

SECTION 5: FINDINGS & RECOMMENDATIONS

There are several salient issues that the results of the Community Preference Survey have highlighted. The following is a review of the baseline conclusions from the survey:

Communities in Motion Implementation Guidebook

Few regions in the country have experienced growth as rapid as the Treasure Valley in recent decades. The Treasure Valley can grow in a way that improves the quality of life and competitive advantage for the region. By the adoption of the CIM in August 2006 the region has agreed on a common vision. However, stated in CIM, “a plan is not a solution.” The *Communities in Motion Implementation Guidebook* provides more specific strategies for land use and transportation necessary to move this vision into action. The feedback received in the Community Preference Survey will be used to develop a recommendations section in the *Communities in Motion Implementation Guidebook*. The recommendations will be developed for each stakeholder, including local municipalities, transportation agencies, neighborhood groups, developers, financial institutions, and the public.

“I hope that some concrete recommendations are soon presented to elected officials as well as creating an effective educational program to the citizens of the Treasure Valley.”

--Participant

Both Density and Design Matter

The Community Preference Survey showed weak correlation between density and desirability. Both low and high density developments scored in the top five rated images used in the survey, suggesting that density is not the only factor that determines housing preferences. Some of the highest rated housing types were the narrow lots with front or rear parking. Furthermore, based on a correlation analysis that compared overall preference scores versus density ratings, density explains only a minor amount of the variation in preference scores (as indicated on Chart 1).

Lots with yards are desirable for families; larger lots and sprawl development have become increasingly undesirable. Pre-survey groups hinted that large lots would rank highest due to higher property values and acreages. If rankings were merely based on property values, then large lots would have been the highest scored, however, in many cases large lots scored below much less expensive housing options. Focus groups highlighted that while the expensive lots would be nice, there are additional costs that go into maintaining lifestyle (e.g., gas, property taxes, and inconvenience).

One important aspect of density to note came from the focus groups. Some focus group participants stated that density can be good if it is done “right.” Design features, such as building height and bulk, façade treatments, the location of parking, and the relationship of the buildings to the street and to one another, mature landscaping, quality construction, and unique and varied street facades make density more integrated into existing neighborhoods and more compatible in new development proposals. Some focus group participants associated high-density developments with renters who do not take care of the property and/or may be involved in criminal activities. Even though national research indicates the correlation between renters and crime/property degradation is not true in most cases, the perception may exist among the greater population.⁴⁷

Well-designed, higher density developments ranked high in the survey; however, based on focus group feedback, when these were located in low-density areas, the transition between development types

⁴⁷ Skogan, W., *Fear of Crime and Neighborhood Change*, Crime and Justice, 1986.

exacerbated the difference in density and made for conflict. A well-designed and integrated transition helps the appearance of low, medium, and high density developments. However, the distances between different densities do not need to be large to be effective. For example, low-density developments can be located in close proximity to higher densities and still achieve an appropriate transition between neighborhoods. In some parts of the Treasure Valley, this pattern varying degrees of density within close proximity to each other exists. Planning and zoning that excessively separates low and high densities are unnecessary but also contribute to various problems associated with sprawl.

Based on survey data and from focus groups, the main demographic variable somewhat associated with density was age. Preference scores from survey respondents who were age 65 or over negatively correlated with density ratings more than preference scores from respondents in lower age categories. One reason for this difference in demographics is based on feedback received from focus group participants who stated that as they age, they want less maintenance and to live in one-story buildings. Because higher-density developments often have multi-story buildings, such as apartment complexes, the correlation between low preference scores and high density developments may be more influenced by the multi-level aspect of the development than the density itself. However, some multi-story images scored high even for the age 65 group despite the multi-story aspect of the development—further suggesting the importance of good design.

