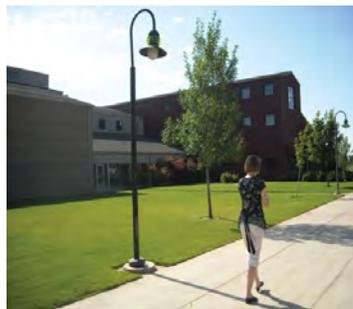


# Vernal City General Plan Update

## 2009 to 2029



Prepared by:  
**The Landmark Design Planning Team**  
*Landmark Design, Inc.*  
*Wikstrom Economic and Planning Consultants*  
*InterPlan Co.*

Adopted May 19, 2010



# TABLE OF CONTENTS

**Acknowledgements.....v**

**Executive Summary & Implementation Actions ..... viii**

**Glossary of Terms..... xviii**

**Introduction and Background ..... 1**

Purpose of the Vernal City General Plan Update ..... 1-1

Organization of the Plan Document..... 1-1

History of Vernal City..... 1-2

Recent Planning History ..... 1-4

Demographics and Population ..... 1-4

Public Involvement ..... 1-15

Summary of Planning Issues..... 1-17

Amending and Updating the General Plan ..... 1-18

Goals and Policies..... 1-18

**Land Use ..... 2**

Introduction ..... 2-1

Background and Context..... 2-1

Existing Neighborhoods ..... 2-4

Existing Land Use ..... 2-6

Existing Zoning..... 2-19

Planning Analysis..... 2-20

Future Land Use Concept ..... 2-28

Future Land Use ..... 2-29

Goals and Policies..... 2-40

**Sensitive Lands and Environmental Conditions ..... 3**

Introduction ..... 3-1

Existing Resources..... 3-2

Preserving Sensitive Lands..... 3-7

Possible Implementation Tools for Protecting and Developing  
Sensitive Lands and Preserving Open Space ..... 3-7

Goals and Policies..... 3-14

<b>Parks, Recreation, and Trails .....</b>	<b>4</b>
Introduction .....	4-1
Parks .....	4-2
Recreation Facilities and Park Facilities.....	4-8
Recreation Programs .....	4-11
Trails .....	4-13
Conflicts and Safety on Multi-Purpose Off-Street Trails .....	4-20
Goals and Policies.....	4-21
<b>Economic Development .....</b>	<b>5</b>
Current Economic Conditions.....	5-1
Understanding the Oil and Gas Extraction Industry .....	5-7
Diversification.....	5-10
Goals and Policies.....	5-13
<b>Infrastructure, Capital Facilities and Funding Options.....</b>	<b>6</b>
Existing Facilities.....	6-1
Approach to Infrastructure and Capital Facilities.....	6-1
Funding Options.....	6-7
Goals and Policies.....	6-11
<b>Transportation .....</b>	<b>7</b>
Summary of Transportation Issues .....	7-1
Existing Transportation Conditions.....	7-2
Future Transportation Conditions.....	7-6
Transportation Plan.....	7-10
Transportation Needs.....	7-14
Goals and Objectives .....	7-15
<b>Appendix A .....</b>	<b>A</b>
Newspaper Articles Written by Members of the Planning Team .....	A-1
<b>Appendix B .....</b>	<b>B</b>
Public Planning Workshop Results and Analysis .....	B-1
<b>Appendix C .....</b>	<b>C</b>
Visual Preference Survey and Analysis .....	C-1
<b>Appendix D .....</b>	<b>D</b>
Plan Alternatives .....	D-1

**Appendix E..... E**  
Housing Element (Prepared by Tightline Community Resources, LLC) ..... E-1

**List of Maps**

2-1 Existing Land Use..... 2-8  
2-2 Existing Schools ..... 2-12  
2-3 Future Land Use..... 2-30  
3-1 Sensitive Lands ..... 3-4  
3-2 Agricultural Land Use ..... 3-6  
4-1 Existing and Future Parks and Service Areas ..... 4-9  
4-2 Regional Trails..... 4-15  
4-3 Vernal City Trails ..... 4-17  
6-1 Ashley Valley Water Distribution System..... 6-2  
6-2 Valley-Wide Sewer Collection..... 6-3  
6-3 Vernal City Water System ..... 6-4  
6-4 Vernal City Sewer System ..... 6-5  
7-1 Transportation Plan ..... 7-11

**List of Tables**

1-1 Population Growth Scenarios for Vernal City General Plan 2008–2028 ..... 1-9  
1-2 Household Tenure for Vernal City, Utah..... 1-11  
1-3 Urban vs. Rural..... 1-11  
1-4 Race and Ethnicity..... 1-12  
1-5 Employment Status for the Population 16+ Years, 2000 ..... 1-12  
1-6 Percentage of Households by Income Groups ..... 1-13  
2-1 Existing Land Use..... 2-7  
2-2 Future Land Use..... 2-31  
4-1 Most-Needed Park Improvements ..... 4-2  
4-2 Existing Parks Serving Vernal City ..... 4-4  
4-3 Existing Population and Park Land Ratio ..... 4-6  
4-4 Park Acreage Need Analysis at a Moderate Pace of Growth (Baseline) ..... 4-6  
4-5 Current Recreation Facilities and Park Facilities Serving Vernal City  
Compared to 2028 Growth Projections..... 4-10  
5-1 2006 Share of Employment by Industry, Uintah County, and State of Utah ..... 5-1  
5-2 2007 Non-farm Employment by Sector, Vernal City and Uintah County..... 5-3  
6-1 Expected Future Land Supply within Vernal City Limits by 2028..... 6-6  
6-2 Current and Future Water and Sewer Capacity Available to Vernal City..... 6-7  
6-3 Assumed Increase in Per Capita Lane Miles for Vernal City Streets in 2028 .... 6-7  
7-1 Large Truck Traffic in Vernal City and Moab ..... 7-5  
7-2 Uintah Transportation Special Service District Property Projects ..... 7-7  
7-3 Projected Traffic Volumes on State Highways in Vernal..... 7-8  
7-4 Future Traffic Volumes and Road Capacities ..... 7-9  
7-5 Projects Identified in the US-40 Corridor Study ..... 7-9

## List of Figures

1-1	Historic Population Projections and Actual Population for Uintah County .....	1-6
1-2	Vernal Population Projection Scenarios: 2008-2028 .....	1-9
1-3	Percent of Population by Age: Vernal City, Utah .....	1-10
1-4	Percent of Population by Age: Uintah County, Utah .....	1-10
1-5	Education Attainment for Persons 25+ in Vernal (2000).....	1-13
1-6	Education Attainment for Persons 25+, Uintah County (2000) .....	1-14
2-1	Vernal City and Surrounding Impact Area .....	2-2
2-2	Existing Vernal City Zoning .....	2-19
2-3	Size Comparison of Vernal City and Surrounding Impact Area .....	2-22
2-4	Proposed Uintah County Ashley Valley Land Use (2008) .....	2-23
2-5	Example: Standard Residential Subdivision versus Clustered Development ..	2-32
2-6	Photo Examples: Open Space Subdivisions/Clustered Development .....	2-33
2-7	Photo Examples: Open Space Residential/Clustered Development.....	2-34
2-8	Photo Examples: Open Space Subdivision/Clustered Development .....	2-34
2-9	Big Box versus Neighborhood Commercial Center .....	2-37
2-10	Neighborhood Commercial Center Concept.....	2-37
2-11	Photo Examples: Neighborhood Commercial Centers .....	2-38
5-1	Uintah County Employment in Selected Sectors, 1970-2000 .....	5-2
5-2	Natural Gas Price and Production in Uintah County 1984-2007.....	5-5
5-3	Oil Price and Production in Uintah County 1984-2007 .....	5-6
5-4	Historical Unemployment 1980-2008: Uintah County and State of Utah .....	5-7
5-5	Oil and Natural Gas Production and Exploration .....	5-11
5-6	Oil and Natural Gas Production and Exploration in Uintah County.....	5-11
7-1	Access and Mobility by Functional Classification.....	7-2
7-2	Existing Road Network by Functional Class .....	7-3
7-3	Traffic Volumes on State Highways.....	7-4
7-4	Alternative Mode Share to Work.....	7-5
7-5	Planned Transportation Improvement Projects.....	7-7
7-6	Local Street Standard Cross-Section .....	7-12
7-7	Collector Street Standard Cross-Section .....	7-12
7-8	Minor Arterial Standard Cross-Section (Alternative One) .....	7-12
7-9	Minor Arterial Standard Cross-Section (Alternative Two) .....	7-12
7-10	Principal Arterial Standard Cross-Section (Alternative One) .....	7-13
7-11	Principal Arterial Standard Cross-Section (Alternative Two) .....	7-13
7-12	Limited Access Parkway Standard Cross-Section.....	7-13
7-13	Downtown Area Side Treatment Standard Cross-Section.....	7-13

## Acknowledgements

### Mayor

Gary Showalter  
Allan Mashburn (former)

### City Council

JoAnn Cowan  
Ted Munford  
Cal Dee Reynolds  
Bert Clark  
Sonja Horton  
Dennis Glines (former)

### Planning Commission

#### Members

Troy Allred  
David Brinkerhoff  
Vernie Heeney  
Sonja Norton  
Eric Olsen  
Glenn Spencer  
Howard Carroll (former)  
Freida Parker (former)  
Gordon Seitz (former)  
Shirley Wilkins (former)

#### Alternates

Ben Mahaffey  
Stuart Branham

### Management Committee

Glade Allred	Vernal City Streets Superintendent
Ken Bassett	Vernal City Manager
Robert Behunin	Utah State University
Craig Blunt	Naples City
Darlene Burns	Uintah County Commission
Howard Carroll	Vernal City Planning Commission (former)
Doug Case	Maeser Water & Sewer
Matt Cazier	Uintah County Planning Director
JoAnn Cowan	Uintah School District, Vernal City Council
Mike Davis	Vernal City Water & Sewer Superintendent
Jeff Duncan	Anadarko
Lianna Etchberger	Utah State University

Joe Evans	Citizen
Nikki Farmer	Dinosaurland Travel Board
Chris Hoem	Naples City
Heather Hoyt	Uintah County Grants Administration
Si Hutt Ashley	Valley Regional Medical Center
Dylan Rooks	Vernal City Police
Gary Jensen	Vernal City Police (former)
Troy Lupcho	Altitude Cycle
Allan Mashburn	Vernal City Mayor (former)
Dusty McCormick	Maeser Water
Cheri McCurdy	Uintah Transportation SSD
Sonja Norton	Vernal City Council
Robin O’Driscoll	Uintah Recreation District
Allen Parker	Vernal City Assistant City Manager/City Planner
Debbie Spafford	Ashley Valley Regional Medical Center
Paul Wages	Anadarko
Boyd Workman	Ashley Valley Water & Sewer

**City Manager**

Ken Bassett

**Assistant City Manager/ City Planner**

Allen Parker

**Information Services Department**

GJ Searle, IT Tech/GIS specialist

**Planning Team**

***Landmark Design, Inc.***

Mark Vlasic, AICP, ASLA, LLA – Principal-in-Charge/ Project Manager

Jan Striefel, AICP, FASLA

August Bateman, ASLA

Lisa Benson, ASLA, LLA

***Wikstrom Economic and Planning Consultants***

Karen Wikstrom, AICP

Geoff Butler, AICP

Jonathan Dorwart

Alex Barnum

***InterPlan Company***

Andrea Olson, AICP

**Thank you to members of the public for participating in meetings and helping ensure the plan represents the community vision.**



## Executive Summary

The following is a summary of plan highlights, presented by chapter.

### 1 Background and Introduction

#### ***History***

Vernal City, unlike the majority of Utah towns, was not settled by Mormon Pioneers. Captain Pardon Dodds, the Indian Agent for the Uintah Indian Reservation, built the first cabin in the Ashley Valley. Many trappers, prospectors, home seekers and drifters subsequently arrived in the valley, and some stayed to establish homesteads. These enterprising settlers developed a basic irrigation system which enabled them to produce, manufacture, and develop most of the things they needed to survive. The City was incorporated in 1897, had its first oil boom in 1948, and has been a “boom and bust” City ever since.

#### ***Population***

Projecting future population is an important facet of this Plan. The current population was estimated at 10,040 at year end 2008. A baseline population growth projection was then established based on past growth trends. According to this estimate, population will grow to 13,378 persons by 2028, representing a net increase of 3,338 and an average annual rate of change of 1.4 percent.

Three population scenarios were then investigated to better address the widely variable population growth that could occur in Vernal City during the upcoming 20 year planning horizon, as follow:

- The “Bust with No Recovery” scenario, which assumes an immediate halt to growth followed by baseline growth, resulting in a population of 10,568 by 2028, a net increase of only 528 persons.
- The “Bust with Recovery” scenario, which assumes a short term downturn followed by a rapid rebound as the natural gas boom regains momentum, resulting in a population of 12,382 by 2028, a net increase of 2,342 persons.
- The “Boom” scenario, which assumes that oil shale extraction will become economically viable in 10 years, resulting in a population of 29,105 by 2028, a net increase of 19,065 persons, or nearly three times the current population.

After careful consideration, the Baseline Population Projection was utilized for projecting future needs.

#### ***Other Demographic Characteristics***

Vernal City residents have a lower median age than surrounding areas. Vernal also has higher concentrations of people aged 20 to 29, children under 5, and females over age 70 compared to Uintah County. The household size in Vernal is almost exactly the

same as it was in 1990, and the majority of residents in Vernal City live within an urban area. Vernal City's median income is noticeably lower than surrounding areas, which may be due to the large number of high-wage workers who do not live in typical housing units. The City also has a slightly higher proportion of citizens over age 65, and a slightly higher degree of educational attainment than surrounding areas. The most prevalent industries in Vernal City are mining, government, and trade.

***Planning Process***

The General Plan Update builds upon the findings of several recent studies, and focuses on seven different elements or chapters as follow:

- Background and Introduction;
- Land Use;
- Sensitive Lands and Natural Systems;
- Parks, Recreation, and Trails;
- Economic Development;
- Infrastructure, Capital Facilities, and Funding Options; and
- Transportation.

The planning process utilized an extensive public involvement process, providing multiple opportunities for participation and comment. Several methods were used, including management committee meetings; a public scoping meeting; public workshops with a visual preference survey; a public open house meeting to review the draft plan update; media coordination; and a project web page.

After the General Plan Update is adopted, zoning ordinances, development guidelines, and other means of implementing the plan should be revised and updated as necessary. The Plan needs to be revisited and updated every five to ten years in order to reflect new developments and changing priorities.

**2 Land Use**

Existing land use conditions in Vernal City and the surrounding Impact Area were analyzed to help determine future planning needs and directions. At present 4.6 square miles of land are contained within the Vernal City municipal boundary, as compared to and the surrounding Impact Area, which contains 25.7square miles.

More than one-quarter of the land in Vernal City is agricultural or vacant, providing adequate land to accommodate projected growth during the next 20 years. The potential for accommodating longer-term regional growth within the Impact Area is also high. If the municipal boundaries of Vernal City are not expanded and adjacent land is not annexed in the future, the city will soon be built out, possibly within the twenty year planning horizon. Without additional land to accommodate future growth in Vernal, the onus for accommodating this need will fall on Uintah County, Naples and other

communities in the area. The lack of long-term growth options is a key concern, illustrating the need to form a common vision for Vernal City and the Ashley Valley.

