

(DRAFT) Public Comment Report to County Commission

6/19/2018

Public Comment Process.

This process consisted of four public meetings intended to garner public sentiment about current and future development trends in the unincorporated area of Western Weber County.

The first public-comment meeting was held at the West Weber Elementary. It was an informal open house introducing this process and providing current trends. A six question survey was collected at this meeting that help staff understand the public's current understanding and expectations for development and development regulations. The public were given blank maps and comment cards on which to draw specific geographic concerns or write comments. We estimate approximately 80 people attended. We received 36 comment cards.

The second public-comment meeting was also held at the West Weber Elementary. It was a more formal meeting setting in which staff presented current trends. The first drafts of the public comment maps were presented and explained. The maps were created based only on the comments drawn on maps or written on comment cards in the first meeting. The public were then asked to review the maps and mark items that they cannot live with or that they love. They were also given the chance to write and draw on the maps additional comments or concerns. In this meeting Survey #2 was disseminated. Survey #2 was also disseminated online to folks not in the meeting. One concern staff discovered about this is folks who were present in the meeting and received all of the information tended to answer survey questions through the reality-view of market-driven forces in the context of existing private property rights. In contrast, folks who took the survey online – who were asked but not required to review the meeting material – tended to lean heavily toward a no-growth future regardless of what rights already exist or what development trends are already occurring. There were a total of 107 survey responses. 28 of them were meeting attendees, and the other 79 were online respondents. It is difficult to determine how the online responses would have shifted if answering survey questions through the same lense as those present in the meeting. Despite the differences, there were still a number of similarities to help document public desire on a few subjects. Staff documented both types of survey responses, both separately and together, and used the information and all the information written in the meeting on the maps to adjust the draft maps in anticipation of the third meeting.

The third public-comment meeting was held in the Weber Center. It was not as well attended, with only about 40 attendees. The survey responses from the second meeting were presented, as were visuals on how one-unit-to-the-acre density really appears at full build-out. Also presented were the new draft maps that accommodated the comments from the second meeting participants as well as the online survey respondents. In this meeting staff disseminated Survey #3, which was a quick eight questions survey designed to flesh out whether downzoning is really a desire of the participants. With the information collected here, staff were able to hone down on a final set of maps that represent a general popular vision of the future of unincorporated Western Weber County. These maps were presented to the public in the fourth and final meeting.

The fourth public comment meeting was also held in the Weber Center. It [...]

Public Comments Regarding Future Land Uses

As was documented in the 2003 West Central Weber County General Plan, there remains a dichotomy between large land owners and small land owners regarding the desired future density of the area.

Large Land Owners.

Generally, large land owners are a minority voice in unincorporated Western Weber County, but represent the majority of the open-land that creates the areas rural charm. Those large land owners who participated in this public process expressed their appreciation and support for their current rural way of life, but desire to retain their land/development rights offered by existing zoning. One reason for this desire is to plan for their financial future (and for the future of their posterity). Some large land owners have expressed a desire to *never* develop their property, but about 62% of large land owners – those owning more than 20 acres – would rather not have their development potential reduced.

Values of large land owners:

- 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.

Small Land Owners.

Generally, the small land owners were a vocal majority in this public process. Many of them have a heritage from the area and would rather not see it developed. Others have moved to the area for the rural character and loyally defend it.

Small land owners, who generally have little or no development potential on their own land under existing zoning rules, would rather not see the area developed any more than it currently is. They enjoy the benefits of their smaller-lot and its proximity to other owner's agricultural lands.

One of the greatest points of confusion that was primarily expressed by small land owners was a perception that development is sponsored by the County. A common sentiment was bitterness toward the county for "changing the rules" of development without public consent to make developing the area easier. One element that has fueled this misconception is the modification of the cluster subdivision regulations in 2014. A number of folks believe that it is this modification that has led to the new development that is now occurring. It does not appear to be widely understood that some version of the cluster subdivision ordinance has been in Weber County Code for at least the last 40 years. It is not a common conception that the developments currently being platted in the area are a result of a strong housing market in tandem with loss of developable acreages in surround cities – not a change in development rules.

