

DRAFT

OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES



03 Introduction

Throughout the master plan visioning process, members of the East Bench Community identified what they liked about their community. These elements were used as the cornerstone for building the East Bench Community Vision.

Members of the community also listed a number of challenges facing their neighborhoods. In some instances, the challenges are based on differing opinions or values. In other instances, they are actual physical constraints to meeting the future needs of the community.

The following pages provide a summary of the opportunities and challenges in the East Bench. The intent of the principles and initiatives of the East Bench Master Plan is to capitalize on the existing opportunities while developing solutions to challenges in an effort to meet the East Bench Community vision.

Opportunities

The following opportunities have been identified by the East Bench Community. These opportunities should be embraced as critical elements in achieving the East Bench vision.

Stable and Interactive Neighborhoods

Much of the East Bench is comprised of well established residential neighborhoods. The safe, friendly, and welcoming neighborhoods encourage interaction and foster a distinct sense of place with a “small town” feel within the context of the larger city.



Business Districts

The existing business nodes within the East Bench contribute to the livability of the community. They are each unique and range from small and intimate, such as the 15th & 15th Neighborhood Business District to those with larger service areas, such as the commercial nodes located along Foothill Drive. These commercial areas provide easily accessible dining and shopping opportunities, as well as neighborhood gathering places.

City and Regional Connectivity

The East Bench is comprised of a well defined street grid that connects the community to the larger regional transportation network. Foothill Drive and Parley's Way provide direct access to the I-80 and I-215 corridors connecting the East Bench to the region, while Sunnyside Avenue, 1300 East, and 500 South connect major activity areas of the East Bench to the City. This street network provides opportunities for additional transportation options.



Gateway Corridors

Foothill Drive and Parley's Way are major corridors that provide the first glimpse of the City from I-80 and I-215. As such, these streets provide an opportunity to showcase the City's approach to creating a livable community.



Foothills and Stream Corridors

The location of the East Bench offers exceptional open space access that is not readily available in other areas of the city. There are several access points to the trail systems where residents can hike, run, and bike. Both Red Butte Creek and Emigration Creek flow through the area creating both recreation opportunities and habitat for native vegetation and wildlife.



Regionally Significant Destinations

The East Bench is home to the University of Utah, Research Park, Veteran's Administration Hospital, and numerous cultural and entertainment destinations. These facilities provide employment, learning and entertainment opportunities for not only East Bench residents, but for people all over the region. The proximity to one another creates a regional node.



Economic Prosperity

The economic prosperity within the area, as illustrated by higher household incomes and percentages of home ownership, benefits the entire community. High income levels contribute to continued private investment into the community in various ways ranging from purchases of goods in local businesses and property improvements.

Challenges

The following challenges have been identified by the East Bench Community. The main goal of the East Bench Plan is to address these challenges in an effort to achieve the community vision.

Maintaining Neighborhood Character

There is a strong desire among East Bench residents to preserve the defining features of their unique neighborhoods. The challenge comes in balancing private property rights and allowing the community to grow, while preserving the things that make the neighborhood special.



Meeting the Needs of Future Generations

The East Bench is characterized by its mature, stable neighborhoods. While this is an asset, it also creates challenges due to limited opportunities for new growth. An aging population, and the young families who are replacing this population, are looking for additional housing, service and recreational opportunities within their community. The limited redevelopment potential in the East Bench will require creative solutions to meet these needs.



Limited Transportation Choices

The history of infrastructure improvements along major streets within the East Bench has been focused mainly on the movement of the automobile. Also, the predominant low-density residential land use pattern does not generally represent an environment of high transit ridership. These characteristics have contributed to a lack of transportation options in the East Bench. The lack of options is evident in the travel characteristics of the East Bench working population where 86% of the working commuters travel by automobile.



Commercial Impacts on Residential Property

Although appropriate commercial development generally provides positive benefits to surrounding residential neighborhoods, there can be negative impacts as well. Neighbors who live close to businesses often list noise, light and parking as negative impacts.

Growth of Regional Destinations

The regional destinations within the East Bench are growing and will continue to grow. While this growth is a positive contribution to the region, it can put a strain on existing resources within the community. Creative solutions are needed to accommodate the housing, service and transportation needs related to the growth of these facilities and impacts to the surrounding neighborhoods.



Impacts of Major Streets

The proximity of major corridors to single-family residential neighborhoods presents significant challenges. The major streets, such as Foothill Drive and Parley's Way are designed to move automobiles, which can negatively impact the neighborhoods they bisect. Development along the major corridors are auto-oriented, with parking close to the street, buildings set back far from the sidewalk and land uses that support the automobile. It is difficult for pedestrians to cross major streets except at signalized intersections, which may be up to a half mile away. There are few bike lanes that connect neighborhoods to commercial and recreation areas.



Balancing Access and Preservation of Public Lands

Protection of natural habitats and resources can conflict with objectives to provide greater access to natural areas. As more and more people utilize the open spaces within the East Bench, balancing public access and recreation with protection of natural habitat and resources will be an ongoing challenge.

Focus Areas

Utilize existing opportunities and overcome challenges in order to achieve the vision of the East Bench Community.

The East Bench Community Vision is a framework for what the community will look like in the future. In some cases, the East Bench will appear as it does today with minimal change. In other cases, change is encouraged to meet the future needs of the East Bench Community.

There are five specific areas of focus described in this plan. The goal of each of these focus areas is to utilize existing opportunities and overcome challenges in order to achieve the vision of the East Bench Community. The focus areas are the following:

- **Neighborhoods;**
- **Major Corridors;**

- **Regional Activity Centers;**
- **Connecting People to Places; and**
- **Parks, Recreation, and Open Space.**

Each of the following chapters are devoted to discussing these focus areas. Each focus area has a list of **Guiding Principles**, which are overarching, high level guidelines for future decision making. The **Moving Forward** section of each focus area chapter contains concepts, ideas, and strategies that have been developed according to the overall guiding principles. These should be used to develop specific implementation tools, such as ordinances, policies, and programs.

