areas and to preserve open space (for watershed, recreation, scenic value and wildlife).

Survey Respondents

Round	# of Respondents
1	2,102
2	4,725
3	9,204
Total	16,031

In addition to surveys, thousands of comments were collected to get a more in-depth look at the public's vision for the Wasatch Canyons. Survey results were collected at open houses, online, and by telephone. Open houses and surveys were advertised by radio, TV, newspaper and via the Internet.

This report is available online at

Wasatch Canyons
TOMORROW
<http://www.wasatchcanyons.slco.org>



Recreation

The popularity of outdoor recreation continues to grow with the population. This trend shows no signs of slowing. In fact, the number of recreational visits to the Wasatch Mountains will likely double in the next 30-40 years. Winter or summer, high-quality outdoor recreation is something that Utahns prize as part of the quality of life we enjoy.

Recreation Goal Statement:

Offer diverse, high-quality recreation experiences while protecting the natural resources of the Wasatch Canyons.

The following publicly supported recommendations support the recreation goal statement:

1. Study the feasibility of a parking pass to pay for improvements to recreational areas in Big and Little Cottonwood Canyons.
2. Acquire strategic land and/or easements for recreation access.
3. Conduct a Capacity Study for trails in the Wasatch Canyons.
4. Develop a Master Trails Plan to explore regional trails and trail connections for appropriate uses.
5. Further pursue recommendations of the Emigration Trails Master Plan.
6. Maintain and enhance winter avalanche safety.
7. Develop a Climbing Management Plan for Big and Little Cottonwood Canyons to address the needs of the climbing community.
8. Encourage cooperation among the resorts, Salt Lake County, U.S. Forest Service, Salt Lake City, and other partners to explore appropriate year-round activities at the ski resorts.
9. Promote lesser-used recreation areas in Salt Lake County to provide alternatives to the more-used recreation areas in the Wasatch Canyons.

Transportation

Significant growth of the population in the next 30 years and the anticipated corresponding growth in recreational visits to the Wasatch Canyons presents a potential major strain on the existing transportation network. Addressing transportation issues while protecting the watershed and natural environment is among the most important questions for the future of our Wasatch Canyons.

Transportation Goal Statement:

Transportation projects should reduce congestion, improve air quality, and facilitate access and public safety, while maintaining our high-quality recreational experience and protecting natural resources.

The following publicly supported recommendations support the transportation goal statement:

1. Expand from winter-only to year-round transit service in Big and Little Cottonwood Canyons.
2. Continue to look for and promote ways to improve road-cycling safety for both transportation and recreation.
3. Prepare and implement updated road corridor avalanche control plans for Big and Little Cottonwood Canyons.
4. Study the feasibility of extending UTA TRAX to a “transit hub” at the mouth of Big Cottonwood Canyon or Little Cottonwood Canyon to serve shuttles and buses to Millcreek, and Big and Little Cottonwood Canyons.
5. Develop Express Bus transit service between downtown Salt Lake City and Summit County/Park City.
6. Conduct a feasibility study of extending a mountain rail line up Little Cottonwood Canyon to Snowbird and Alta.
7. Study the feasibility of alternative transportation for Millcreek Canyon.
8. Implement recommendations from the Big and Little Cottonwood Canyon Corridor Management Plan.