Regardless, there remains a strong distaste for cluster subdivisions. It is not apparent that the majority are aware that the cluster subdivision code was changed earlier this year in order to permanently preserve agriculturally viable farmland. When some were informed of the changes they shifted their perception. Some even became strong advocates of clustering. However, many are still unaware and a few who became aware were unmoved in their desire for lots sizes no smaller than one acre.

Based on a host of public comments received from this process, many people are just beginning to understand how much development potential is entitled throughout their communities by the existing one-acre zoning development rules. When asked in Survey #2 whether they would support a government taking of development/property rights from large landowners (through downzoning) in order to preserve their rural community, the majority of small-lot survey respondents – about 60 percent of those owning less than five acres – favored doing so.

After a little more education regarding the significance of removing land rights from large land owners, Survey #3 found less respondents favoring a downzone. In its place there appears to be a strong desire to defend the community's current overall zoning density of one-dwelling-unit-per-acre of land, with about half supporting clustering dwellings onto smaller lots in return for permanently preserved agricultural open space and minimal bonuses if absolutely necessary to preserve farmland.

Values of small-land owners:

- 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, but we do 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 they have to be used, they should only be used to enhance or support the rural nature of the community.

Land Use Staff Recommendation:

- Create a new Western Weber Future Land Use Map that designates small mixed use commercial areas (villages) at primary transportation intersections in Western Weber area, including:
 - The intersection of 900 South (12th Street) and the planned West-Weber Corridor (see also transportation recommendation to lobby UDOT and legislators to realign the West-Weber Corridor further west to border the currently-zone manufacturing area).
 - The intersection of 2550 South and/or 2200 South and the planned West-Weber Corridor.
 - The intersection of 1150 South (12th Street) and 4700 West.
 - Work with Plain City to determine their future annexation desires to the west and determine how to better plan for the intersection of 2700 North and the planned West-Weber Corridor, if any connection is desired in the foreseeable future.
- Do not allocate any more density rights to the Western Weber County area, except those reasonably necessary to preserve or enhance the rural feel of the area in contrast to the existing development potential of one unit to the acre density.

- Create a new Western Weber Future Land Use Map that prioritizes areas within 1000 feet of sewer for primarily large-lot (one acre) residential, or clustered residential that offers little impact on existing density allowances.
- Create a new Western Weber Future Land Use Map that prioritizes land not within 1000 feet of sewer as primarily agriculture, with some large lot residential.
 - Encourage the creation of a local land trust that can help implement a Purchase of Development Rights program wherein rights are purchased from existing farm land then permanently retired. The land may continue to be farmed.
 - Continue to monitor the public's level of support for the creation of a special assessment tax for the purpose of preserving open-farmlands.
 - Continue to monitor the public's level of support of downzoning certain areas.
 - Pursue the legalities of charging an impact fee for the long-term preservation of farmland.
 - Pursue incentives to encourage land owners to voluntarily reduce their own development potential.
 - Create new development regulations that will encourage less development to occur on farmland.
- If better supported by the public after more education, implement primary TDR receiving area as those areas being prescribed as a local village. This will create higher density housing in villages but reduce density on active farmland. Implement secondary receiving area as those areas within 1000 feet of an existing sewer system, or for areas capable of extending the sewer system to their development.
- Explore better land use configuration of the manufacturing area to offer a buffer between mixed use commercial and heavy manufacturing. Consider a tech park or other light commercial or manufacturing.

Public Comments Regarding Future Transportation

The future of transportation was not as controversial as land uses. One consistent theme was that the public are not interested in the developing the public transportation to far out ahead of development patterns. As development occurs, the County should look to developers to create new streets on section lines to fill in the street grid network.

There was strong advocacy for widening existing streets to accommodate shoulders capable of supporting a variety of road users – not just cars. There was very little support for allowing developers to choose where future streets should be located. About 25 percent of survey respondents wanted to see more public transportation options.

