

GNARLY CHALLENGES: PLANNING AND URBAN DESIGN IN GATEWAY AND NATURAL AMENITY REGIONS

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RMLUI

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Plan for this roundtable

- What is a gateway and natural amenity region (GNAR)?
- Who is in the room – and why?
- Planning, development, and urban design challenges in western GNAR communities
- The GNAR Initiative
 - Research findings
 - Capacity building and education efforts
- Discussion about GNAR community challenges, opportunities, and needs
 - How to make progress on these things
- Hopefully leave with some action items / next steps

What is a GNAR?

- **Gateway**

...to a state or national park, national forest, BLM recreational area, protected cultural heritage site, or other prominent public lands

- **Natural Amenity**

...community and economic development is closely tied to landscape and natural assets utilized for recreation, tourism, and outdoor-based leisure

- **Region**

...part of a larger region with similar attributes AND/OR a region surrounding a resort-like community

Two National Parks
One Destination



MOAB

Where Adventure Begins



SPRINGDALE
ZION · CANYON

An aerial night photograph of Park City, Utah, showing a snow-covered town with warm lights and surrounding snowy mountains under a twilight sky. A large black circle is visible on the right edge of the image.

Park City, UT

Aspen, CO



Telluride, CO



Jackson, WY





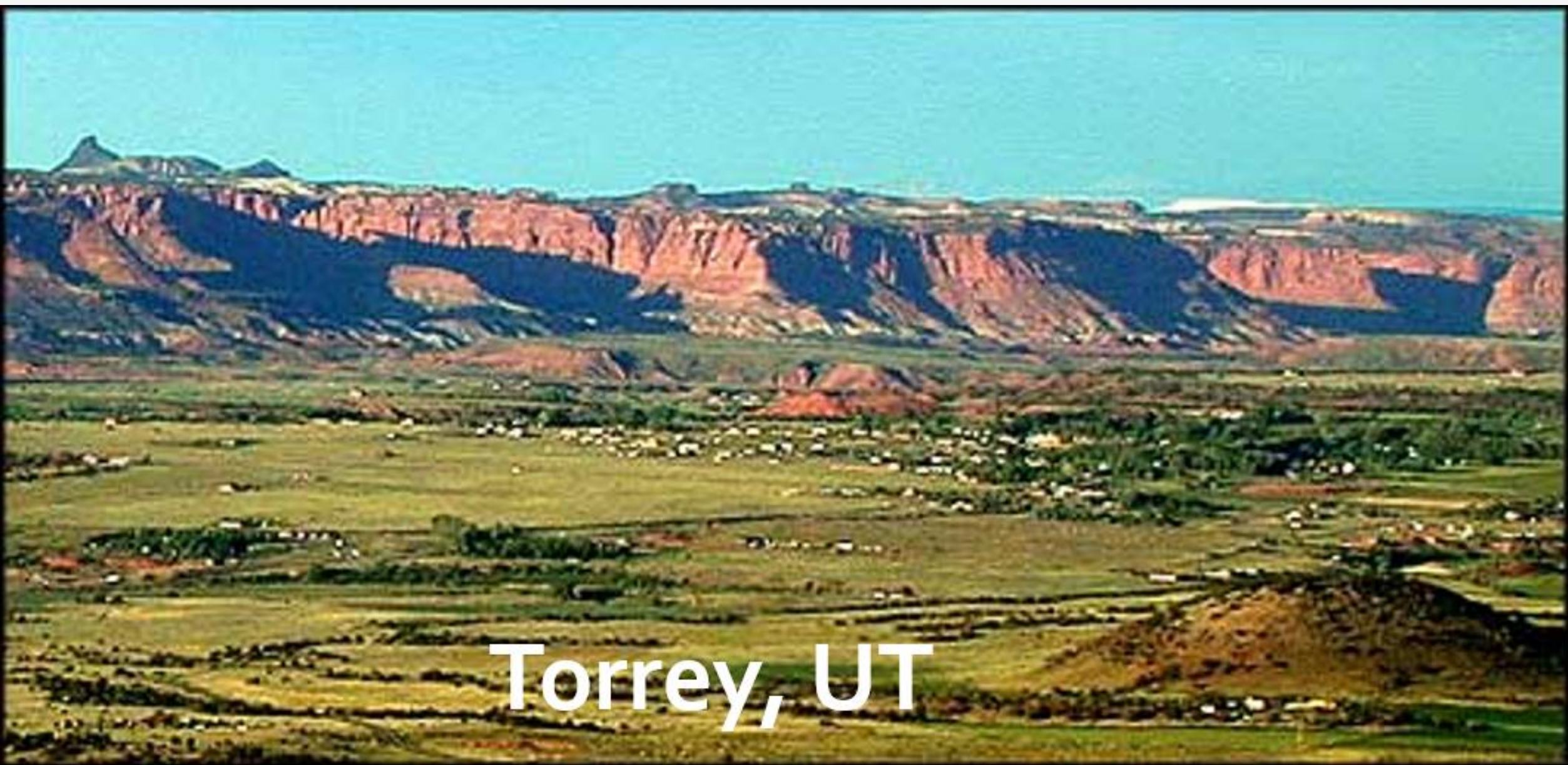
Escalante, UT





UTAH'S CANYON COUNTRY

START YOUR
Spring
IN
SAN JUAN COUNTY



Torrey, UT

*Who is in the
room – and
why?*

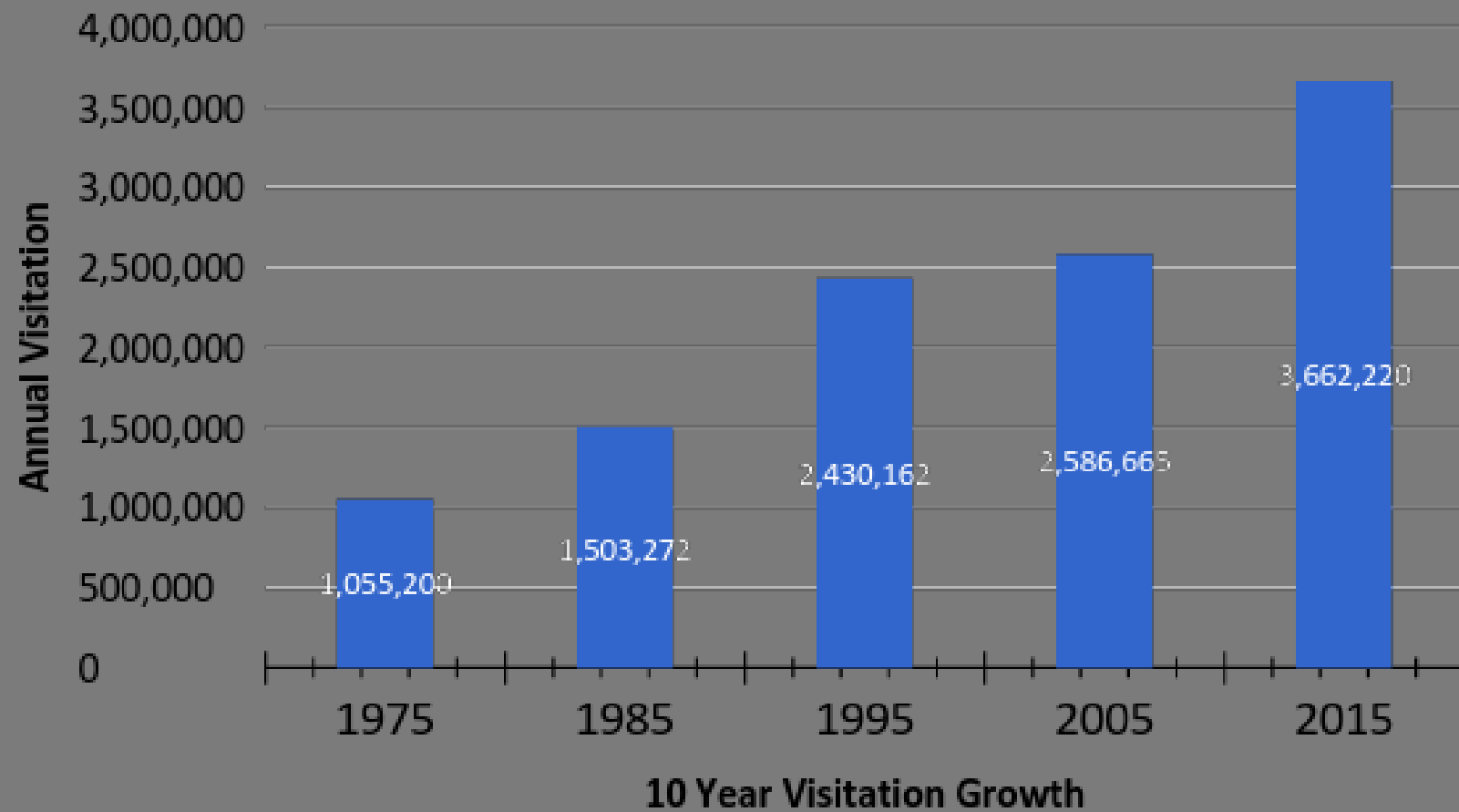
- Name
- Organization
- Why are you interested in GNAR communities and/or one key aspiration for this session?