Both Uintah County and Naples have been updating their respective General Plans more or less concurrently with this plan. Unfortunately, there has been little or no coordination between the various planning efforts. Land use changes proposed by Uintah County for the Ashley Valley envision a future dominated by unprecedented growth and the assumption that that the County will lead community-building and development efforts for the region. The county plan also indicates unprecedented economic growth, as indicated by the conversion of dozens of square miles of Ashley Valley agricultural land into commercial and industrial uses. In essence, the proposed Uintah County General Plan reflects complete makeover of the Vernal City region.

The residents of Vernal City have high expectations for the future of their city and the quality of life it offers. Recent rapid growth, limited areas to accommodate long-term growth without expanding existing city boundaries, and a sprawling development pattern threaten well-planned and sustainable growth in the city. In order to proceed in a sustainable manner, these conditions must be addressed.

A wider range of residential uses are necessary to accommodate projected population growth in the future. For example, downtown Vernal should adopt an urban growth model that encourages infill development and the conversion of existing buildings into mixed use projects. Clustered Subdivisions<sup>1</sup> and new neighborhoods based on Traditional Development<sup>2</sup> patterns should be encouraged throughout the community, particularly on the outskirts of the City.

Governmental offices and civic functions are important to Vernal City. Such uses and should be concentrated in the downtown area to the greatest degree possible. For example, a new City Hall is currently being built in downtown, across the street from the existing facility. Similar public uses should also be located downtown to help create a critical mass of civic amenities and activities and to further support downtown as a regional destination. Historic buildings in downtown and the core of Vernal should be respected and preserved. Past studies and designs should be reviewed, confirmed and implemented as appropriate to help ensure downtown and its surroundings thrive.

In order to create a more balanced and sustainable commercial profile in Vernal, strip commercial development should be curtailed and new neighborhood commercial centers encouraged in key areas of Vernal and the Impact Area. In addition to providing a variety of commercial services, these centers should incorporate a mix of housing, office, civic and recreational functions to serve the surrounding neighborhoods and the region as a whole.

---

<sup>1</sup> See Chapter 8 – Glossary of Terms for definitions

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

The Uintah Basin Regional Campus of Utah State University and the Uintah Basin Applied Technology Center should continue to have a strong and visible role in the Greater Vernal community. In order to strengthen the campus/city relationship, both institutions should locate a few key college uses and functions on Main Street near downtown. Likewise, a limited number of commercial and cultural facilities should be encouraged to locate in close proximity to these campuses

New roads and transportation infrastructure should be provided to meet the needs of the growing community and region. The need for better roads should be balanced with the needs of pedestrians and cyclists. Safe crossings along Main Street and other busy roads are particularly important.

A summary of the most important land use goals during the next 20 years follow:

- Encourage new growth within the existing Municipal Boundaries during the 20-year planning horizon.
- Encourage a wider range of residential uses in order to meet projected future population growth.
- Encourage the re-establishment of Main Street Vernal as the “heart” of the city.
- Relocate the existing City Hall to a new landmark downtown location.
- Improve the commercial profile and operations along the outskirts of the community and along other major road corridors.
- Encourage the development of Neighborhood Commercial Centers<sup>3</sup> to serve the needs of nearby residents.
- Strengthen the role of the Uintah Basin Applied Technology Center and USU campuses in Vernal.
- Ensure the future needs for schools and other public services meet future demand.
- Protect and conserve critical agricultural land.
- Protect and conserve sensitive lands and critical natural features in the city.
- Expand the Vernal City Municipal Boundaries as necessary to ensure future growth and development needs are met.

### **3 Sensitive Lands and Natural Systems**

Setting aside and protecting key natural areas and sensitive lands is critical to preserving the open spaces, views, vistas, and cultural landscapes that characterize the region. Preserving these features contributes significantly to the quality of life for residents, the growing tourism industry, and the economic health of the community.

---

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

The Utah Division of Wildlife Resources has identified mule deer habitat as the most critical type of sensitive land in the Vernal area. Other sensitive habitats include those that support wild turkey and sage grouse, which occur in the Impact Area just beyond the Vernal City Municipal Boundary. Critical habitat for the California quail, ring-necked pheasant, pronghorn antelope, bighorn sheep, and rocky mountain elk is located on the edge of the Impact Area boundary. Drainages such as Ashley Creek are important for migratory songbirds, and some water fowl and riparian birds. At a minimum, safe migration corridors should be incorporated into future master plans for the impact area. The floodplains for Ashley Creek and several of its tributaries need to be protected from future development in order to control flooding and protect the valuable resource of this natural feature. The Ashley Creek corridor can provide additional recreational opportunities for the community, such as trails, natural parks, wildlife viewing areas, and sites for the study of natural systems. In the workshops conducted as part of this planning exercise, residents indicated a desire to protect these sensitive lands as recreational and agricultural uses.

Agricultural land is highly valued by residents and visitors. These areas play a key role in diversifying the local economy. There are several methods for preserving agricultural land, including density bonuses, cluster development, floodplain development zoning restrictions, purchase of land, conservation easements, and transfer of development rights.

#### **4 Parks, Recreation, and Trails**

The General Plan Update builds on the recommendations contained in the *Uintah Recreation District Park Master Plan*, which focuses on existing parks and the kinds of facilities that need to be included or improved. Public input that was received as part of the planning process focuses on making sure that there is adequate park land, and that special lands are preserved.

Vernal City is currently served by a variety of parks. These include:

- Neighborhood Parks (generally one to five acres in size and within one mile walking radius of residential areas),
- Community Parks (generally ten to fifty acres in size and within two miles walking radius of residential areas), and
- Regional Parks (generally serving residents on a County-wide basis, although a two mile walking radius was assumed for this plan).

Assuming that the current service level of 10.3 park acres per 1,000 residents is acceptable to the community, 35 acres of new park land will be needed by 2028, assuming the baseline population scenario is correct. A distribution analysis was undertaken, indicating that access to parks is generally good although some driving may be necessary. Based on the nature of growth anticipated in the City's impact area,

a new Neighborhood or Community Park will be needed during the 20-year planning horizon. It will be important to work with the Uintah Recreation District (URD) to provide planning, design, and implementation funding for the new parks. To the extent possible, the dedication of land and the provision of park development funds should be negotiated with future developers in a partnership between the City, the developer, and URD.

Unless community members indicate otherwise, it appears that no new recreation facilities are needed until the population reaches about 20,000 persons; however, senior citizens and high school students indicated a desire for a greater variety of age-appropriate recreation opportunities. One of the roles that the URD could play is the provision of regional and special use facilities, and specifically more activities, facilities, and events for teens which appear to be needed now and in the future. The City may wish to focus on assuring that residents have access to Neighborhood and Community Parks and the facilities they provide. This will require cooperation between the URD and other partners in the community.

Recreation programs and facilities are very closely entwined, thus the public comments from teens and senior citizens apply to the recommendations for recreation programs as well. As new facilities are developed, the recreation program needs of teens and senior citizens should be addressed. The URD does offer important recreation programs and is currently cooperating with other local agencies and entities to share facilities and expand programs. These efforts could be broadened to include more cooperation with local businesses and interest groups who might offer classes, special events, or other opportunities for expanded recreational programs. The City should work with the URD to identify these opportunities.

The number and extent of existing trails in Vernal City is limited; neither the City nor the County has developed a trail master plan. There are federally managed regional trails nearby, and very limited walking and biking trails within the City which do not connect to existing regional trails. Support for trails is very broad and important to Vernal City residents. The proposed Regional Trails are intended to connect with the trails on public lands in order to provide additional opportunities for hiking and biking in particular. Although potential Regional Trails are shown on the map, a Regional Trails Committee will be needed to refine it, add to it, and begin the process of implementation.

The intent of the proposed Vernal City Trails System is to link residential neighborhoods with schools, public and cultural facilities, shopping areas, and other destinations. Many existing roadways are utilized to incorporate on-street bike lanes, on-street routes, or bike and pedestrian paths.

Improvements should be prioritized in the few areas of the city where sidewalks are insufficient or missing, especially on important routes leading to schools. Public trail maps, flyers, newspaper articles, public service announcements, and other means will

be needed as part of an education campaign to encourage safe and appropriate trail use.

## **5 Economic Development**

Vernal is the business hub of Uintah County. Mining, government, and retail trade are the strongest sectors in Vernal City's economy. According to a recent study, nearly one in five workers in Uintah County is employed in the production of oil or natural gas. The County's oil and natural gas jobs have followed a boom and bust pattern since the 1920's. When oil production is down, unemployment rates go up in the County, and in 22 of the last 29 years the County has had higher unemployment than the rest of the State. Long periods of above-average unemployment are representative of the negative impacts that come from living in an area with a less diverse economy that is heavily dependent on natural resource extraction. The challenge is not the absolute depletion of resources – at least in the foreseeable future, but how to deal with the volatility that comes with a natural resource based economy.

One of the ways to mitigate the impact of the boom and bust cycle is to diversify the economy by strengthening a variety of industries, especially those not related to oil and natural gas extraction. The new Bingham Entrepreneurship and Energy Research Center is a good step towards diversification, since it helps local residents create their own successful businesses.

Examples of economic sectors that are under-represented in Uintah County include manufacturing, professional and technical services. With the projected increase in retirees and seniors over the next 10 years, providing services for seniors could be a good possibility for job expansion as well. Vernal should continue to make use of Community Impact Board Funds with a focus on diversifying the local economy.

## **6 Infrastructure, Capital Facilities and Funding Options**

Three districts provide water and sewer service in Ashley Valley: Vernal City, Maeser Water and Sewer Improvement District, and Ashley Valley Water and Sewer District. There is one main sewer system in the valley, and each of the three districts has representation on the Ashley Valley Sewer Management Board. When considering the population and economic uncertainty that exists in the area, the adoption of a conservative approach toward infrastructure expansion is encouraged.

The cost savings realized by utilizing existing infrastructure would be directly passed on to current and future residents. There is a negligible shortfall of vacant land within the incorporated boundaries over the 20 year planning horizon, assuming population growth at the baseline rate. Only sewer appears to be nearing capacity given current system limits.

More attention should be given to developing appropriate zoning regulations that encourage growth in vacant and underutilized land already available within the incorporated boundaries of the City than to planning the expansion of capital facilities. This approach is reinforced by the increasing needs for affordable workforce housing and senior housing.

The impact of population for transportation was estimated in terms of per capita lane miles. Assuming the baseline population growth rate, 38 miles of lane capacity will be needed by 2028, which is an addition of 33 percent to the existing network of 114 miles.

Funding options for capital facilities expansion and improvements include Special Service District (SSD) funds, impact fees, tax increment financing, community impact funds, State Revolving Fund (SRF), Public Works and Economic Development Program, Economic Adjustment Assistance Program, Local Technical Assistance programs, HUD Section 108 Program, HUD Brownfields Economic Development Initiative (BEDI), and the Rural Housing and Economic Development Program (RHED).

## **7 Transportation**

Major transportation issues identified by residents during the planning process include: limited downtown parking, traffic congestion, truck traffic, lack of safe alternative modes of transit, and roads in newly developing areas. Vernal City's existing road network is based on the standard road functional classification system used by most transportation agencies. No public transit service is currently available in the Vernal area, with the exception of a dial-a-ride service that is available to residents over age 60.

Traffic volumes have fluctuated in recent years in coordination with the boom and bust cycles of the oil and natural gas extraction industries. The City does not currently have traffic data from which to do a quantitative analysis of level of service or congestion concerns.

The three state highways are currently operating below their capacities, although the perception of congestion can be greatly influenced by slow moving trucks, difficult traffic movements, and ineffective access management policies and standards. City residents tend to carpool to work significantly more than the State and the nation, which may be due to the nature of the mining jobs which are some distance away from the City.

Transportation projects planned by Vernal City and the Uintah Transportation Special Service District include improvements to 1500 West, 1500 South, 2500 West, 500 South, 2500 South, Main Street/2000 West, 500 North 1550 East Bridge, Seep Ridge Road, Native Tar Sands Test Project, Alternative Route Truck Study, Vernal Avenue, 3500 East, Watson Bridge and Roadway, and studies of many intersections of concern which will be studied to determine what type of improvement might be warranted. Transit is essential, and the *2008 Uintah Basin Public Transit Business Plan* explores

issues and opportunities, as well as funding and action items to implement a successful system in the Uintah Basin.

An examination of population projections and traffic volumes indicates that capacity concerns are not expected on most roads within the 20-year planning horizon, although US-40 is likely to slightly exceed capacity by 2028. Manageable factors that can affect both traffic volume and capacity include access management and signal timing. Other factors include the economy and development patterns.

A planned transportation network has been developed addressing both short- and long-term needs, with suggestions for specific priorities. It is important for Vernal City to reassess existing and planned future conditions and to consider transportation priorities in light of these conditions. The City should identify non-state roads that need to maintain a high level of traffic and safety efficiency using access management standards, such as 500 South. Corridor preservation agreements are needed when upgrading existing roadways or when planning for new roads, and the *US-40 Corridor Study* offers sample agreements that offer Vernal City a good way to maintain transportation priorities on City streets.



## GLOSSARY OF TERMS

The following are definitions of key terms contained in the plan. Some terms reflect standard descriptions, while others address situations and conditions particular for Vernal City.

### **ADT – Average Daily Traffic**

The average number of vehicles on a given road or road segment in one 24-hour period.

### **Arterial**

A moderate or high-capacity road which is immediately below a highway level of service. Much like a biological artery, an arterial road carries large volumes of traffic between areas in urban centers. They are noted for their lack of residential entrances directly onto the road (except in older or denser communities); they are designed to carry traffic between neighborhoods; and have intersections with collector and local streets. Often, commercial areas such as commercial centers, neighborhood centers, gas stations and other businesses are located on them. Arterial roads also link up to expressways and freeways with interchanges.

### **Big Box**

Also known as a supercenter, superstore, or megastore, this is a large retail establishment, usually part of a national or regional chain. Big Box stores are predicated on automobile traffic, generate high levels of automobile traffic, and are earmarked by large expanses of parking to accommodate the traffic they attract. The term sometimes refers, by extension, to the company that operates the store.

### **Build-out**

The stage at which a community has been fully-developed.

### **Capacity**

The volume of vehicles a road is able to accommodate.

### **Clustered Residential**

Also known as an Open Space Subdivision, this is a development approach that configures residential dwellings in a range of configurations around a coordinated open space system, with the intent of providing shared parks, trails and similar amenities and preserving open space that builds upon the desired rural characteristics for the community.

Clustered Residential developments are intended to avoid monotonous, large lot developments that typically do not respond well to existing site conditions and opportunities. Clustered Residential is a preferred development pattern for Vernal since it helps preserve rural characteristics while accommodating growth demands at the same time.

### **Collector Road**

A low or moderate-capacity road which is below a highway or arterial road functional class. Collector roads tend to lead traffic from local roads or sections of neighborhoods to activity areas within communities, to arterial roads or (occasionally) directly to expressways or freeways.

Collector roads can have many different characteristics. Some urban collectors are wide boulevards entering communities or connecting sections. Others are residential streets, which are typically wider than local roads, although few are wider than 4 lanes wide except in extremely dense areas. Some small-scale commercial areas can be found on collector roads in residential areas. Key community functions such as schools, churches and recreational facilities can often be found on residential collector roads.

The category is sometimes subdivided into major and minor collector roads, with the former category being for the more important and busier of the two types of roads. Often, full private access will be permitted onto collector roads. Speed limits are typically between 20 and 35 mph in built-up areas, depending on the degree of development and frequency of local access, intersections and pedestrians, as well as the surrounding area (the speed tends to be lowest in a school zone). Traffic calming is occasionally used in older areas on collector roads.