Out of 107 survey responses there were zero respondents who suggested that as the area grows, motor vehicle travel is the only priority mode of transportation desired. There is strong support for bicycle lanes (or at least shoulders to accommodate them) and for every major street to have a sidewalk or street-adjacent pathway to accommodate active transportation.

Regarding street construction and cross sections, extended shoulders, multi-use pathways, bike lanes, street trees, and curb-less edges (using swales for drainage) are all favored over other alternatives.

Other major street concerns included:

- A need for a return loop from Little Mountain so that 900 South does not need to accommodate all the traffic.
- A strong advocacy for applying pressure on UDOT and the State to move the planned West Weber Corridor westward to intersect with the manufacturing area of Little Mountain and not cut through current active farmland.

Transportation Staff Recommendation:

- Actively influence the State and UDOT's planning of the West-Weber Corridor to move the proposed alignment westward to better connect to the Little Mountain manufacturing areas and avoid the prime agricultural land on which the alignment is currently planned.
- If the West-Weber Corridor is created, pursue funding opportunities to extend 2550 South, 2200 South, and 2700 North to it, effectively linking I-15 and West-Weber Corridor interchanges. Pursue upgrades to these streets to accommodate traffic needs.
 - Encourage the connection of 2200 South and 21st Street in and through West Haven.
 - Encourage the reconfiguration of the 2550 South and Pennsylvania avenue intersection in Ogden City in a manner that assists efficient connection between the planned West-Weber Corridor and I-15 interchange.
- Encourage the extension of 4700 West to a future 2700 North extension in Plain City.
- Support prior street-grid planning by requiring collector streets to be located on section lines whenever possible. Require new developments to preserve section-line street corridors for future street grid expansion, and, if the development renders the need, require these streets to be installed by the developer.
- Consider the need for a secondary collector street to the manufacturing areas near Little Mountain. In the event the County is unsuccessful in lobbying the State or UDOT to realign the West-Weber Corridor to the manufacturing area of Little Mountain, consider developing a collector street that extends north from 12th Street near Little Mountain and curves east to connect into 2700 North, 4000 North, or some other alternative connection that routes traffic to the I-15 corridor and alleviates traffic impacts on 12th Street. Continue to pursue programmed safety improvements to 12th Street in the meantime.
- Pursue better street and pedestrian connections from Western Weber unincorporated area to Plain City and Marriott Slaterville, over the Weber River. Pursue partnerships with these cities to encourage interlocal planning efforts along these connections.
- Require all new arterial and collector streets or existing street improvements, including pavement overlays, to accommodate the need for active transportation.
 - When programing such improvements, diligently pursue planning, design, and funding of a 10-foot wide street-parallel pathway. If funding only allows partial segments of this pathway with street improvements, install as much pathway or future-pathway-supporting infrastructure as funding will allow, with consideration for future connections and extensions, and adequate safety measures. Call on deferral agreements when necessary to support the pathway improvements.

- Require the installation of a 10-foot wide pathway as part of an approved development along arterial and collector streets. Deferrals should only be available to lengths of pathway that are insufficient to implement quality pathway design at the time.
- When designing or improving street-drainage systems, consider creating drainage swales in place of curb and gutter. Increase right of way widths if necessary. Drainage swales have more public support as a characteristic that supports the rural feel of the community.
- When designing or improving arterial or collector streets, add sufficient shoulder to accommodate a variety of street users, including farm implements, equestrians, and cyclists. Stripe bike lanes on these new shoulders when sufficient width exists or can be created. Ensure proper sweeping of shoulders is scheduled into programmed maintenance.

Public Comments Regarding Future Parks and Recreation

Parks and recreation has the most consensus. The majority of the public want more trails and pathways with trailheads throughout their community, including lining major waterways, canals, and rail-beds with pathways.