SPRINGDALE
ZION · CANYON

ZNP Visitation (1975 -2015)



*An opportunity
for the Zion
region...*


*...and a
challenge*





*An opportunity
for the Zion
region...*

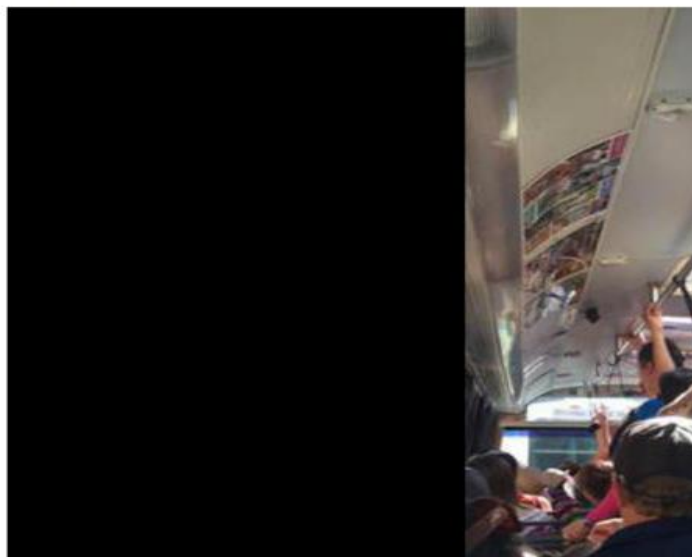
*...and a
challenge*

- Pressure on **parking** and **transportation** systems
 - Impacts on **other infrastructure**—from **restrooms** to **water treatment** facilities
 - Pressure on **emergency management** and **safety services**
 - Concern about **affordability of housing**—for residents and employees
 - Concerns about loss of **community character** and reduced **quality of life**
 - **Environmental** and **recreational amenity degradation**
- 

The mighty wa (Utah's nationa

By Amy Joi O'Donoghue [@amyjoi16](#)
Published: April 15, 2016 2:55 p.m.

1 of 14



Park Officials F Another Bustlin Glacier

Superintendent: Glacier Pa
crowds again in 2016

BY DILLON TABISH // MAR 3, 2016 // OUTD



SHOW CAPTION

RELATED STORIES:

- Glacier Park Visitation Record Settles at 2.36 Million
- Storylines That Could Define 2016
- Flathead Leads State in Visitor Spending

waiting to enter the popular park
long. The traffic backed up all the
dreds of cars lined both sides of t

Tiny Utah town's stunning canyon draws thousands of hikers — and a potential federal buyer

By BRIAN MAFFLY AND NATE CARLISLE | The Salt Lake Tribune
First Published Jul 11 2016 08:00AM • Last Updated Jul 11 2016 03:25 pm



(Steve Griffin / The Salt Lake Tribune) Hikers climb a ladder made from a tree at the first falls of the Kanarrville Falls hike in Kanarrville Wednesday July 6, 2016.

Outdoor recreation » As hiker traffic overwhelms tiny Kanarrville, BLM seeks to buy private land at canyon's mouth.



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Kanarrville • This tiny Iron County town has a big problem that some rural Utah communities would kill for.

Thousands of visitors come here, drawn to an increasingly popular [day hike to a slot canyon](#) and waterfalls up Kanarra Creek. But other than a \$10-a-car parking area, an RV park and kids' lemonade stands, Kanarrville lacks opportunities to tap these visitors' wallets. The trailhead is easily accessible off Interstate 15 south of Cedar City on Zion National Park's northern boundary. Yet there are no groceries, restaurants, gas stations or shops here.