### **Community Parks**

Parks that serve the recreation needs of a broad spectrum of users, typically within a service area of one-mile or more. These are large parks that are generally between 10 and 50 acres in size.

### **Complete Streets**

Roads operated to enable safe, attractive and comfortable access and travel for all users. Pedestrians, bicyclists, motorists and public transport users of all ages and abilities are able to safely and comfortably move along and across a complete street. Proponents claim that Complete Streets also create a sense of place and improve social interaction, while generally improving property adjacent land values. (See also [Traffic Calming](#)).

### **Floodplain**

Flat or nearly flat land adjacent to a stream or river that experiences occasional or periodic flooding. These areas typically include the floodway, which consists of the stream channel and the adjacent areas that carry flood flows, and the flood fringe, which are areas covered by the flood, but which do not experience a strong current.

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) determines floodplains in each community. Data is provided to local jurisdictions as Flood Insurance Rate Maps (FIRM's) for planning purposes to regulate development in the affected areas.

### **Freeway**

A freeway is a limited access divided highway with grade separated junctions and without traffic lights or stop signs. The term is used in the United States and parts of Canada, Australia, and South Africa. In the United States, the term *freeway* is used in many regions. In some regions of the U.S., other terms are used, including *Interstate*, *thruway*, *highway*, *expressway*, and *turnpike*. The word *freeway* was coined by the "Father of American Zoning," Edward M. Bassett, in an influential article published in February 1930.

There are no freeways in Vernal, although State Road 191 provides linkages with Interstate 80 via Heber, Interstate 70 near Green River, and Interstate 15 via Heber and Provo.

### **Functional Classification System**

The process by which public streets and highways are grouped according to the character of service they are intended to provide. Generally, there are four broad functional categories: freeways, arterial roads, collector roads, and local roads.

### **Gateway**

Also known as entry nodes, these are locations along major roads that signal one is entering a distinct area or community. In Vernal City, special landscape, lighting and signage treatments are encouraged at such locations to help provide sense of visual order, and to clearly indicate that one is entering a unique part of the community.

### **General Plan**

Also known as a Comprehensive Plan, the General Plan is a policy document that guides all land use and development regulations of a given community or jurisdiction. A General Plan encapsulates the vision of the community, and defines specific actions to be taken to ensure the vision is achieved.

### **Greenfield Growth Area**

Large land holdings occupied by agricultural or vacant land that are slated for residential and other types of development.

### **Impact Area**

An informal boundary surrounding Vernal City that encompasses areas of interest to the community. Land with the Impact Area is located in Uintah County and is not within the Vernal Municipal Limits. Since land use and development within the Impact Area will have significant impact on Vernal City, the Impact Area was established to address future growth preferences.

### **Infill Development**

Land in the built-up portion of Vernal City that is earmarked for further construction, redevelopment and intensified use as part of community redevelopment efforts and smart growth. Infill development focuses on the reuse and redevelopment of obsolete or

underutilized buildings and sites. This type of development is essential to renewing blighted and underutilized neighborhoods.

**Local Road**

A street that primarily provides access to the properties that line it and are mostly intended for the traffic of their residents and visitors. Local roads are typified by low speed limits (usually not more than 30 mph), curbside parking, and few or no painted line markings to display lanes. Intersections in urban or suburban areas are usually marked by stop signs, or occasionally yield signs in some suburban areas when intersecting other local streets. In rural areas, some intersections are uncontrolled. Most local roads are lined with residences with an occasional place of worship or school, and few if any commercial uses.

**Mini-park**

A small park that primarily serves the needs of subdivisions and are not able to meet the definition for a Neighborhood Park either because they are too small or because they are incapable of accommodating the required facilities.

**Mixed-Use**

Development including residential, commercial, office, and institutional land uses in a single building or within the same area. Examples include an apartment located above retail space, or office uses co-located within a project containing residential uses.

The Vernal City Zoning Code presently identifies Mixed Use as industrial and commercial uses located on a single lot. For the purposes of this plan the present definition does not apply, and should be modified to eliminate future confusion.

**Mode Choice**

How people get to and from their destinations, whether by car, bus, train, walking, or bicycle.

**Neighborhood Commercial Center**

Small-to-medium nodes designed to serve the day-to-day shopping and service needs of surrounding neighborhoods. These places are also intended to attract users from beyond the neighborhood, and to encourage local activities. A handful of new Neighborhood Commercial Centers are proposed within the Impact Area that surrounds Vernal City. The size, intensity and uses of each will vary according to the specific needs of each area, but should generally be 10-20 acres in extent. Neighborhood Commercial Centers should be developed as mixed-use places, incorporating a range of office and residential uses in addition to commercial and community functions. Each Neighborhood Commercial Center in Vernal City should be carefully designed and developed to link the needs of the surrounding neighborhood with those of the city.

### **Neighborhood Park**

A park that typically serves the needs of users who live within a one-mile radius of a given park, and are 4-5 acres in size.

### **New Urbanism**

An urban design movement which promotes walkable neighborhoods that contain a range of housing and job types. It arose in the United States in the early 1980s and continues to reform many aspects of real estate development and urban planning. New Urbanism is strongly influenced by urban design standards prominent before the rise of the automobile and encompasses principles such as traditional neighborhood design (TND) and transit-oriented development (TOD). New Urbanism also supports issues historic preservation, safe streets, green building, and the redevelopment of brownfield land.

### **Open Space**

Undeveloped natural land areas, often surrounding and encompassing drainage corridors, foothills, canals, hillsides and other natural features. The Vernal City open space system provides visual and/or physical benefits, but is generally not considered part of the formal parks and recreation system.

### **Open Space Subdivision**

See Clustered Residential.

### **Park Strip**

The linear piece of land located between a road and sidewalk within a road right-of-way. Park strips vary in size according to the function of each road, but are typically wide enough to accommodate a tree, lawn and subsidiary planting, and to physically separate pedestrian and vehicular traffic. The provision and treatment of parks strips in Vernal are addressed as both transportation and community design policy.

### **Park and Recreation Standards**

The type and level of park and recreation facilities to be provided by a given community. In Vernal City, the amount of land dedicated to parks and recreation, and the types of parks and recreation facilities to be provided, are functions of both the established community vision and the existing and projected population.

### **Planning Vision**

A process that defines what a community is, and where it wants to be in the future. This process is often encapsulated as an optimistic series of statements.

### **Regional Park**

Developed recreational parks with amenities found in Neighborhood and Community Parks, which may also include special landscape features, open spaces or additional community-based recreation facilities.

### **Right-of-way**

A corridor within which all elements of a street are normally contained. In addition to basic elements such as the paved road, curb and gutter and drainage facilities, the road right-of-way often includes center medians, park strips, on-street parking and sidewalks.

### **Sense of place**

Characteristics unique to a particular place that make it special, unique, authentic and memorable. Key factors that contribute to the Vernal City Sense of Place include the natural surroundings, view and vistas, open spaces and compact town pattern.

### **Sensitive Land Preservation**

A range of tools and techniques for preserving open spaces and sensitive lands. Included among these are (1) density bonuses, (2) clustered residential development or “open space subdivisions” which mandate development to be compact, thus preserving open space; (3) zoning and development restrictions prohibiting development within the floodplain; (4) purchase of land or conservation easement protecting land from future development; and (5) transfer of development right (TDR) programs which allow denser development in “receiving areas” in order to protect sensitive sites. Other less common tools may also be used to realize community preservation goals.

### **Smart Growth**

An urban planning theory that (1) concentrates growth in the center of the city and in neighborhood centers in order to avoid urban sprawl; and (2) advocates compact, transit-oriented, walkable, bicycle-friendly land use patterns. Key features include neighborhood schools, complete streets and mixed-use development with a range of housing choices. Smart growth accentuates long-range, regional considerations of sustainability over short-term decisions. The key goals are to (1) achieve a unique sense of community and place; (2) expand the range of transportation, employment, and housing choices; (3) equitably distribute the costs and benefits of development; (4) preserve and enhance natural and cultural resources; and (5) promote public health.

### **Statewide Long Range Plan (SLRP)**

A plan developed every four years by the Utah Department of Transportation (UDOT) that identifies long-term project priorities on a statewide basis.

### **Traffic Calming**

The reduction of speed in road traffic, achieved by constructing speed ramps, by creating more pedestrian crossings, and by building low walls halfway across the road from alternate sides in order to create curves in a straight street. (See also Complete Streets)

### **Trails**

Pathway facilities that facilitate one’s ability to travel, exercise, walk, and cycle. Trails typically connect neighborhoods, parks, schools, regional open space systems and

other public areas, and offer a separate corridor for non-automobile modes of travel. The types of trails envisioned for Vernal City are interconnected and diverse, meeting both functional and recreational needs of the community.

**Transfer of Development Rights (TDR)**

See Sensitive Land Preservation.

**Viewsheds**

Broad landscape views or vistas. Examples in Vernal and the Ashley Valley area include views toward the foothills and mountains north and east of the city, and vistas across the broad agricultural lands and open spaces alongside major roads leading into the city.

**Wetlands**

The environment at the interface between terrestrial ecosystems and aquatic systems, making each inherently different from each other yet highly dependent on both. Wetlands are host to considerable biodiversity, yet are highly endemic or unique to the particular area. These conditions make the preservation and conservation of wetlands a high priority. The bulk of wetlands in Vernal are adjacent to Ashley Creek.

**Zoning Code/ Zoning Ordinance**

The system of land use regulation commonly used throughout the United States and other countries which separate one set of land uses from another. A zoning ordinance is a set of regulations that determine the power of a community to allow particular land uses.



# 1 Background and Introduction

## Purpose of the Vernal City General Plan Update

The Vernal City General Plan Update (2009- 2029) is an official document intended to help the public understand the broad planning goals of the city, and to help decision makers evaluate development proposals in accordance to a coordinated vision for the community. Typically, the General Plan identifies future land uses (residential, commercial, public, parks, etc.), transportation and traffic options (highways and trails), and other elements that make up a community.

Updating the General Plan provides an opportunity for the citizens of Vernal City to take a look at the community today, to determine what is good and what requires improvement, and to look into the future and “plan” for anticipated changes. The General Plan generally has a life of 5 to 10 years, although it often looks 20 years or more into the future in order to anticipate how the community might change. Every five to ten years the General Plan needs to be revisited and changed to reflect new developments and changing community priorities.

When the *Vernal City General Plan Update* is adopted, zoning ordinances, development guidelines, and other means of implementing the plan should be revised and updated as necessary.

## Organization of the Plan Document

The Vernal City General Plan Update (2009-2029) documents existing conditions, analyzes important community issues, and proposes future visions and growth directions for the City. The plan is divided into a series of Elements or chapters, as listed below.

- ***Background and Introduction***
- ***Land Use***
- ***Sensitive Lands and Natural Systems***
- ***Parks, Recreation, and Trails***
- ***Economic Development, Capital Facilities, and Funding Opportunities***
- ***Infrastructure, Capital Facilities and Funding Options***
- ***Transportation***

Although each Element is specific in its focus, there is an integrated relationship between each, and a level of overlap. Specific recommendations are provided as a series of Goals, Policies and Implementation Measures at the conclusion of each Element.

## **History of Vernal City<sup>1</sup>**

Vernal City is the largest city in Uintah County. It is located in eastern Utah near the Colorado State Line, and 175 miles east of Salt Lake City. Vernal is bordered on the north by the Uinta Mountain, one of the few mountain ranges in the world which extends in an east-west rather than the usual north to south direction. The Book Cliff Mountains lie to the south, and the Blue Mountains are located to the east. Vernal City itself is located in the Ashley Valley, named in honor of William H. Ashley, an early fur trader who entered this area in 1825 by floating down the Green River in a bull boat made of animal hides.



***Sunset over Agricultural Land along North Vernal***

Unlike the majority of Utah towns, Vernal City was not settled by Mormon pioneers. Brigham Young sent a scouting party to Uintah Basin in 1861 and received word back the area was good for nothing but nomad purposes, hunting grounds for Indians and "to hold the world together." That same year, President Abraham Lincoln set the area aside as the Uintah Indian Reservation. Captain Pardon Dodds was appointed Indian agent for the reservation.

When Dodds retired, he moved to Ashley Valley to raise livestock, along with agency workers Morris Evans and John Blankenship. They arrived on February 14, 1873, settling along the banks of Ashley Creek. Dodds built the first cabin in the valley, which was located about four miles northwest of present day Vernal City. Many single men - trappers, prospectors, home seekers, and drifters - arrived in Ashley Valley, and some stayed. However, no women settled in the area until 1876.

The area where Vernal City is now located was called the Bench, and it was described as a large barren cactus flat. The David Johnston family moved onto the Bench on June 6, 1878. It was reported that when they stopped their wagon, David took his shovel from the wagon and cleared off the cactus so the children could stand without getting cactus needles in their feet. He put the wagon on logs to keep it off the ground as there were many lizards, horned toads, scorpions, mice and snakes in the area. Alva Hatch came to the valley looking for a place to settle in May 1878. He returned later with his family

---

<sup>1</sup> Source: Doris K. Burton , *History of Vernal Utah* from the [Utah History Encyclopedia](#). Allen Kent Powell, ed. University Press, University of Utah, Salt Lake City, Utah. 1994.

and his father, Jeremiah Hatch, along with Jeremiah's two wives. The fall of 1879 brought many settlers to the valley. On September 29, 1879, the Meeker Massacre took place in Colorado, with members of the White River Ute tribe killing their agent, Nathan Meeker, among others. This was the last major Indian uprising in the United States. The Army arrived quickly, banishing the Indians to the Uintah Reservation. According to local account, some tribe members rode into the Ashley Valley to convince members of the Uintah Ute tribe to join them in killing area settlers. Instead, the Uintah chiefs advised the settlers to "fort-up." A fort was soon after constructed on the Bench due to its high location and open views of the surroundings. Many settlers of Ashley Valley soon after disassembled their cabins, moving them to the fort site. The incident was eventually settled, but the people remained in the fort for the winter. The severe weather that followed killed most of the animals, and humans also suffered. Much of their grain became moldy, and diphtheria took its toll. It was March before they could leave the valley for supplies.

Many families moved their cabins back to their homesteads, while others remained in the fort. A town grew out of the fort, which became known as Ashley Center. A store was opened and the residents applied for a post office. The name Ashley Center was requested, but it was too similar to the town of Ashley; the name Vernal was assigned to the community by the U.S. Postal Department, which has remained to the present.

The enterprising settlers of the valley developed a basic irrigation system that still serves the valley today. Due to the distance to a major railhead, settlers produced, manufactured, and developed most necessities themselves. The leading livelihood was cattle and sheep production. Milling, honey production, and farming grains and alfalfa were also important.

Although there is still no railhead nearby, Vernal City, the highway transportation system has provided good access to most goods and services. The Mormon Church helped set Vernal up as a town in 1884, although it was not incorporated until 1897. For this reason, Vernal City had the distinction of being a city with no taxation for fifteen years. In 1948 Vernal City experienced its first oil boom. From that time on it has been a boom and bust town.

With the declaration of nearby Dinosaur National Monument in 1915, a thriving tourism industry was born. After decades of continuous operation, the Quarry Visitor Center was closed in July



*Sunset over Red Fleet Reservoir, north of Vernal*

2006, due to structural problems that have plagued the building since it was built in 1957. In April 2009 the Federal Government announced that Dinosaur National Monument would receive \$13.1 million to refurbish and reopen the Visitor Center and associated gallery as part of a federal stimulus plan. It is hoped that a renewed National Monument, in addition to livestock and agriculture production and growing interest in the area for outdoor recreation purposes such as mountain biking, will help keep Vernal City solvent during "bust" times.