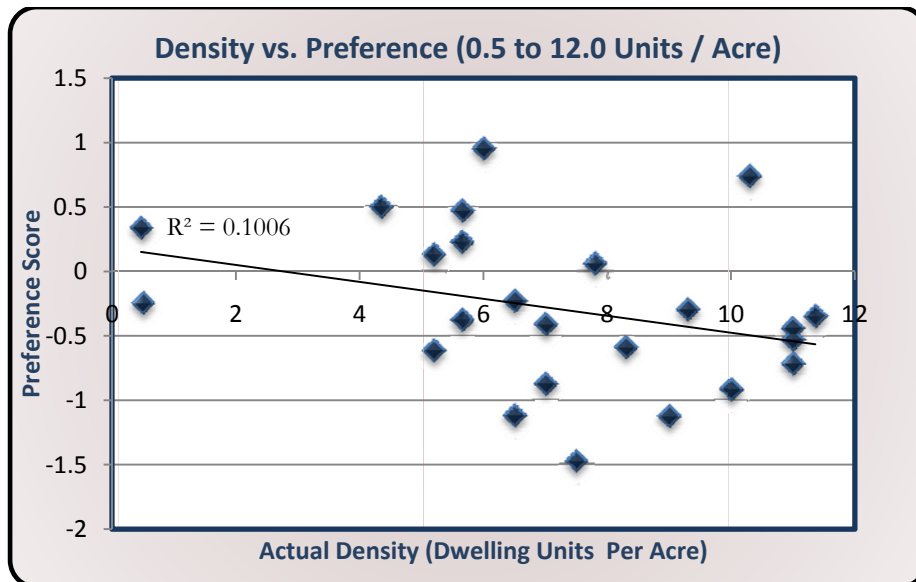
“I might like a large home on a large lot while my kids are active but as a younger married couple we may have liked a more affordable home on a smaller lot. I think the valley needs to offer a variety of choices.”

--Participant

“(I) hope this helps convince (the) development community that there is demand for other than detached, single-family subdivisions.”

--Participant

Chart 1: Density and Preference Graph



While traditional rural and suburban style housing ranked well in the survey, it was noted often by the focus groups that too often garages are the prominent feature of a home. This reduced walkability of the neighborhood.

There is a sweet spot of density

While there was not a strong correlation between design and density, the highest ranking housing options were for similar or slightly higher densities than typically built in the region but while still maintaining detached buildings and personal backyards. This finding indicates a possible universal desire across all demographic and economic groups—privacy. The density scores of multi-story buildings indicate that a certain density-privacy threshold exists.

The preference for “privacy” can also be different for different groups of people. From the focus groups it was noted that a young family will want a “private” backyard for children to play safely; however, an elderly household may desire that private space for socialization or hobbies. The preference of detached homes also suggests the need for “privacy” in terms of sound barriers between neighbors. Understanding the nuances of different needs for different groups will help both municipalities and developers achieve desired density levels while still meeting the housing needs of a diverse population. This will be further addressed in the mobility management section.

It is possible to meet the needs of various groups through good site and building design even at densities in the range of 6-12 units per acre.

Transit Oriented Developments are more palatable when Densities are hidden

Communities have often opposed transit oriented developments (typically with densities more than 8 units per acre) in part because they feared the new units would not fit in with the surrounding architecture. Recent developments in compact housing design are changing this perception. One way of increasing densities by building multiplexes. It offers an effective alternative to the traditional townhouse options by providing an attached unit that blends in better with detached housing units. The exterior resembles the larger, standard single-family detached home; however, the interior structure is divided into two to four individual units. Entryways to multiplex units may be strategically placed on the sides or rear, with separation from other entryways for desired spacing and privacy.

Increased Awareness of Benefits Improves Scoring of Dense Projects

The Visualizing Density Group who participated in the survey had significantly different responses on several key issues. The group was presented the Visualizing Density information and then participated in the survey. This group seemed more likely to shed some of the common negative perceptions associated with the term “density.” In general, the more individuals have knowledge about benefits and uses of higher density, the more they like it.⁴⁸

Recommendations:

The feedback received in the CPS will be used to develop a recommendations section in the *Communities in Motion* Implementation Guidebook. The recommendations will be developed for each stakeholder, including local municipalities, transportation agencies, neighborhood groups, developers, financial institutions, and the public. There are a variety of ways that the region can achieve higher densities than what is typically offered under existing conditions and recommendations may include:

Adopt the Communities in Motion and the Implementation Guidebook

CIM identifies the future long-range vision of transportation for the region. Adopting the plan enables local planning to participate more seamlessly in land use and transportation planning.

The *Communities in Motion* Implementation Guidebook provides more specific strategies for making the vision of the plan into a reality. The guidebook provides principles of land use, multi-modal transportation, and provides local examples of success stories. The guidebook has been developed for a variety of stakeholders to work together for acceptable transit oriented development solutions. The guidebook provides a catalog of images and details of well-designed and integrated TODs within neighborhoods.