*Big city
problems in
small rural
towns...*

*and some
unique
challenges*

Concerns related to:

- Affordability and availability of housing
 - Employee attraction/retention
 - Traffic/congestion/parking
 - Insufficient or overwhelmed infrastructure and public services
 - Loss of community character
 - Economic vulnerability and need for diversification
 - Questions about the role of tourism and tourism marketing
 - Environmental impacts
 - Reduced quality of visitor experience
 - Climate change vulnerability/adaptation
 - Social-cultural-political dynamics
 - Local-regional-state-federal relationships
- 



THE GNAR INITIATIVE

AT THE UNIVERSITY OF UTAH


Research

- What are the challenges?
- What are the opportunities?
- What are communities doing to prepare and respond?

Education

- Training planners to work in GNAR communities
- Training for planners and public officials in GNAR communities
- Peer-to-peer learning forums

Capacity building

- On-the-ground planning, urban design, and collaboration assistance
 - Online toolkit
 - Tool and resource development
- 

Research

- Database of western GNAR communities
 - Interviews with public officials in more than 20 western GNAR communities, ranging from more to less developed
 - Survey of public officials in western GNAR communities
 - Sent out to more than 1278 communities
 - Completed by 333 public officials in more than 263 communities
-

What defines a GNAR community?

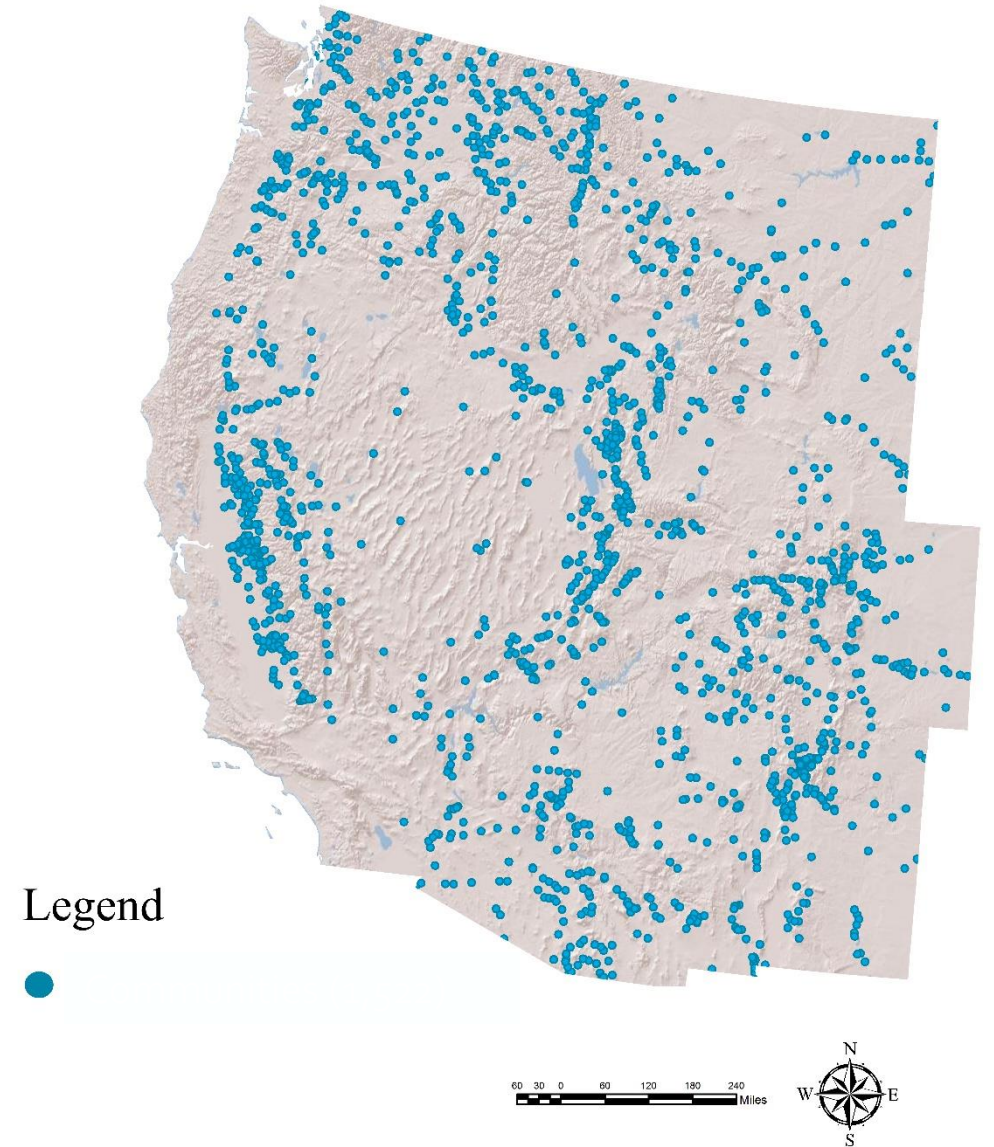
- Small town
 - 150-25,000 people
- Proximity to natural amenities
 - Within 10 miles of a national park, state park, national forest, lake, scenic river, etc.,
- Not in an urbanized area
 - Further than 15 miles from an urbanized area by road