Flaming Gorge Dam was built in 1964, bringing more tourists to the area. Steinaker and Red Fleet dams, built in 1962 and 1980, provide irrigation water and serve as recreation sites. As with many cities, big box stores have moved to the outskirts of town. Small businesses and shops are scattered along Main Street and throughout the core of downtown Vernal City, which is noted for its colorful display of summer flower baskets on both sides of Main Street.

## **Recent Planning History**

Recent growth related to natural gas production and other resource extraction industries has resulted in significant changes to the community. While the local economy has been improved as a result of recent growth, resources and infrastructure have become strained. The existing General Plan, which was adopted nine years ago, is outdated. In an attempt to address recent changes, a number of studies have been undertaken, albeit in an ad hoc manner. Some of the key studies include the Vernal City Affordable Housing Plan, Ashley Valley Stormwater Plan, Vernal Downtown Specific Area Plan, the UDOT US-40 Corridor Study and the UDOT Bypass Study. Uintah County has been updating the County Master Plan concurrent with this plan, and Naples City General Plan has also been updated recently. Each of these studies and plans has been reviewed and analyzed as part of the current planning process, and will be incorporated into the updated General Plan as appropriate.

Vernal City is approaching build out and has been exploring options for accommodating future growth. This includes the possible expansion of municipal boundaries, and consideration of new forms and directions of development. In order to craft an updated General Plan that meets future needs and addresses growth in a comprehensive manner, a clear vision of future needs and desires is necessary.

## **Demographics and Population**

### **Population**

#### ***Current Population Estimate***

The current population of Vernal City was estimated at 10,040 for year end 2008 as part of the General Plan Update. The estimate is based on past decennial census counts, new building construction and a survey of local hotels. In 2000 the population of Vernal

City was 7,714 persons. From April 2000 through June 2008 an additional 657 housing units were permitted in the City. Based on the type of unit permitted (single family or multi-family) the resulting construction added an additional 1,678 persons to the population. Additionally, Vernal City has a sizable worker population which sometimes resides in temporary housing during “boom” cycles. A 2008 survey of local area hotels indicated that 55 percent of all hotel rooms and 40 percent of all campsites with RV hookups were semi-permanently inhabited with workers related to the oil and natural gas industry. This resulted in an additional 669 residents overall

***Baseline Population Projection***

The baseline population projection assumes that the Governor’s Office of Planning and Budget (GOPB) projections for Uintah County, Utah are correct. From 2000 to 2008 population growth inside Vernal City accounted for 45 percent of the growth in the County, which is higher than the historic average. From 1960 to 2008, the City accounted for 34 percent of the County’s growth.

To project Vernal City’s population it was assumed that the City would continue to account for an average of 34 percent of the County’s new growth. Based on the GOPB’s baseline projections, 34 percent of the five year net change in Uintah County was added to Vernal City’s baseline population estimate. This process was repeated at five year intervals until 2028.

Using this methodology Vernal City is projected to grow to 13,378 persons by 2028, a net increase of 3,338 persons. The baseline projection assumes an average annual rate of change of 1.4 percent over the 20 year period for Vernal City. For comparison, that State of Utah is projected to grow at an average annual rate of 2.1 percent over the same time period.<sup>2</sup>

***Population Scenarios***

Population projections are difficult to perform with accuracy in areas with small populations or with boom-bust economies. In 2008, the GOPB took a historical look at the baseline population projections for Uintah County produced from 1967 to 2002 to better understand the accuracy of the projections over the years. Figure 1-1 shows historic population projections for Uintah County, Utah along with the observed population.

Note that the population projections that occurred concurrent with the oil driven population boom of the 1980’s are significantly different from the actual observed populations. This is due to the difficulty of accurately predicting how long a boom will last and how much the population might decline following a boom.

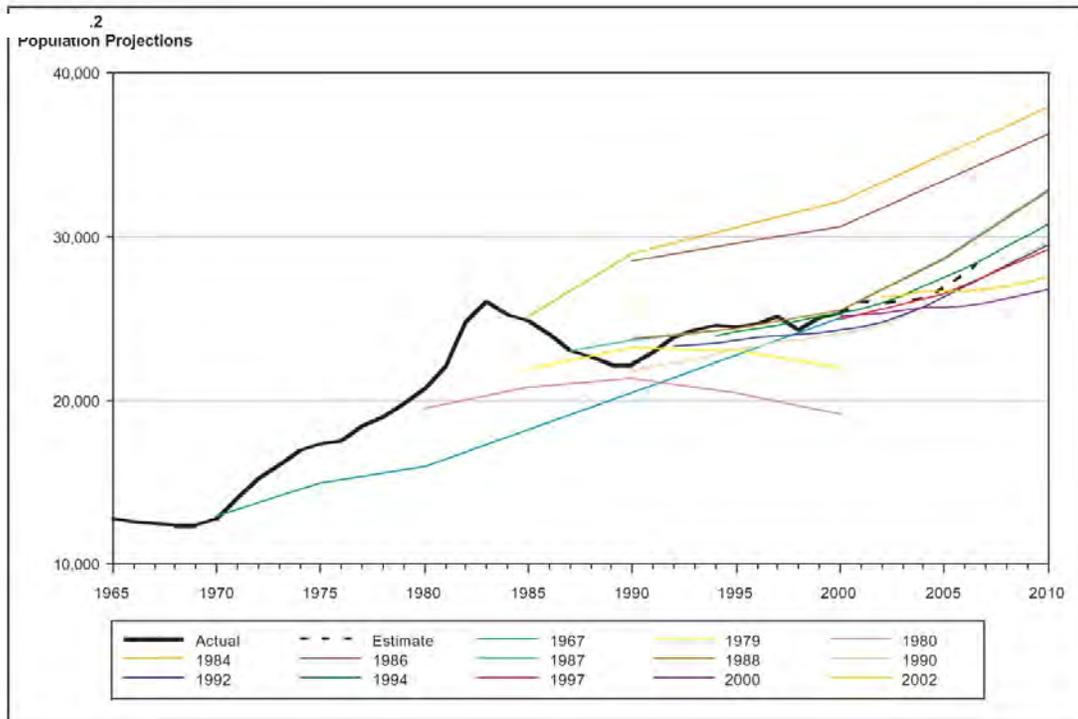
Many forces that cannot be directly quantified and modeled will influence how the population of Vernal City changes over the next 20 years. The national economic

---

<sup>2</sup> 2008 GOPB baseline projections, 2008 – 2028.

downturn since 2008 has had obvious impact on recent growth and development, and could lead to a decrease in the population in the short term. Desires for natural gas development in the future could continue at the current pace over the next twenty years leading to continual growth throughout the planning, which could signal the beginning of an even greater boom than Vernal City has experienced to date.<sup>3</sup> All of these options are possible and only time will tell which scenario described above materializes.

**Figure 1-1  
Historic Population Projections and Actual Population for Uintah County**



To help understand this uncertainty, population projection scenarios have been developed to understand the impact of each of these scenarios on the population of Vernal City for the next 20 years. To assist in preparing the scenarios, the “booms and busts” in similar oil and natural gas counties across the United States were analyzed. The criteria that for comparable counties included those which are non-metropolitan, that have an economy based on oil or natural gas deposits, and which are located in states that are either known for oil and natural gas (Texas and Alaska) or are likely to have similar natural resources as Uintah County (Wyoming and Colorado).

Twenty-four counties were identified that met these criteria. Each of these was then further analyzed for similarity to Uintah County based on population, employment by

<sup>3</sup> Shell executive quoted in Salt Lake Tribune article, “BLM allows oil shale demonstration in West,” January 15, 2009, stated that oil shale could become commercially viable within the next 10-15 years.

sector and ethnic/racial composition. Comparable counties were selected if they had a similar population to Uintah County and a similar racial composition or employment composition. Population similarity was based on the 2000 census count as well as the 2007 estimate. Employment similarity was based on the proportion of total county employment in mining. Racial and ethnic similarity was based on percentages of the total population made up by the various census designations for race and Hispanic origin.

The purpose for including ethnicity and race in the selection process was to try to minimize differences in migration patterns. Counties with high numbers of Hispanics, for example, may experience large population changes due to in-migration from Mexico and Central America rather than reasons related to oil and natural gas booms. Another example that highlights the reason for including this factor is that some areas in Alaska have high percentages of Native Alaskans, who are less likely to migrate based on trends in the oil and natural gas economy than do other population groups.

Using historic population data, the duration of each boom and bust period was calculated along with the annual rate of growth observed during each year of the cycle. By analyzing growth trends during booms and busts in other similar economies, a possible range of growth rates was established, resulting in three alternative population scenarios for Vernal, which follow<sup>4</sup>.

Population Scenario 1: Bust Alternative - No Recovery

The bust scenario assumes an immediate halt to growth in Uintah County. To model a bust in population, GOPB's projected -0.3 percent growth rate for Uintah County is maintained for 2009. Busts in the similar communities were then compared and averaged. Negative growth following a boom can last anywhere from two to eight years. Among the six similar communities, including Uintah County, the average period of negative growth lasted for four years. Annual rates of growth were averaged for all six years starting with the first year each had a negative growth rate of the bust following the 1970's energy crisis. Averages for the first four years following a peak in population were then used and inputs for Uintah County for 2010 through 2014. After the five years of no growth or negative growth, Uintah County population was allowed to grow at the same rates previously projected for the year by GOPB.

After altering the growth rates of Uintah County, projections for Vernal City were prepared with the same constant share of net growth methodology used for the baseline scenario. This scenario resulted in a population of 10,568 by 2028, a net increase of only 528 persons.

Population Scenario 2: Bust Alternative – With Recovery

The bust scenario with recovery recognizes that while the current economic crisis could cause Uintah County to suffer a loss of population in the short term, the natural

---

<sup>4</sup> The projected growth rate for Uintah County was altered and a portion of the population change allocated to Vernal City accordingly.

resources that are able to be extracted from the surrounding area will provide Uintah County with a relatively stable source of economic power over the 20 year planning horizon. Talks with one of the major natural gas companies in the area revealed a plan for continued expansion of natural gas production for the next 20 years. This scenario assumes that the current economic climate will create a short term downturn followed by a rapid rebound as the natural gas boom regains momentum. The same population growth projected in the bust alternative was maintained in this scenario for 2009 to 2014. However at the end of the population decline, the population was grown at the average annual rate observed in Uintah County from 2003 to 2008 for the three years following the bust. The GOPB's projected growth rates for 2010 were then shifted to 2017 to show growth during the baseline being delayed but reinstated after the bust.

Once the growth rates for Uintah County had been modified, projections for Vernal City were prepared with the same constant share of net growth methodology used for the baseline scenario. Even with a strong recovery it is likely Vernal City would not reach the same population as the Vernal City Baseline. This scenario resulted in a population of 12,382 by 2028, a net increase of 2,342 persons.

### Population Scenario 3: Boom Alternative – Oil Shale

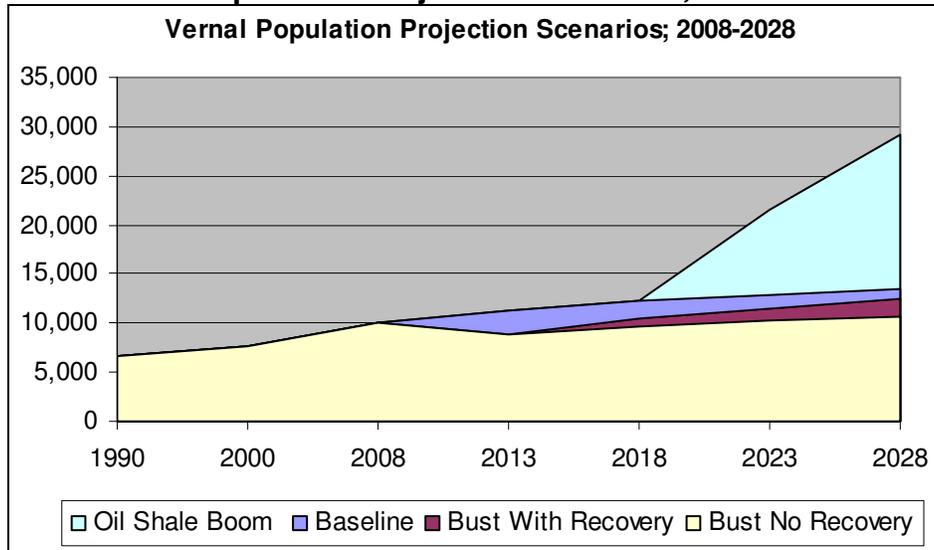
The boom scenario looked at the average rate of growth observed in similar communities during the oil boom of the late 1970's and early 1980's. In this analysis only booms in counties in Wyoming were analyzed due to their similar environment and natural resources. On average boom periods lasted 10 years in these communities. Growth rates in the Wyoming counties of Converse, Sweetwater and Campbell were averaged after aligning all the booms to start in a single year. Averages were then plotted on a graph and fit with a third degree polynomial function to help smooth the growth curve. Rates from this growth projection were then applied to Uintah County starting in the year 2019, since sources do not predict oil shale technology would be viable for at least 10 years. Under this scenario, the population of Vernal City could grow to 29,105 persons by 2028 or nearly three times its current population. Depending on when and if the oil shale boom hits Uintah County, the size of the boom population could shift. Figure 1-2 shows all the population scenarios on one graph. The cyan (blue-green) portion of the graph which represents the oil shale boom could shift to the right if the boom starts later than modeled here and to the left if earlier than modeled here (although the boom starting earlier than 2019 seems unlikely based on current knowledge).

### Summary of the Baseline Projection and Three Alternative Scenarios

The Baseline Population Projection and the three Population Growth Scenarios are illustrated in Table 1-1. To summarize, Alternative 1 (Bust with no Recovery) and Alternative 2 (Bust with Recovery) indicate that population growth during the 20-year planning horizon will be small, with 528 and 2,342 additional people living in Vernal by 2028, respectively.

The Baseline Projection indicates slightly higher population growth during the same period, with 3,338 additional persons residing in Vernal by 2028. Alternative 3 - Oil Shale Boom Scenario projects a significant population increase with 19,065 new people living in the city by 2028. The wide range of projected growth between Alternative 3 – Oil Shale Boom and the other three projections illustrate the difficulty of accurately planning for future needs in Vernal and the surrounding region.