Zoning ordinances should consider both the density and the design of neighborhoods:

- Transitions between high and low density are mediated by in-between densities. Midrange density can take different forms, such as large buildings surrounded by parking or smaller buildings that make up more coherent neighborhoods.⁴⁹
- Manage transit supportive development nodes. One strategy is to establish bull’s-eye zoning around transit stations, which concentrates the highest density around transit nodes and gradually reduces density as you move away from the stations.
- Allow for density bonuses, or additional housing units beyond what the maximum allowed under the zoning of the property, contingent upon meeting certain criteria. These criteria could include proximity to transit, employment, schools, and parks or for greater affordability to match employment and housing through transit.
- Design guidelines and/or a design review process should be established for such developments. Design items should include building materials, access to amenities, walkability factors, safety, sound dampening construction practices, how the development integrates within the existing neighborhood, and areas for privacy.

“You can't build your way out of traffic congestion. A holistic approach to the building of neighborhoods, roads, shopping areas and public transportation is the only thing that makes sense. We have known for a generation that oil-based transportation was going to come to an end. It's a sin that we didn't address the issue before now.”

--Participant

⁴⁸ Malizia, E. and Exline, S., Consumer Preferences for Residential Development Alternatives. Working Paper. 2002.

⁴⁹ Form-Based Codes: Implementing Smart Growth, Local Government Commission,

- Use the guidebook to develop a pattern book. A pattern book is a concept used by municipalities to establish the basic form of buildings and to provide key architectural elements and detail. This may include acceptable renderings and images of treatments necessary to build a house. This process engages builders, developers, architects, and real estate professionals in a more technical process which can reduce misunderstandings between neighborhoods, the developer, and builders. For neighborhoods, a pre-approved housing style has been established that is attractive to the community. The developer has a list of approved-styles and thus does not have to pursue the entitlements which can drag out the process and increase costs of developments. The municipality has less public hearings and provides a fair result.

Require a mixture of land uses and housing stock.

Zoning codes should emphasize a mix of land uses and housing types to bring destinations into close proximity to housing and provide housing choices to meet many individuals' needs at different times in their lives. A common criticism of new residential developments is that homes appear to be indistinguishable from one another. One way to avoid the creation of cookie-cutter subdivisions is to have different builders construct homes on the same block or, alternatively, to have different builders construct homes on different blocks close to one another. However, there are obvious increased logistics involved when dealing with more than one homebuilder.

Use compact design to create more secure neighborhoods.

Well-designed compact developments can foster the sense of safety and security that every person desires in their community. By incorporating front porches, attractive common open space, appropriate lighting, and narrow streets with sidewalks into new or existing developments, the community promotes safety and security by means of its own activity. This type of crime prevention through design can help alleviate some of the perceptions mentioned earlier about high density and crime/neighborhood degradation. Some methods of creating higher-density neighborhoods while maintaining security include:

- Adopting a cottage housing development zoning ordinance: Cottage houses are single-family detached units, usually less than 1,000 square feet in size, that incorporate many of the amenities associated with conventional single-family detached housing. Because of the style and size of cottage houses, developers can cluster cottage housing onto smaller parcels of land without sacrificing the feel and character of detached housing. The survey shows several possible markets for such housing including young families and/or retirees who want less maintenance. Live-work units: Live-work units enable certain businesses to operate and, unlike zoning provisions for "home-occupations," must allow office use by non-resident employees and customers.⁵⁰ This style of housing provides both residential space and limited office space and can reduce vehicle trips, especially during the commute hours.
- Accessory dwelling units (ADU): When extended families were housed on the same site, they sometimes converted a basement, carriage house or guest house into separate living quarters. Often separate servants' quarters were included in large homes. Curiously, this sometimes is permitted today in otherwise strictly exclusive single-family zones. Modern accessory dwelling units are often built over the garage. These units can be used as a studio, a teenager's bedroom, or rented as a separate apartment to help offset the cost of a mortgage. ADUs provide additional density by slowing small units on the same site as a single-family dwelling. This also enables more freedom and

security for elderly who wish to “age in place” but reduce the amount of indoor and outdoor maintenance needed.

- Townhome and Condominium Developments: The development of affordable townhomes and condos typically higher densities, while maintaining a similar appearance to detached housing and therefore integrates better in neighborhoods.

Increased Educational Opportunities

COMPASS sponsors a series of public presentations to address a range of issues regarding growth, land use, and transportation planning. The presentation series also supports our goal to communicate and disseminate information in a clear and concise manner to multiple audiences, to make difficult information understandable. To support public outreach COMPASS has a Public Participation Committee (PPC) that works to improve the opportunities for the public to learn about transportation and to be involved in decisions. Comparing the results of the survey between those who had participated in the Visualizing Density forum, it is apparent that additional information and dissemination about the benefits of higher density housing is needed.