GNAR community database

- 1,522 GNAR communities
 - 821 incorporated cities
 - 701 Census designated places
- 30.6% of Mountain West communities
- 61.1% of “small” MW communities
- We were not able to find contacts for all communities
 - Hence, survey was not sent out to all communities identified

Final City Selection



Survey demographics

- Average population of represented communities was 8,649

On average, these communities:

- Are growing (7.17% average growth rate between 2010-2016)
 - Had a median income of \$49,414 in 2016 (as compared to a national average of \$57,617)
 - Are seeing higher than the national average rates of housing unit and rental unit growth
 - Are becoming more popular places to visit:
 - 82% of respondents said the number of tourists visiting their communities increased in the last 10 years
 - 42% said this increase was substantial
-

Key concerns

- **Survey respondents said people in their community care most widely care about:**
 - Well maintained city infrastructure
 - A small town feel
 - Maintaining community character/identity
 - Livable wages
 - Housing affordability



Key concerns

- **Key identified challenges – across GNAR communities**
 - Housing affordability
 - 49% of survey respondents do not feel their community is doing enough to address housing
 - Only 8% feel their community is definitely doing enough to address housing
 - Average wages relative to cost of living
 - Income inequality/social inequality
 - Climate related risks
 - Lack of resources and revenue
-

Key concerns

- Issues that are not widely seen as key problems – across GNAR communities
 - Too much tourism
 - Additionally, on average, respondents said that tension between residents and tourists is not really a problem
 - Environmental degradation
 - Crowding and overuse of recreational areas
 - Population growth
 - Parking related issues
 - Traffic and congestion
-

Key concerns

- **But certain issues seem to come to the fore as GNAR communities develop**
 - Communities often quickly go from not being concerned about short-term rentals to being quite concerned, sometimes due to acute shortages of long-term rental stock
 - Tensions between residents and tourists seem to appear once tourism reaches a certain level – or if the community attracts certain kinds of tourists
- **Certain kinds of GNAR communities tend to have certain kinds of issues (and don't have other issues)**
 - Geographic constraints tend to exacerbate housing issues, but also tend to prevent concerns about sprawl
 - Transportation issues are a predominant concern in some, but not all, highly developed GNAR communities—e.g., Springdale and Moab,

Regional collaboration

- **Surprisingly high levels of regional “collaboration”**
 - About 50% said there is quite a bit to a lot of involvement in collaborative efforts around both **transportation** and **economic development**
 - 40-45% said there is quite a bit to a lot of involvement in collaborative efforts around: **housing, natural resource management, tourism recreation, and infrastructure**
 - **However, the level of perceived efficacy of that collaboration was much lower**
 - For each topic area, less than 25% said these collaborative efforts were extremely or very effective
-

Community character

A lot of GNAR communities say they don't want to be like:

- Vail, Aspen, or Breckenridge, CO
- Jackson, WY
- Moab, UT

Or to be:

- “A tourist trap”
- A big city
 - Many say they want to maintain their “town-ness”

But, on the other hand, some are concerned about becoming:

- “An abandoned small town”
-

*Innovation
and
learning
from each
other*

GNAR communities are innovating and experimenting

- “Pop-up” intersection treatments and experimental traffic calming measures
- E-bike share programs
- Tiny house ordinances

And they want to learn from each other and share their lessons learned



*Help
wanted!*

GNAR communities want assistance with their planning, development, and sustainability issues

- Strong interest in:
 - Model ordinances
 - White papers on key topics
 - Case studies and lessons learned
 - Best practice guidelines for GNAR communities
 - Help with charrettes and design workshops
 - Models for regional collaboration
 - Information about different funding options
 - Forums (in person, webinars, etc) for peer-to-peer learning and sharing innovative ideas
 - 95% say an online toolkit to support planning in GNAR communities would be helpful
-