**Figure 1-2  
Vernal Population Projection Scenarios, 2008 - 2028**



**Table 1-1  
Population Growth Scenarios for Vernal City General Plan Update 2008-2028**

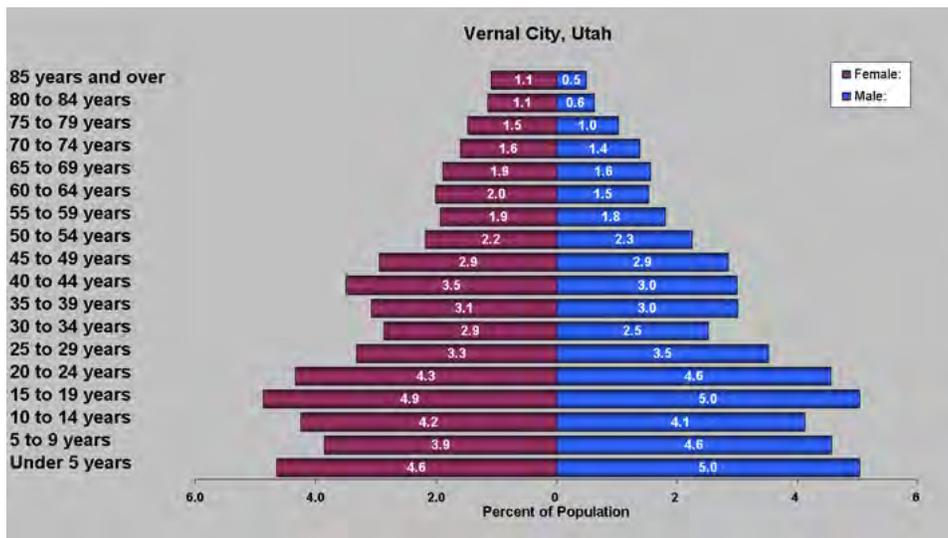
Year	Bust No Recovery	Bust With Recovery	Baseline	Oil Shale Boom
1990	6,644	6,644	6,644	6,644
2000	7,714	7,714	7,714	7,714
2008	10,040	10,040	10,040	10,040
2013	8,838	8,838	11,199	11,199
2018	9,668	10,380	12,245	12,245
2023	10,246	11,543	12,972	21,571
2028	10,568	12,382	13,378	29,105
Net Change 2008 - 2028	528	2,342	3,338	19,065
Percent Change 2008 - 2028	5%	23%	33%	190%
Average Annual Rate of Change 2008 – 2028	0.3%	1.1%	1.4%	5.5%

Source: Wikstrom

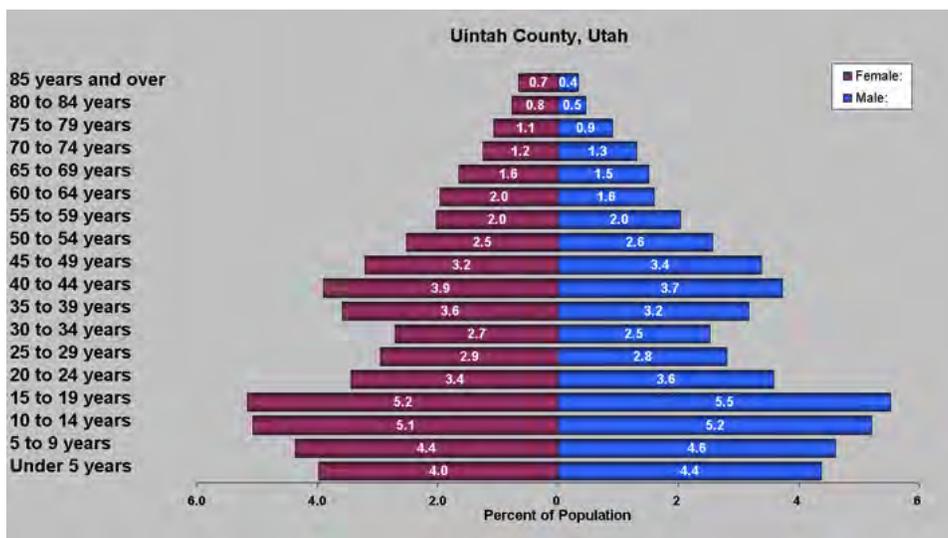
**Age**

According to the 2000 census, the median age in Vernal City is 28.3. This is lower than Uintah County, Maeser CDP and Naples City, which have median ages 29.0, 31.7 and 29.3 respectively. Figures 1-3 and 1-4 illustrate population distributions for Vernal City and Uintah County for Census 2000. Compared to Uintah County, Vernal City has a concentration of people aged 20 to 29. There are also higher concentrations of children under five and females over age 70. Uintah County overall shows a stronger presence of the 35 to 55 years-old population. Because of this, there is also a higher proportion of persons aged 10 to 19 in Uintah County as compared to Vernal City.

**Figure 1-3**  
**Percent of Population by Age: Vernal City, Utah**



**Figure 1-4**  
**Percent of Population by Age: Uintah County, Utah**



**Household Characteristics**

According to the Census Bureau, Vernal City had 2,709 households in 2000. Census sample data from this period indicates that 63 percent of those households were single family units and 28 percent were multifamily units. The remaining nine-percent are contained in mobile homes, recreational vehicles, vans and similar temporary options (which is approximately double the state average.) The average household size was 2.77, which is much smaller when compared with Uintah County, Maeser CDP and Naples City at 3.05, 3.16 and 3.23 respectively. The household size in Vernal City was almost exactly the same as it was during the previous census in 1990, at 2.78.

Sixty-four percent of the households in Vernal City are owner occupied, while 36 percent are renter occupied. The renter occupancy rate is quite a bit higher than the average for the State of Utah, which is 28 percent. The majority of residents in Vernal City live within an urban area (99 percent), which is significantly greater than Uintah County, Maeser CDP and Naples City, with 47 percent, 69 percent and 19 percent of their populations living in an urban area, respectively.

**Ethnic Background**

The proportion of non-whites in Vernal City (eight percent) is less than Uintah County’s proportion (14 percent). Compared to Uintah County (nine percent), Vernal City has a low percentage of American Indian and Alaska Native population at only two percent. This difference is due to the nearby location of the Uintah Indian Reservation in Uintah County south of Vernal City. The Hispanic or Latino population makes up about four percent of the total population for both Vernal City and Uintah County.

**Table 1-2  
Household Tenure for Vernal City, Utah**

	Vernal City Number	Vernal City Percent	Utah Percent
Owner Occupied	1,742	64%	72%
Renter Occupied	967	36%	28%

Source: Census 2000

**Table 1-3  
Urban vs. Rural**

	Uintah County	Maeser CDP	Naples City	Vernal City
Urban:	47%	69%	19%	99%
Rural	53%	31%	81%	1%

Source: Census 2000

**Table 1-4  
Race and Ethnicity**

	Uintah County		Vernal City	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Total:	25,224		7,714	
White alone	21,662	85.88%	7,083	91.82%
Black or African American alone	26	0.10%	12	0.16%
American Indian and Alaska Native alone	2,264	8.98%	161	2.09%
Asian alone	56	0.22%	26	0.34%
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander alone	19	0.08%	3	0.04%
Some other race alone	7	0.03%	1	0.01%
Two or more races	296	1.17%	85	1.10%
Hispanic or Latino	894	3.54%	343	4.45%

Source: Census 2000

**Income and Labor Force**

In 1999 Vernal City’s median household income was \$30,357 (2008\$), which was noticeably lower than the County median household income of \$44,012 (2008\$) and the State’s median of \$45,726 (2008\$). Vernal City had 33 percent of households with incomes at \$19,999 or less, which is more than double the rate in the Maeser CDP<sup>5</sup> (15 percent) and Naples City (15 percent).

As noted in Chapter 5 - Economic Development, one of the most significant reasons for Vernal’s low household income may be due to the fact that many of the high-wage workers do not live in traditional housing units. Another reason may be the higher proportion of citizens over age 65 that live here. Both Vernal City and Uintah County have a high percentage of residents over 16 that are not in the labor force (37 percent) when compared to the State of Utah.

**Table 1-5  
Employment Status for the Population 16+ Years, 2000**

	Uintah County		Vernal City		Utah	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
In labor force:						
In Armed Forces	29	0%	29	1%	5,508	0%
Employed	10,258	58%	3,297	59%	1,044,362	65%
Unemployed	860	5%	222	4%	54,561	3%
Not in labor force	6,547	37%	2,083	37%	495,848	31%
	17,694	100%	5,631	100%	1,600,279	100%

Source: Census 2000

<sup>5</sup> CDP (Census Designated Place)

**Table 1-6  
Percentage of Households by Income Groups**

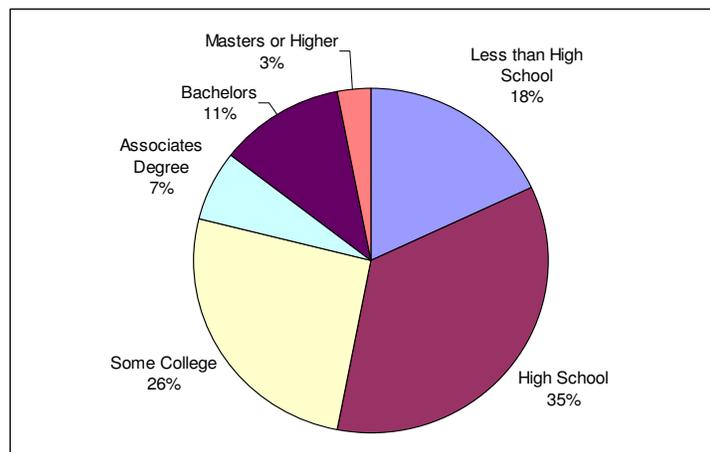
	Uintah County	Vernal City	Maeser CDP	Naples City
Less than \$10,000	11%	12%	6%	3%
\$10,000 to \$14,999	8%	10%	5%	5%
\$15,000 to \$19,999	8%	11%	4%	7%
\$20,000 to \$24,999	8%	9%	10%	7%
\$25,000 to \$29,999	7%	7%	6%	6%
\$30,000 to \$34,999	9%	9%	10%	8%
\$35,000 to \$39,999	7%	5%	6%	7%
\$40,000 to \$44,999	6%	6%	10%	9%
\$45,000 to \$49,999	6%	7%	5%	5%
\$50,000 to \$59,999	9%	8%	10%	14%
\$60,000 to \$74,999	9%	7%	13%	14%
\$75,000 to \$99,999	7%	6%	10%	10%
\$100,000 to \$124,999	2%	1%	4%	2%
\$125,000 to \$149,999	1%	1%	1%	1%
\$150,000 to \$199,999	1%	1%	1%	1%
\$200,000 or more	0%	0%	0%	0%

Source: Census 2000

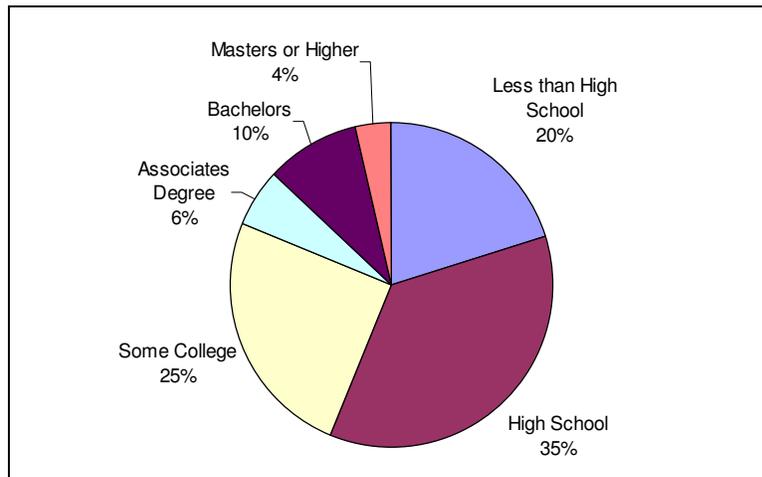
**Educational Attainment**

Twenty-one percent of the Vernal City population over 25 has completed a college degree or higher. Twenty-six percent of the population over 25 in Vernal City has attended college without completing a degree. Eighteen percent of Vernal City’s residents 25 years old or older have not completed high school. These figures are similar to Uintah County, although Vernal City tends to have a slightly higher level of educational attainment. Twenty percent of the Uintah County 20 population does not have at least a high school degree, and only 20 percent of the population has completed some form of a college degree.

**Figure 1-5  
Education Attainment for Persons 25+ in Vernal (2000)**



**Figure 1-6**  
**Education Attainment for Persons 25+, Uintah County (2000)**



### ***Employment***

As noted in [Chapter 5 - Economic Development](#), the most prevalent industries for employment are mining, government and trade. These accounted for 21.3 percent, 18.4 percent and 24.3 percent of non-farm jobs, respectively. Vernal City's proportion of mining jobs is noticeably higher than the State's, which is less than one percent. For more information on employment trends, please refer to [Chapter 5, Economic Development](#).

### ***Summary of Key Demographic and Population Findings***

- The baseline projection assumes an average annual rate of change of 1.4 percent over the 20 year planning horizon. According to this scenario, Vernal City is projected to grow to 13,378 persons by 2028, a net increase of 3,338 persons and approximately 1,205 households.
- The baseline projection is based on projection methods that have proven inaccurate in the past, due to the "boom and bust" nature of growth which has occurred in the Vernal region. Three alternative growth scenarios were investigated, reflecting possible "boom and bust" cycles of the future. According to these investigations, growth in Vernal may be somewhat lower than the Baseline Projection if slowdowns prevail, or significantly higher if oil shale extraction becomes a reality. The purpose of these scenarios is to help select a projected growth rate that is realistic while not over-estimating future needs.
- Compared to Uintah County, Vernal City has a concentration of people aged 20 to 29.
- Fourteen percent of the population aged 25 years and older have a Bachelor's degree or higher, which is ten percent less than the national average.

- The majority of residents in Vernal City live within the urban area (99 percent).
- Like many communities in Utah, Vernal City will experience a growing proportion of seniors in their communities over the next two decades.
- During boom times, many natural gas and oil workers are housed in temporary housing arrangements, making it difficult to account accurately for household income, total City population, and total households. Cooperation with local oil and natural gas extraction companies may help in assessing and mitigating the community impacts of worker migration.

## **Public Involvement**

Verifying the issues and needs of the community is a critical step for ensuring that the General plan accurately represents expected future needs and desires, and encapsulates the future vision of the community. As summarized below, a thorough public involvement process was utilized to capture the pulse of the community. The process incorporated multiple opportunities for the public to provide comments, identify issues, and provide feedback during the planning process.

## **Plan Management Committee**

A Plan Management Committee was established during the early stages of the project in order to review progress and to provide guidance as the plan was formulated. Membership in the Vernal City General Plan Update Management Committee included approximately thirty representatives of City staff and administration, Vernal City Council, Vernal City Planning Commission, Utah State University and Uintah Basin Applied Technology Center, Uintah County staff and officials, local and regional agencies, civic and business leaders, real estate and development representatives, recreation advocates, and interested citizens. The Management Committee met at four key stages as follows:

- Prior to Public Scoping Meetings held as part of the Documentation of Planning Issues and Existing Conditions;
- Prior to Public Workshops held as part of developing Alternative Planning Approaches and Directions;
- To review the Preliminary Plan Alternatives; and
- Prior to a Public Open House Meeting held to review the Draft Vernal City General Plan Update.

Once the Preliminary Plan Alternatives had been prepared, meetings were held between officials from Vernal City, Naples City and Uintah County to coordinate their various planning efforts and to help solidify a unified planning vision for the area.

### **Public Scoping Meeting**

A Public Scoping Meeting was held in January 2009 at Discovery Elementary School in Vernal City. The purpose of this meeting was to receive input from members of the community regarding their concerns and issues related to future growth and community development.

### **Public Workshops**

Three public workshops were held in February 2009 as hands-on community visioning exercises, providing residents and stakeholders the opportunity to review maps and existing conditions, identify opportunities and constraints to future growth, and develop ideas and concepts for the future of the City. A Visual Preference Survey was also conducted to help determine the future vision for the community. The workshops focused on the following population scenarios:

- Baseline
- Bust Alternative – No Recovery
- Bust Alternative – With Recovery

The workshops were well attended, with more than 200 people participating. Results from the workshops were compiled, summarized and analyzed by the planning team to help develop Preliminary Plan Alternatives.