Mobility Management Development Guidebook

Walkable Neighborhoods (When Done Right) are Highly Desirable

The research suggests that there is a pent-up demand for more walkable environments in the region. More walkable neighborhoods are associated with a larger proportion of residents who elect to drive less and walk and take public transportation more often. These findings can mean significant benefits for residents who live in areas that are more compact rather than spread out, that offer shopping and/or jobs close to where people live, and that have a well-connected street network. In these neighborhoods, people drive fewer miles and spend less time driving, generate less air pollution and greenhouse gas emissions, and are more physically active and less likely to be obese.

Changing Demographics and an Aging Population need more alternatives for traveling

By 2030, one in five adults will be over the age of 65⁵⁰ which underscores the importance of creating walkable communities with older adults in mind. Incorporating community design strategies and options related to housing, transportation, and land use can support walkability among senior citizens, enabling them to remain independent, to foster better health, and to actively participate in community life.

Recommendation:

Develop a Mobility Management Guidebook

COMPASS has been developing *Communities in Motion* Implementation Guidebook to provide more specific strategies for land use and transportation necessary to move this vision into action. A changing demographics and a large increase in the elderly will prompt necessary changes to promote elder-ready communities.

Conventional zoning often prevents the development of walkable, mixed-use neighborhoods by strictly separating uses so that they must be connected by a car trip. In addition, many local jurisdictions have used zoning and other means to restrict the construction of apartments, townhouses, senior housing or traditional neighborhoods with mixed housing types.

The Mobility Management Guidebook will explore elements of development, design, and transportation that will enable the elderly to live independently in their homes and neighborhoods for as long as possible. Key elements that are important to sustain older people in their communities could include affordable housing, public-private transit options, and necessary community supports.

⁵⁰ 2008 American Community Survey

Develop a pedestrian/bicycle master plan.

Data from the CPS indicates that sidewalks and bike lanes are highly desirable. This enables multi-modal options and reduces vehicles miles, especially on short trips. However, communities are often designed without these basic elements and without accommodating pedestrian and bicycle traffic. A pedestrian / bicycle master plan can provide a consistent policy for prioritizing current and future improvements.

UPlan Land Use Model

The feedback received in the CPS will be used to calibrate the UPlan land use model used by COMPASS. Input into the model is largely dependent on local information regarding development trends and conditions and therefore the interpretation of this survey data is critical to this highly malleable land use allocation model. The model will be used in the development of the long-range transportation plan in identifying location of growth and demand on the roadway and transit network, including deficiency analysis.

Individual preferences for denser and more walkable neighborhoods aggregate to total demand by the community population. Even if individual preferences remain constant, a shift in the total demographic composition could place added weight in categories where preferences are relatively stronger for walkable neighborhoods. A declining prevalence of households with children and a growth in older households both have major implications for overall housing and location preferences. In this section we review those demographic trends.⁵¹

Our forecast of potential demand rests on combining the demographic trend with preferences indicated in the CPS. These forces indicate there could be a large and growing market for compact city alternatives. It remains to be seen how fully these housing preferences will be translated into actual housing consumption. For this demand to be actualized, it will require a suitably designed and located new supply. Well-designed new projects in turn create new opportunities for consumers to learn about satisfying alternatives to the suburban sprawl of auto-dependent, low-density single-family homes.

In anticipating expected demands for housing and their effect on the transportation network, we can expect greater variety than ever before in the housing stock built. However, predicting the exact mixture of rural lots, large lots, suburban lots, compact lots, townhouses, and condominiums⁵² will be difficult and an inexact science. To provide support to the model the following are findings of the survey:

American Dream No Longer Requires a Large Backyard

The CPS found considerable demand for conventional subdivisions. However, it also revealed a large, underserved market for more walkable neighborhoods with varying housing types, access to shopping and

“It is foreseeable that in the future, other amenity-oriented retail shops or upscale convenience stores may cluster in districts anchored by a Starbucks or another coffee house. These districts will become the nuclei for denser, walkable residential clusters enjoyed by many housing consumers.”

-- Dowell Myers and Elizabeth Gearin, Current Preferences and Future Demand for Denser Residential Environments

⁵¹American Community Survey, 2008.

⁵²COMPASS UPlan.

restaurants and a potential for shorter commutes. This compact housing market does not appear to be fully served by the current housing stock.

Based on assessed values and the assumption that highest valued properties would rank highest, large lots should have been the favorite building type in the survey. However, large lots were only the fourth highest housing type (out of 15). Also, 72% of Ada County residents would like higher density neighborhoods if it reduced commute distance. A smaller proportion of Canyon County residents wanted to trade density with commute distance. The study provides evidence that the segment of the housing market that is interested in these alternatives is underserved-that is, there is unmet demand for more compact development in the region.