Research

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GNAR Toolkit

ISSUES

[COMMUNITY PLANNING](#)[REGIONAL PLANNING](#)[COMMUNITY DESIGN &
PLACEMAKING](#)[ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT &
TOURISM](#)[HOUSING & LODGING](#)[NATURAL RESOURCE & AMENITY
MANAGEMENT](#)[NATURAL HAZARDS](#)[RECREATION & TRAILS](#)[TRANSPORTATION](#)[TECHNICAL SKILLS](#)[EXPERIENCES](#)

The GNAR Community Online Toolkit is designed to be a resource for planners, public officials, community members, consultants, and all others who are working in communities with significant outdoor recreational resources. These communities are referred to as Gateway and Natural Amenity Regions (GNAR). This toolkit provides resources, case studies, model ordinances, and other tools to help GNAR communities plan for and respond to the unique planning, transportation, economic, community development, and sustainability challenges and opportunities they face. The toolkit is a living resource; it will grow and adapt in order to provide the most useful and up-to-date information possible.

Have ideas for topics we should address, thoughts about tools we should link to or develop, or suggestions for how to improve the toolkit? Let us know! Or even better: use the toolkit to share your case studies, resources, and lessons learned: gnar@utah.edu.

February 4, 2019

HOUSING & LODGING

ISSUES

TECHNICAL SKILLS

EXPERIENCES

SUPPORT

OVERVIEW

Housing is a major issue for many Gateway and Natural Amenity Region (GNAR) communities. Many of the issues focus around vacation rentals. The combination of a high volume of short-term rentals, higher home values, and the lack of affordable workforce housing make living in GNAR communities extremely difficult for seasonal workers and lower-income families.

CHALLENGES

Housing affordability can be problematic in GNAR communities. Generally low wages, high volumes of short-term vacation rentals, and rapid high-end development can cause significant lapses in affordable housing. Many workers



GUIDANCE & BEST PRACTICES

DARK SKY PLANNING

AN INTRODUCTION FOR LOCAL LEADERS

RURAL PLANNING GROUP

Case Study: Creating an Ordinance to Regulate Short-term Rentals

Marina, California

Key Takeaways

This case study is an analysis of the process of drafting an ordinance to regulate short-term rentals that occurred in 2017 in Marina, California. Information was collected through reviewing public documents and conducting informal interviews with city staff in the community development department. Here are the key findings:

- Short-term rentals are an increasingly popular mode of lodging for many individuals and families, spurred in large degree by the success of online platforms like Airbnb and VRBO.
- Residents of the community often complain about noise, parking, diminished neighborhood character, and other issues associated with short-term rentals.
- Planning staff have to work to balance the needs and desires of property owners, residents, and visitors to the community. One area of special concern is the pressure that short-term rentals place on the city's already limited affordable housing stock.

Background

Marina, California is located north of Monterey and south of Santa Cruz in the Monterey Bay Area. The city of 25,000 was incorporated in 1975 but existed much earlier as a community for the families of soldiers stationed at Fort Ord. The fort closed in the early 1990s, ushering in a period of decline for the city both in terms of population and economic development. Marina rebounded following the Great Recession. Today, a number of housing developments and commercial projects are taking place in Marina, many of them on old Fort Ord lands that were transferred to the city when the fort closed.

Marina is mere miles away from tourist destinations like the Monterey Bay Aquarium, Pebble Beach, Point Lobos, and Carmel-by-the-Sea. Tourists have traditionally stayed in hotels, motels, and lodges in neighboring Monterey, Pacific Grove, and Carmel. The



The GNAR online toolkit (which is still very much in development) is available at:


gnar.utah.edu

Ideas, questions, or want to get involved? We need help!

Contact:

gnar@utah.edu

Small group discussion

- Groups of 4-5
 - Identify someone to take notes for your group
 - Someone with good handwriting – we'd like to keep and be able to read the notes!
 - Identify someone to report out for your group briefly at the end
 - Report out will focus on key needs and opportunities identified, as well as any key insights
- 

Small group discussion

- What particularly resonated with you? Why?
 - What are key challenges, opportunities, and needs for western GNAR communities?
 - What can we do to assist these communities and regions?
 - How can the GNAR Initiative be most helpful?
 - How do we leverage the Initiative to have the biggest positive impact?
 - Who might be potential partners and/or supporters for the GNAR Initiative?
 - Any other ideas for the GNAR Initiative or for how to help western GNAR communities?
-

Thanks to NITC and all of the other organizations that have made our research, education, and capacity building work possible





QUESTIONS?

THOUGHTS?

IDEAS?



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