### **Public Open House Meeting to Review the Draft General Plan Update**

Once a Preferred Planning Direction had been determined with input by City staff and others, a Draft Plan was developed by the planning team. A Draft Plan Public Open House meeting was held in March 2010. This meeting provided additional public input prior to plan finalization and adoption.

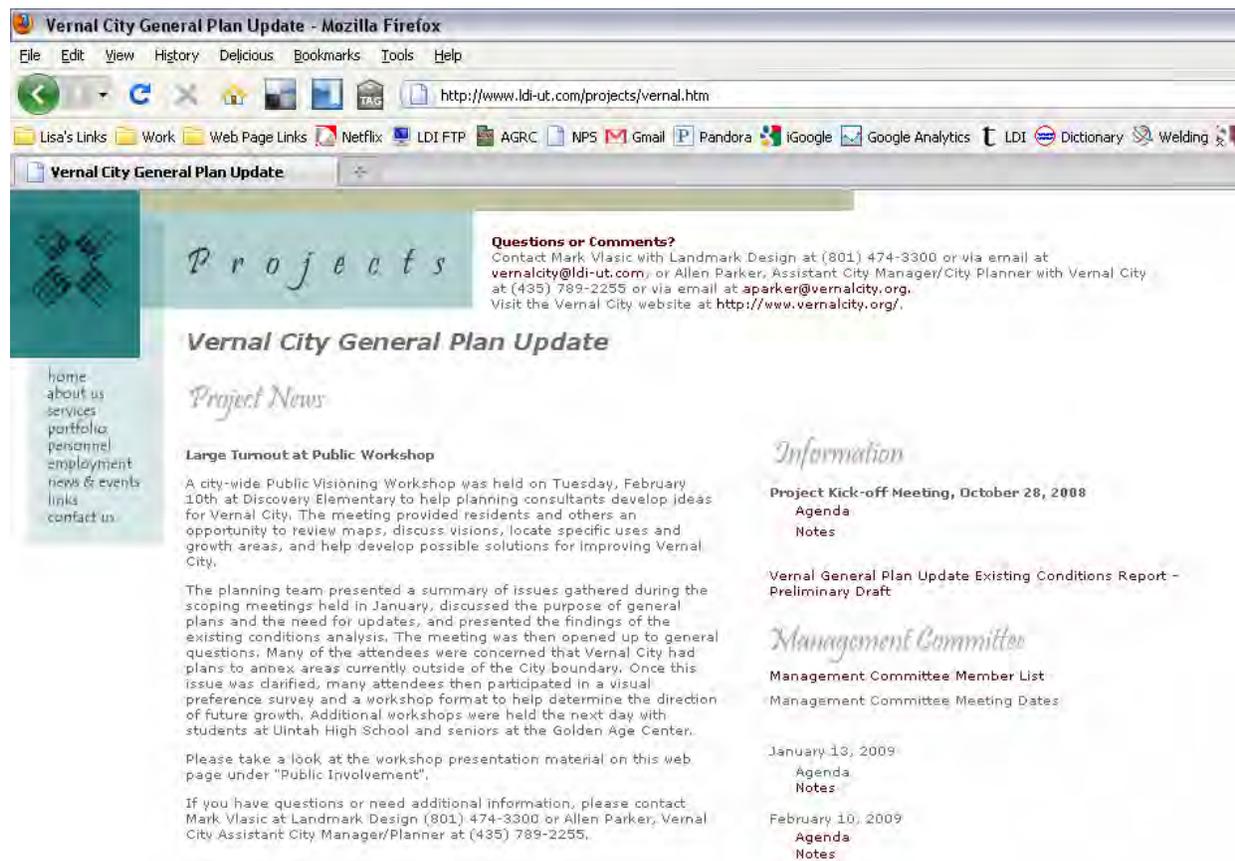
### **Media Coordination**

The preparation of public notices and invitations to the various meetings and workshops were prepared by the planning team and published in local news outlets. The noticing of meetings and events was also carried out through less formal avenues, including the distribution of digital flyers through email lists. A series of articles related to the project were written by members of the planning team and later published in the Vernal Express newspaper (see Appendix A for details).

### **Project Web Page**

In order to provide easy access to planning information and to increase the scope of public involvement, the Vernal City General Plan Update web page was established. The web page provided an electronic venue for noticing important meetings and events,

accessing digital planning ideas and draft plans as they were developed, and receiving public feedback and input.



**Sample Screenshot from the Vernal City General Plan Update Webpage**

### Plan Adoption

The Draft General Plan Update was presented to a special joint session of the City Council and Planning Commission on May 5<sup>th</sup>, 2010, and was followed by a public hearing. After tabling the matter, the General Plan Update was later adopted by the Vernal City Council on May 19, 2010.

### Summary of Planning Issues

As might be expected, the comments, issues and ideas expressed through public participation were broad and varied. All comments and ideas received at public meetings and workshops were reviewed, summarized, and analyzed, and later compared with workshop results, visual preferences, previous plans, studies and reports. An important result of this process was the identification of planning issues which are discussed in detail in the General Plan Update Chapters. Some of the key issues which were identified are summarized below:

- Water/Roads/Infrastructure and Sustainability of Future Growth
- Direction and Type of Future Growth
- Affordable Housing
- Traffic Safety and Roads
- Parks, Recreation, and Trails
- Boom and Bust Economic Patterns/Diversification of Economy
- Quality of Life
- Vernal City is Running Out of Land – Accommodating Future Growth in Vernal
- Coordinating with Uintah County and Adjacent Towns

## **Amending and Updating the General Plan**

It is envisioned that the updated Vernal City General Plan will be a vital, living document that will serve the community for a number of years. In order to stay current and maximize the utility of the plan, it should be reviewed and updated regularly.

Amending the Vernal City General Plan between regular updates should not be taken lightly. A great deal of effort, time, commitment, and consideration has gone into the development of this Plan. In order to be a trusted document, all amendment proposals should be carefully reviewed and evaluated from the perspective of how they affect the greater community. In order to retain the integrity of the plan and to allow the recommended actions to take place, it is recommended that General Plan amendments should only be considered on a semi-annual or annual basis during special meetings devoted entirely to that process. In this way, the time necessary to fully understand and evaluate the amendment proposals will be assured, and the General Plan will not be compromised due to haste, development pressure or inadequate information.

Additionally, it is recommended that no General Plan amendments should be considered for a period of one year following the date of adoption. This will provide an adequate time for the Planning Commission and the City Council to work with the adopted plan without pressure for premature modifications.

## **Goals and Policies**

**Goal:**           **To ensure that the General Plan reflects the vision of the community.**

**Policy:**           Clearly identify a vision that addresses the immediate community needs during the next five to ten years, while considering longer-term implications up to twenty years into the future.

*Implementation Measure:* Update the General Plan every five to ten years to ensure it remains current and reflects new developments and changing community priorities.

**Policy:** Ensure that the vision expressed in the Updated General Plan addresses issues identified by the public, and that it is supported by an objective analysis of implications.

*Implementation Measure:* Review the general plan every five to ten years to ensure that issues have been addressed and progress is being made.

**Goal:** **To ensure that the Vernal City General Plan is supported by future actions.**

**Policy** Revise existing Vernal City policy to match the vision and ideas contained in the Updated General Plan.

*Implementation Measure:* Modify existing zoning ordinances, development guidelines and other implementation tools to ensure they are aligned with the vision contained in the Vernal City General Plan Vision.

**Goal:** **To maintain the objectives and goals of the Vernal City General Plan while accommodating future modifications and changes.**

*Policy:* Consider amendments and modifications to the updated Vernal City General Plan only within the context of comprehensive, community-wide review.

*Implementation Measure:* Allow no amendments to the updated Vernal City General Plan for a period of one year following the date of adoption.

*Implementation Measure:* Consider potential amendments to the General Plan only during special meetings devoted solely to that process.

*Implementation Measure:* Hold special meetings to consider potential General Plan amendments on a semi-annual basis only.

**Goal:** **To ensure that the General Plan vision is maintained regardless of the rate of future change and growth.**

**Policy:** Direct future development to appropriate sites within the current Vernal City boundaries until built out.

*Implementation Measure:* Annually monitor the City's population and compare changes in land use and development.

**Policy:** Carefully consider annexation and other land expansion options to accommodate future growth that is beyond the scope of the General Plan.

*Implementation Measure:* Coordinate annexation efforts to ensure future growth and development meets the needs of Vernal City, Uintah County and neighboring communities.

## 2 Land Use

### Introduction

Providing clear land use direction is one of the most critical – and utilized – functions of the General Plan. Determining the correct amounts and locations of future uses is an essential function – but it is not all that is needed.

As Vernal has grown and developed rapidly in recent years, it has become a much more complex and sophisticated place. The demands and expectations of the public have evolved, which is due in part to the changes taking place. The public is asking for new and more sustainable development ideas, for better relationships and transitions between existing and new uses, for cooperation and coordinated planning efforts with Naples and Uintah County, and for new development that is responsive to the natural setting, environment and history of the City.

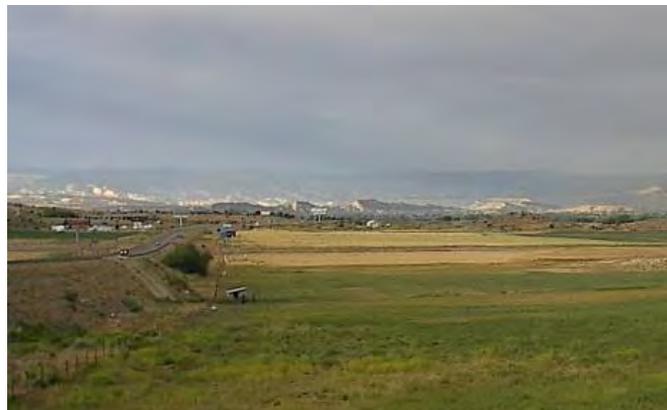


**Dinah the Pink Dinosaur –  
An Iconic Landmark**

In order to adequately address the increasingly complex patterns of land use in Vernal, and to ensure that future growth meets the needs and expectations of the community, a new vision is required. As presented in the following pages, the future land use vision is based on a careful understanding of past directions and patterns of growth, and consideration of alternative development ideas and directions. The vision was established through analysis of existing land use, review of existing plans and data, and careful consideration of the input and ideas provided as part of the public input process.

### Background and Context

The existing Vernal City municipal boundary encompasses 2,964 acres of land, or approximately 4.6 square miles. A much larger Impact Area boundary surrounds the City, encompassing 16,424 acres or 25.7 square miles of Uintah County land. The Impact Area is an informal boundary created by Vernal City planners that contains Uintah County land that is of interest to the City. Since land use and development decisions

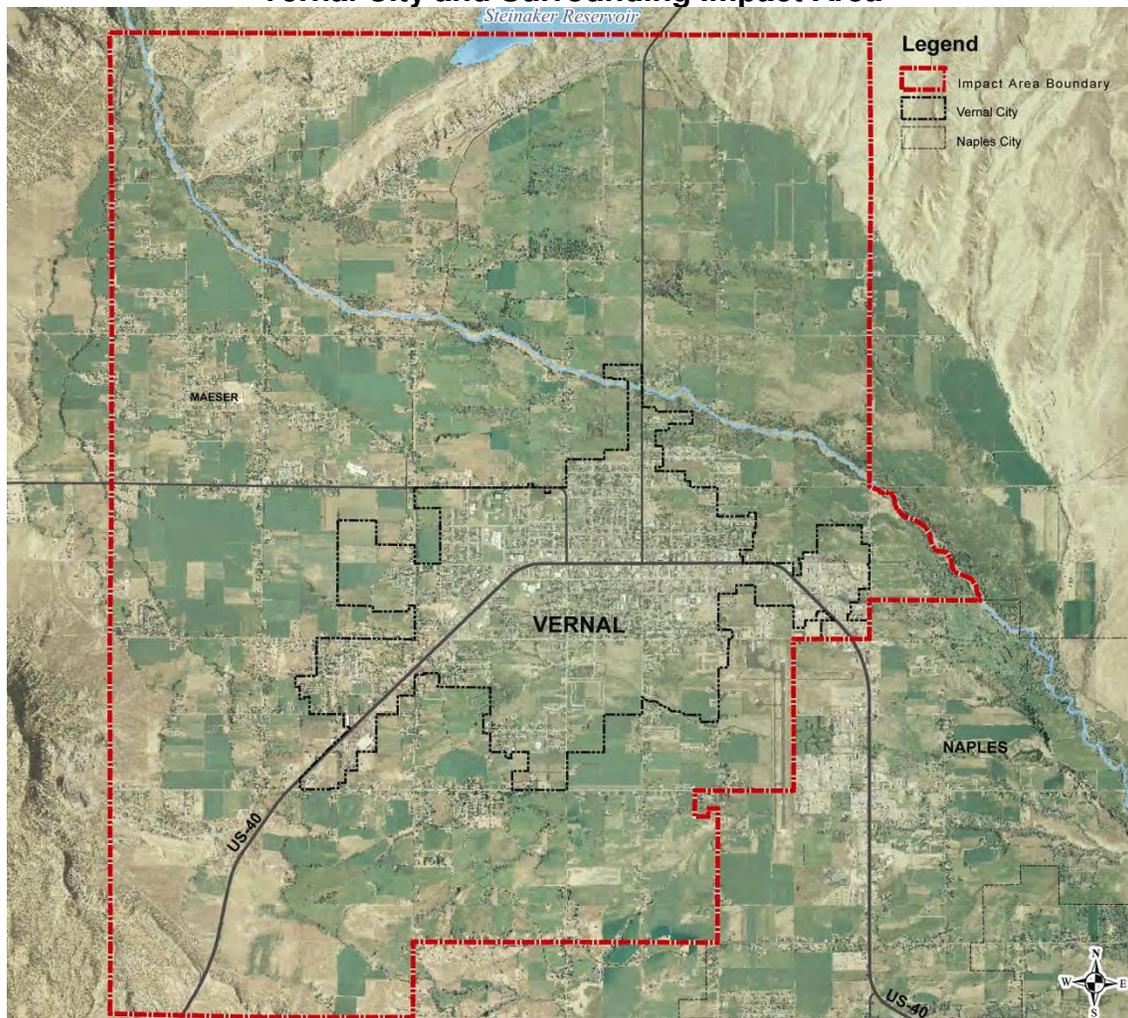


**Open landscape on outskirts of Vernal along US40**

within the Impact Area will have significant impact on Vernal City, it was decided to analyze the area as part of the planning process.

When combined, Vernal City and the surrounding Impact Area encompass 19,388 acres or 30.29 square miles of land<sup>1</sup>. As illustrated in Figure 2-1, even though the existing City has been growing rapidly in recent years, nearly a third of the incorporated area remains as undeveloped agricultural or vacant land. In comparison, the Impact Area is dominated by large tracts of agricultural and vacant land interspersed with low-density residential subdivisions and homesteads. The Impact Area also includes the Maeser settlement area northwest of Vernal, and more than ten square miles of undeveloped agricultural and vacant land.

**Figure 2-1**  
**Vernal City and Surrounding Impact Area**



<sup>1</sup> For comparison, this is approximately the same size of Sandy City, which is the fourth largest Utah municipality with a population in excess of 95,000.

Steinaker Reservoir is located north of town, just beyond the proposed Impact Area boundary. The reservoir is set in the lower foothills of the Uintah Mountain range, marking an upward approach toward the Ashley National Forest, Flaming Gorge Reservoir and other recreational destinations to the north. In comparison, areas south, west and east of town are relatively flat and open. Naples City abuts Vernal City along the eastern edge of the City.