“As I get older, I want a one story home.”

--Participant

This demand for compact growth is likely to increase. While several public policies made suburban development styles the preference of post-World War II growth, many of those policies and the demographic composition of the market have changed.⁵³ As previously noted, babyboomers and young, first-time homeowners will play a large role in defining the future development patterns. Demographers predict that empty nesters in the 55 to 64 age bracket will be the fastest- growing segment of the home-buying market until 2010, when the 25- to 34-year-olds will match their growth rate.⁵⁴

Other elderly are looking to “age in place” as the community they live in provides the features and resources they need. About half of the babyboomers plan to “age in place” but that could also include a different housing situation, while maintaining the same neighborhood and associations enjoyed now. Both segments represent a potentially large shift in the housing demand.

Other groups also could open up the market for compact and transit-oriented development. This includes households that would like to avoid traffic congestion exacerbated by the single-occupant vehicle. Traffic is one of the most powerful pushes driving households away from larger, rural lots. Also, households with children have pronounced preferences for sidewalks, smaller lots with smaller front yards, pedestrian-oriented streets, and higher-density housing with houses on smaller lots close to the street. They might be perfect candidates for new neighborhoods built on traditional principles as they want small lots on safe streets.⁵⁵

Housing Stock Mix by UPlan Residential Categories

⁵³ Avila, E., *Popular Culture in the Age of White Flight: Fear and Fantasy in Suburban Los Angeles*, 2004.

⁵⁴ *The Coming Demand*. Dowell Myers, Elizabeth Gearin, Tridib Banerjee, ad Ajay Garde Congress for the New Urbanism, 2001.

⁵⁵ *The Coming Demand*. Dowell Myers, Elizabeth Gearin, Tridib Banerjee, ad Ajay Garde Congress for the New Urbanism, 2001.

	Density	Treasure Valley, 2000-2008	Greater Wasatch Area ⁵⁶ 2000-2020 Base Simulation ⁵⁷	Greater Wasatch Area 2000-2020 Alternative Simulation
Rural Lot	0.5 DU/acre	8.1%	4.0% ⁵⁸	1.7%
Large Lot	1.5 DU/acre	6.2%	4.0%	1.7%
Planned Community	1.5 DU/acre	0.0%	N/A ⁵⁹	N/A
Suburban Lot	3 DU/acre	60.8%	62.0%	49.2%
Compact Housing	6 DU/acre	7.0%	8.0%	11.5%
Townhouse	10 DU/acre	4.8%	6.0%	9.5%
Garden Apartment	20 DU/acre	11.8%	12.0%	21.0%
Downtown Condo	50 DU/acre	1.3%	3.0%	5.3%

Recommendation:

Update Housing Mix in Land Use Forecasts

The ramifications of various growth scenarios have far-reaching effects on the region. A growth pattern that favors large-lot residential development will have different consequences on transportation demand and options than a scenario of compact development. Various implications of the future quality of life on the region include traffic congestion, health and welfare, public transportation options, air quality, open space and agricultural production, water quality, municipal infrastructure costs, and so forth. For the production of the upcoming regional, transportation plan COMPASS will be evaluating scenario options and determining preferred options for the future of the region. These scenarios will need a variety of tools to evaluate differences and advantages of each growth model.

Modification to the Attractiveness of Walkable, High Density Neighborhoods for Scenarios

The UPlan land use model, being calibrated for use in the update to CIM, is based on allocating new growth to areas that are more attractive than others areas. In the model, attractions are characteristics that encourage or induce certain types of development. Based on the results of this survey, the UPlan model will need to be developed to account for participant preferences. Some of those preferences included identifying walkable neighborhoods, especially those neighborhoods with convenient and safe access to nearby attractions and services such as grocery stores, restaurants, and shopping centers.

⁵⁶ Salt Lake County and 10 surrounding counties.

⁵⁷ Envision Utah, Greater Wasatch Housing Analysis, 1999

⁵⁸ Greater Wasatch Area category of “Single-family lot greater than ½ acre” is split into “Rural Lot” and “Large Lot” to meet COMPASS UPlan land use categories.

⁵⁹ Greater Wasatch Area did not specify “Planned Community” as a residential land use category.

Visualization Tools

The selection of a scenario analysis will need to be complemented by visualization tools to enable participants to see the effects of their choices. Tools that provide a more robust consideration of the future could include 3-D modeling, visual simulation, and other techniques. These tools will provide a better reference point in understanding the consequences of housing and land use mix, streetscape improvements, and open space preservation. The COMPASS PPC will also be used in engaging public participation in the process.