An interesting idea not previously contemplated was reserving a large chunk of acreage (approximately 2,000 acres near Ogden Bay) for a future regional park. The park will likely dominantly be in a natural state, with recreation trails and pathways running in various directions. Other popular ideas for this park are:

- Sport field complex
- Large open grassy areas
- Shade trees
- Running track
- Playgrounds
- Boweries and pavilions
- Picnic areas
- Pedal-cycle park
- Motor-bike park

There is support for a greenway with trails along the Weber River. It may be appropriate to look to the Jordan River Commission to explore best management practices of such a space.

A dominant theme in parks and recreation is that the County must respect private property owner's desires to not sell for these uses. The county should not use eminent domain for acquiring parks, and should only engage good-faith negotiation with will landowners, or acquire the land or land-right through the development process.

A fish pond near the Reese Park was mentioned a couple of times. It is not clear to staff whether there is popular support for this, but it should be noted that there were no dissenting opinions. More exploration of the public's will may be necessary.

Parks and Recreation Staff Recommendation:

- Pursue funding mechanisms, including impact fees on developers, to purchase and develop a large Ogden Bay regional park. This park should focus on recreation, including sport field complex, large open grassy areas, shade trees, running track, playgrounds, boweries and pavilions, picnic areas, pedal-cycle park, motor-bike park, equestrian facilities, fishing, public restrooms, and maybe camping facilities similar to North Fork Park or Weber Memorial Park.
- Explore park fees and other necessary revenue sources to provide ongoing operations and maintenance. The trail system of this park should connect to other regional trails or public rights of way, with trail heads that offer public restrooms and parking.
- Pursue funding mechanisms to purchase and preserve a green-space buffer along the Weber River similar to that implemented by the Jordan River Commission that will preserve the land from becoming developed and enhance the land as a recreational amenity. Work in partnership with the bordering cities of Plain City, Marriott-Slaterville, and Hooper City for logistics and implementation. Improvements should include:
 - An extensive regional trail system.
 - Benches and drinking fountains.
 - Picnic areas.
 - Connected regional or community parks.
 - Trailhead facilities such as parking and public restrooms.
 - Pedestrian bridges and accesses to nearby streets.
 - Public access to the river.
- Explore the public's support for creating a community fishing pond in or near the Reese Park. If supported, either explore funding opportunities to allow for the creation and ongoing operations and maintenance of a public fishing pond, or encourage and support a private venture that would offer the same service.
- Create regional trails/pathways along or adjacent to existing canal rights-of-way, the Weber River, the Little Weber River, other waterways, and railroad rights of way.
 - During development of adjacent property, require developers to preserve a trail/pathway right-of-way and, if reasonably related to the trail/pathway needs of the development, require the trail/pathway to be installed in the right-of-way.
 - Work with willing property owners to acquire a trail/pathway right-of-way.
 - Work with canal companies and/or the railroad companies to secure pedestrian accessibility within those rights-of-way, whenever possible.
 - Require adequate safety improvements during the development of these pathways.
- Create regional trails/pathways along all collector streets in lieu of sidewalk, as specified in the transportation recommendations.

Public Education

It is clear that there needs to be more time and investment in public education regarding the likely development potential of the unincorporated Western Weber community under existing zoning. Some of the education we brought to the public through this process was viewed as County-run-advocacy for

more development. This unfortunate perception caused quite a bit of anxiety for some, and as a result, they expressed more frustration and anger at the County. This stands in contrast to those others who understood the hard reality of how existing land-rights are going to affect the future of the area, with or without the County's oversight, and why it is so imperative to engage the process to better shape those rights for the betterment of the future of the area.

- Find more effective means of educating the public about the actual effect of the cluster subdivision ordinance
- Find ways to better educate the public about the actual effects on their community of one-acre zoning (if continued to be allowed everywhere).
- Better educate the public about the benefits of a transferable development rights program (TDR). Implement TDR sending areas as those areas the public desires to see open-agriculture.
- Better educate the public about the benefits and methods of a purchase of development rights program.
- Explore methods to incentivize voluntary reductions in development rights.

Future Action

Initiate the creation of a new general plan that accommodates all of these recommendations.