**Rock formation on the outskirts of Vernal along Asphalt Ridge**

US-40 is the main east-west road link, providing access to Roosevelt, Duchesne and Salt Lake City to the west, and Dinosaur National Park and western Colorado to the east. The highway enters the community from the southwest on a 45-degree angle, eventually straightening into an east-west road in the City center, and exiting as a looping southeastward-leading road into the adjacent community of Naples. In the center of Vernal US-40 turns into Main Street as it enters downtown.

US-191 is a north-south highway that provides access to Steinaker Reservoir and Flaming Gorge Reservoir to the north. The road eventually links with I-80 in southwestern Wyoming, providing access to Rock Springs and Laramie, Wyoming and eventually Denver, Colorado to the east. In Vernal the US-191 is called Vernal Avenue. The roadway is the main downtown crossroads, dividing the city into east and west sections.



**Ashley Creek during a flood event**

Ashley Creek passes near Vernal on the north edge of the City, flowing in a northwest to southeast direction. This waterway is an important natural resource, providing a source of water and serving as a natural stormwater drainage facility. Vernal and the surroundings are transected by numerous smaller streams, canals and drainageways, which generally flow from the northwest to the southeast before merging with Ashley Creek. The flood plains, wet lands and unbuildable riparian edges of Ashley Creek and the smaller waterways also provide a significant limit to easy construction and unconstrained development.

The original City was laid out on a one-mile Meridian grid system, centered on the intersection of Main Street/ US-40 and Vernal Avenue/ US-191. The grid is laid out ten blocks per linear mile (100 blocks per square mile), resulting in 528-foot square blocks as

measured from centerline. Newer roads beyond the City center and beyond utilize the mile grid as the basic road layout system, with local roads extending between the mile roads. Newer development areas have deviated from the grid pattern, replacing the grid with suburban patterns and curving road patterns. Recent development is typified by large homes located on large lots, a pattern that is distinctly different than in the City core. New commercial development has also changed over the years, and is now dominated by large-scale, “big-box” buildings concentrated on the western extents of the community along US-40. The new commercial uses are a distinct contrast to the smaller buildings and tight urban form of the traditional Main Street commercial core.

## Existing Neighborhoods



Due in part to the relatively small size and concentrated form of Vernal City, distinct residential patterns and connections are not readily apparent. However, this is changing as growth extends beyond the traditional core to the outer edges of the City. In general, the city core reflects the historic past while the city edge represents recent change and future growth potential. The following descriptions summarize four established and emerging neighborhoods in the City and surrounding Impact Area.



**Main Street is the home to a range of commercial buildings and uses**

### Downtown Commercial Core

Downtown Vernal is centered on the intersection of Main Street and Vernal Avenue, which is the traditional core of the City. Main Street exhibits many of the qualities desired in a traditional western downtown: low and compact commercial buildings; a discernable core district with a “street wall” of structures built-up to the front edge of properties; well-proportioned sidewalks and generally attractive streetscapes; parallel parking along the street; and a mix of small-to-medium commercial uses. Unfortunately,

the wide roadway, heavy traffic and prevalence of large trucks on Main Street limit the positive qualities and pedestrian appeal of downtown Vernal.

Great effort has been placed on improving Main Street over the years. A downtown master plan<sup>2</sup> was developed to improve parking and provide better access to businesses. Numerous beautification efforts have been implemented, including the striking Main Street floral displays. Despite the positive effect of these efforts, the City core continues to struggle. It is assumed that Downtown Vernal and the Main Street core has been negatively impacted by big-box developments and strip malls to the west, and the nearby industrial uses to the southeast in Naples. Further exacerbating downtown problems is the perception that Main Street is an unsafe place for walking and pedestrian activities, and that downtown parking is lacking. There are few residential or mixed-use places in downtown, resulting in a less-than-thriving nighttime place. Although there are several downtown motels and hotels that bring a sense of life and activity to the area after working hours, they have little impact on creating a place that is thriving and energetic.



**Example of a modest single-family home in an established Vernal City neighborhood**

### **Areas Beyond the Downtown Core**

On either side of the Main Street commercial area are blocks of compact and modest residences, some historic in nature. The strong form of the 528-foot square blocks continues for several blocks in all directions, eventually meeting large tracts of open space, newer residential development, and agricultural and vacant land near the edges of the City. Large lot homes, farms and a scattering of newer subdivisions are also found in the area interspersed between the open lands of the Ashley Valley.



**Uintah Basin Applied Technology Center is located adjacent to the Uintah Basin Regional Campus of Utah State University**

A range of office, industrial and commercial uses are located beyond downtown, primarily along the one-mile roadways. The predominant feeling as one leaves the downtown core becomes increasingly rural, although this is changing as newer subdivisions and commercial developments are implemented.

### **Educational District**

The Uintah Basin Regional Campus of Utah State University (USU), the Uintah Basin Applied Technology Center (UBATC) and Uintah High School are located in close

---

<sup>2</sup> Harris & Associates. Vernal City Downtown Master Plan Report – Final. December 18, 2007.

proximity to each other in the northwest quadrant of the City along 500 North, mainly within the Impact Area. Together, these facilities form a unique Educational District that serves both Vernal City and the rest of the Uintah Basin. The USU and UBATC facilities have formed an alliance and are cooperating to maximize the impact of the individual institutions. For example, the USU and UBATC facilities have recently constructed a joint facility which eventually will operate as the Entrepreneurship and Energy Research Center. It is envisioned that the Educational District will enhance both the local economy and regional resource industries in the region.

**Maeser**

Maeser is an unincorporated township located northwest of Vernal within the Impact Area. Maeser is discernable from adjacent rural areas and the more urban feel of nearby Vernal with its small town, village feel. A school and a few small-scale commercial uses are located in the core of the area, interspersed with a few older homes. The result is a distinct “sense of place” and a positive, small-neighborhood feel.



**Agricultural land is dominant on the outskirts in areas like Maeser**

**Naples**



**The adjacent City of Naples is home to many of the industrial uses in the area**

Although Naples is an incorporated municipality separate from Vernal, it is an important component of the overall built environment. The two communities share more than a border, since a portion of Naples was once part of Vernal City. The Vernal Regional Airport is located in Naples, but serves both communities and the region as a whole. Similarly, many of the industrial businesses in Ashley Valley are located in Naples (while the bulk of commercial uses are found in Vernal.) Residential

uses in Naples tend to be newer overall than those in Vernal, indicative of the young status of the City. In many ways Naples and Vernal can be viewed as partner communities with complementary characteristics and generally shared goals. In this sense Naples is analogous to a neighborhood in a larger community.

**Existing Land Use**

Existing land use patterns in Vernal reflect the changing patterns and eras of growth that have taken place since the City was settled. In an effort to verify existing land uses,

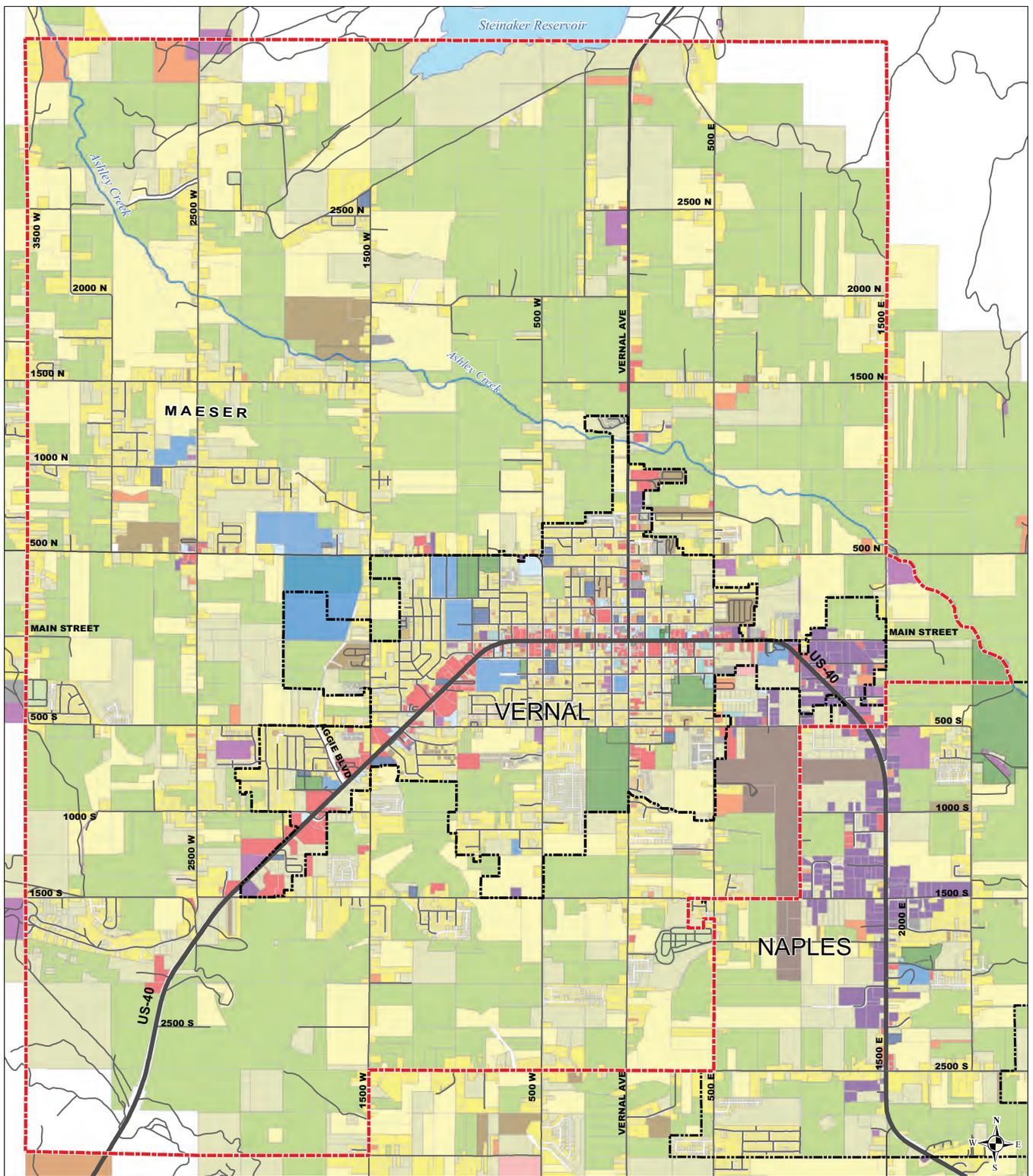
remote mapping techniques were utilized in conjunction with a limited “windshield” survey to document land uses and verify recent changes. Key parcels were visually inspected, crosschecked with aerial photographs and other mapped data, designated on field maps, and updated with the input of Vernal City and Uintah County staff.

Table 2-1 summarizes the acreage and percentage of the total land covered by each particular category within the City and Impact Area. Map 2-1 illustrates the distribution of existing land uses. A detailed description of existing land uses follows.

**Table 2-1  
Existing Land Use**

EXISTING LAND USE	1		+	2		=	3	
	Located within Existing Vernal City Boundary			Located Between Existing Vernal City Boundary and Impact Area Boundary			Located within Existing Vernal City Boundary and Impact Area Boundary	
<b>Residential</b>	<b>1052.5</b>	<b>0.4</b>		<b>5072.3</b>	<b>0.3</b>		<b>6124.8</b>	<b>0.3</b>
Large Lot Single Family	172.9	5.8%		2989.1	18.2%		3162	16.3%
Single Family	726.0	24.5%		1887.8	11.5%		2613.8	13.5%
Duplex	17.2	0.6%		18.2	0.1%		35.4	0.2%
Medium Density (3-4 Units)	46.4	1.6%		9.5	0.1%		55.9	0.3%
High Density (Apartments/Condos)	25.0	0.8%		2.9	0.0%		27.9	0.1%
Mobile Homes	63.8	2.2%		163.8	1.0%		227.6	1.2%
Cabins	1.2	0.0%		1.0	0.0%		2.2	0.0%
<b>Commercial</b>	<b>240.5</b>	<b>8.1%</b>		<b>70.4</b>	<b>0.4%</b>		<b>310.9</b>	<b>1.6%</b>
Office	45.6	1.5%		7.1	0.0%		52.7	0.3%
Mixed Use	19.0	0.6%		131.7	0.8%		150.7	0.8%
Schools	115.0	3.9%		74.8	0.5%		189.8	1.0%
Public	16.7	0.6%		2.2	0.0%		18.9	0.1%
Churches	31.0	1.0%		11.7	0.1%		42.7	0.2%
Airport	0.0	0.0%		165.0	1.0%		172.9	0.9%
Light Industrial	20.9	0.7%		87.1	0.5%		108	0.6%
Industrial	111.6	3.8%		38.9	0.2%		150.5	0.8%
Mining	0.0	0.0%		4.4	0.0%		4.4	0.0%
Parks	142.4	4.8%		24.0	0.1%		166.4	0.9%
Cemeteries	0.0	0.0%		46.7	0.3%		46.7	0.2%
Agricultural	240.4	8.1%		7140.6	43.5%		7381	38.1%
Vacant	577.2	19.5%		2588.9	15.8%		3166.1	16.3%
Utilities	9.6	0.3%		4.1	0.0%		13.7	0.1%
Miscellaneous Land Uses*	342.0	11.5%		946.4	5.8%		1288.4	6.6%
<b>TOTAL ACRES</b>	<b>2964.4</b>	<b>100.0%</b>		<b>16416.3</b>	<b>94.2%</b>		<b>19388.6</b>	<b>100.0%</b>
<b>TOTAL SQUARE MILES</b>	<b>4.6</b>			<b>25.7</b>			<b>30.3</b>	

\* Includes canals, waterways, roadways, power lines and other corridors



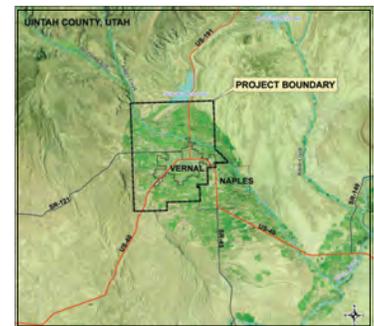
Adopted: May 19, 2010



# Vernal General Plan Update

## Legend

- |                      |                              |                  |              |
|----------------------|------------------------------|------------------|--------------|
| Impact Area Boundary | Res. Large Lot Single Family | Mixed Use        | Public       |
| Vernal City Limit    | Res. Single Family           | Commercial       | Parks        |
| Naples City Limit    | Res. Duplex                  | Office           | Cemeteries   |
| US Hwy. 40           | Res. 3-4 Unit                | Industrial       | Airport      |
| US Hwy. 191          | Res. Apartments              | Light Industrial | Agricultural |
| State Roads          | Res. Mobile Homes            | Schools          | Utilities    |
| Streets              | Cabins                       | Churches         | Vacant Land  |
|                      |                              |                  | Mining       |



VICINITY MAP



Map 2-1:  
Existing Land Use

## Residential

Residential uses occupy 1,052 acres of land within the existing city boundaries, accounting for slightly more than forty percent of all land in Vernal. The total residential acreage within the Impact Area is more than 5,000 acres, or 30 percent of the total.

The bulk of residential uses in Vernal are single-family homes located on private lots, with a significantly smaller amount of large-lot (1 acre+) single family uses. To compare, there are nearly three times as many large-lot single family acres in the Impact Area by percentage, and less than half as many single-family acres have been developed. Duplex, 3-to-4 unit houses and high density residences account for nearly three percent of land uses in Vernal, and less than one percent in the surrounding Impact Area. This difference underscores the more urban setting of Vernal when compared to the immediate surroundings, and highlights distinctive development patterns in the city limits as compared to the Impact Area.



**Example of a newer multi-family residence**



**A Vernal-area subdivision under construction**

Other residential uses found in the study area include mobile homes and cabins. The former accounts for more than two percent of the total land area in Vernal and approximately one percent of county land. Cabins are insignificant land uses in both areas.

The style and density of multi-family residential uses vary by location and era of development. For example, multi-family uses in the developed portions of Vernal encompass a range of building-types and forms, including newer duplex, triplex and

fourplex units. In contrast, multi-family uses located in newer subdivisions tend to encompass a narrow range of uses and forms, such as apartment complexes and condominiums. Single family units range from small homes located on modest lots, to large houses located on larger lots. In general, the size of individual lots is relatively small. The size of large-lot homes in Vernal and the Impact Area also vary, the latter often including various barns, garages and outbuildings, and in many cases more than one home is located on a single lot.

**Commercial**

Existing commercial uses occupy slightly more than eight-percent of the total land in Vernal, and less than one-percent of uses within the Impact Area. The range of commercial uses in Vernal is broad and varied, including small commercial shops in the downtown core, and big box commercial and service uses on the outskirts of town. Commercial uses are described in more detail as part of the following districts.

***Downtown Commercial***

Downtown Vernal is by far the oldest and most diverse commercial district in the City. The area is dominated by Main Street, which is centered on Vernal Avenue. Downtown Vernal includes small eclectic shops, motels, office buildings and similar uses, many of which are locally-owned and operated. In addition to commercial uses, Downtown Vernal is the hub of City and County government operations, a library, museums and cultural uses.

As one proceeds west along Main Street, commercial uses increase in size and become increasingly automobile-oriented, with big box buildings located far from the street behind massive parking lots. North of Main Street along Vernal Avenue the commercial uses become increasingly service-oriented and industrial in nature, eventually fading as one proceeds northward. A similar situation occurs along Main Street as one proceeds east toward Naples.

In recent years the Downtown area has struggled, losing some of its vibrancy and allure. Such changes are generally correlated with the establishment of big box and strip commercial uses on the outskirts of downtown, a steady increase in Main Street traffic, and a steady decline in tourism.

The Vernal City Downtown Master Plan (December 18, 2007) addresses the opportunities of downtown and makes detailed recommendations for future improvements in downtown.



**Historic Bank Building  
in Downtown Vernal**

***Other Commercial Areas***

In addition to big box and strip commercial along the outskirts of Main Street, a limited number of large and small commercial uses are located elsewhere in the community, particularly north along Vernal Avenue. Typical uses include restaurants, auto service facilities and other commercial uses not requiring marquee locations. Within the Impact Area, scattered commercial uses are found in Maeser and along the northern extents of Vernal Avenue/US 191.

**Office**

Office uses account for 46 acres of land in Vernal City, with only seven additional acres located in the Impact Area. Office uses encompass a wide range of businesses, including both shared facilities and buildings occupied by a single user. The form and layout of individual buildings varies by the location, need and era of development. In general, the oldest and most significant office buildings are located along Main Street, on blocks adjacent to Main Street, and in the vicinity of Vernal Avenue.



**Example of a newer office building in Vernal**

**Mixed Use**

This land use category encompasses sites where industrial, commercial and similar uses are located on a single lot. Only 19 acres of this use are located within Vernal City limits. More than 130 Mixed Use acres are located within the Impact Area, primarily on large lots in areas dominated by agricultural land<sup>3</sup>.

**Schools**

Nearly 115 acres of land are currently dedicated for schools and educational uses in Vernal, and an additional 75 acres of school land is located within the Impact Area. In addition to the Uintah Basin Applied Technology Center, this category encompasses various primary and secondary schools administered by the Uintah School District (Map 2-2).

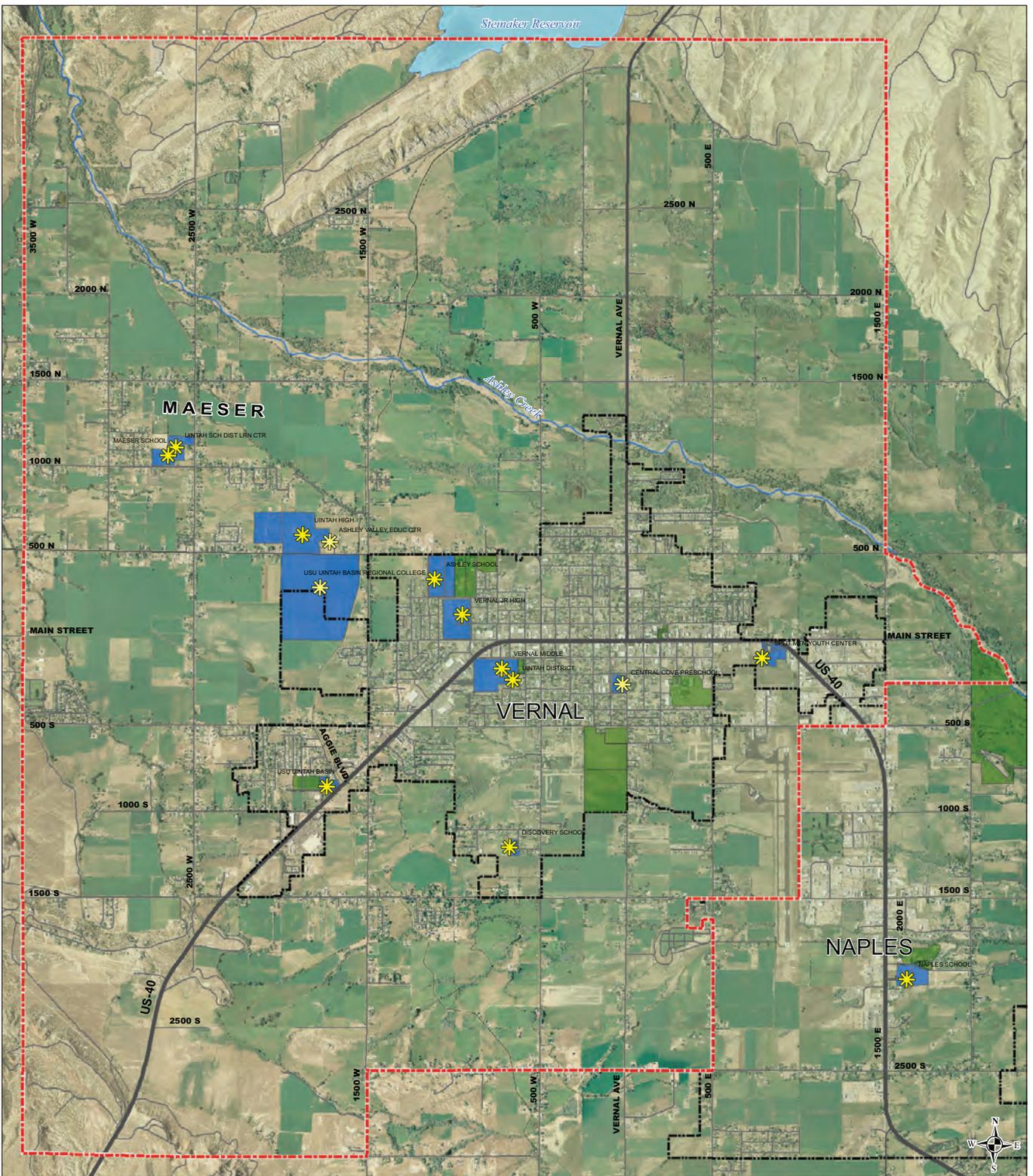


**Discovery Elementary School, located in south-central Vernal**

The following is a summary list of public primary schools located in the study area.

---

<sup>3</sup> It should be noted that this category (Mixed Use) differs from the standard definition, which usually signifies residential and commercial uses clustered together within a single building or property.



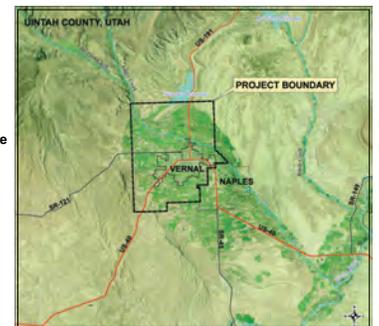
Adopted: May 19, 2010



# Vernal General Plan Update

## Legend

- |                      |                        |                         |                                   |
|----------------------|------------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Impact Area Boundary | Schools                | Naples School           | USU Uintah Basin                  |
| Vernal City Limit    | Ashley School          | Split Mtn Youth Ctr     | USU Uintah Basin Regional College |
| Naples City Limit    | Ashley Valley Educ Ctr | Uintah District         | Vernal Jr High                    |
| US Hwy. 40           | Central Cove Preschool | Uintah High             | Vernal Middle                     |
| US Hwy. 191          | Discovery School       | Uintah Sch Dist Lrn Ctr |                                   |
| State Roads          | Maeser School          |                         |                                   |
| Streets              |                        |                         |                                   |



VICINITY MAP



## Map 2-2: Existing Schools

Elementary Schools

---

**Ashley Elementary**  
350 North 1150 West  
Vernal, UT 84078

**Discovery Elementary**  
650 West 1200 South  
Vernal, UT 84078

**Central Cove Pre-School**  
250 South Vernal Avenue  
Vernal, UT 84078

**Maeser Elementary**  
1640 East 1900 South  
Vernal, UT 84078

**Davis Elementary**  
4101 South 2500 East  
Vernal, UT 84078

**Naples Elementary**  
2670 West 1000 North  
Naples, UT 84078

All secondary schools in the Ashley Valley are located within, or in close proximity to, Vernal City, as listed below:

Secondary Schools

---

**Ashley Valley Alternative High School**  
250 South Vernal Avenue  
Vernal, UT 84078

**Vernal Jr. High**  
161 North 1000 West  
Vernal, UT 84078

**Uintah High School**  
1880 West 500 North  
Vernal, UT 84078

**Vernal Middle School**  
721 West 100 South  
Vernal, UT 84078

The Uintah Basin Applied Technology Center (UBATC) and the regional campus of Utah State University are located on the northwest perimeter of Vernal City in unincorporated Uintah County.

**Public**

Public and institutional uses encompass approximately 17 acres of land in Vernal, with an additional two acres located within the Impact Area. Together, these uses represent one of the smallest land use categories. Typical public uses include governmental and agency operation centers, including city, county, state and federal departments and offices. Most Vernal City departments and operations are administered in and around Vernal City Hall, which is located at 447 East Main Street in downtown Vernal. Depending on specific functions and



**The Uintah County Office Building and Library building is located on Main Street**

needs, some city service providers operate from other sites in the City. Most governmental and agency operations, including Uintah County services, are located downtown.

The following is a brief description of some of the key public and institutional functions located in Vernal City.

***Police***

The Vernal City Police Department is headquartered in the City Hall complex. The department was incorporated in 1906. The Department currently has 23 sworn officers, including the Vernal City Justice Court bailiff.

***Fire Protection***

The Vernal City Fire Department is located near City Hall, at 495 East Main Street. The department operates in conjunction with Uintah County, and consists of a 25-member corps of volunteer fire fighters.



**The provision of adequate fire protection is an essential public safety service provided by Vernal City**

***Library***

The Uintah County Library is located at 155 East Main Street, in a portion of the Uintah County Office Building.

***Historic and Cultural Features***

As may be expected, Vernal City’s historic legacy and cultural core is centered in the downtown area. One of the key historic and cultural landmarks in Vernal is the LDS Temple, which was constructed within the shell of the pioneer-built tabernacle building. A historic landmark of the Ashley Valley, the iconic structure is located just two blocks south of Main Street. The domes of the building and the steeple of the adjacent Glines Stake Center are visible to travelers along Highway 191, providing a landmark as one enters the community from the north. Colorful flowers and beautiful mature trees on the temple grounds enhance the captivating architecture of the building. The Vernal Temple was the first in Utah to be built from an existing building. In addition to the Temple, there are other significant historic and cultural places in Vernal City, two of which are highlighted below.



**Historic Vernal City LDS Temple - a local landmark**

Utah Field House of Natural History – State Park Museum

Located at 496 East Main Street on the eastern edge of the City, the museum replaced the old Field House, which was located on the opposite side of Main street several blocks to the west. The award-winning museum is a 22,000-square foot structure designed to preserve and reveal the wealth of prehistory found within the Uinta Basin. Surrounding the museum building is the Dinosaur Garden, a prehistoric zoo of full-size dinosaur replicas ranging in age from Pennsylvanian through Pleistocene.



**Dinosaur garden at the Utah Field House of Natural History**

Western Heritage Museum

Located at 328 East 200 South, the museum contains artifacts from the Old West. Displays include wildlife exhibits and turn-of-the century recreations of a blacksmith shop, drug store, barber shop, country store and machinery shop. There is also a collection of Native American artifacts. The museum contains an art gallery, arena, and playground.

Other historic buildings are scattered throughout the downtown area and to a lesser degree elsewhere in the community. For the most part these are residential structures.

**Churches and Religious Institutions**

There are numerous churches and places of worship in the community. Encompassing 31 acres of land within Vernal City and twelve acres in the Impact Area, religious facilities range from converted residential buildings and commercial structures to specially-designed chapels and meeting places. The Vernal LDS Temple is an institution of local and regional significance, attracting visitors from near and far.



**St. Paul's Episcopal Church**

**Airport**

The Vernal Regional Airport is located on the southeastern border of the City. It is sited primarily on Uintah County land, with a small portion located in the adjacent community of Naples City. The Uintah County portion is located in the Impact Area, and occupies

slightly more than 165 acres. The airport is owned by Uintah County and Vernal City. It is used primarily for general aviation purposes, but is now served by a single commercial airline – Great Lakes Airline – and is subsidized by the Essential Air Service program. Great Lakes Airline operates flights to Denver International Airport. Previously scheduled service was provided by Salmon Air with flights to Salt Lake City. Before Salmon Air, SkyWest Airlines provided service with flights to Salt Lake City International Airport. According to the FAA's National Plan of Integrated Airport Systems for 2007-2011, the Vernal Regional Airport is classified as a general aviation airport because a Commercial Service classification requires at least 2,500 passenger boardings per year, a condition that is not met.



**Vernal Regional Airport**

### **Light Industrial**

This category encompasses warehouses, light manufacturing and similar uses. At present there are approximately 21 acres of light industrial land uses located in Vernal City, with an additional 87 acres within the Impact Area. The largest light industrial use in the area is a radio broadcasting station and transmission tower field located north of town within the Impact Area. Nearly all light industrial uses are located on sites adjacent to the one-mile grid road system.

### **Industrial**

112 acres of industrial land are located in Vernal City, with an additional 39 acres found in the Impact Area. The bulk of Vernal City industries are located on the eastern edge of the community, adjacent to US-40 where the road curves south toward Naples. Typical uses include manufacturing, mining support and agricultural-based industries. The lack of a railroad in the region has significantly restricted the development of industrial uses.

### **Mining**

A single 4.4 acre mining site is located in the Impact Area. The site provides gravel and other borrow material for construction purposes.

### **Parks**

Approximately 142 acres of park land is located in Vernal City, with an additional 24 acres found within the Impact Area, accounting for 166 total acres in the study area. The largest park site in Vernal City is the undeveloped Kay Memorial Park, which is located on the

southern edge of the City. The largest park parcel in the Impact Area is Dinaland Golf Course (see Chapter 4 – Parks, Recreation and Trails for more detail).

**Cemetery**

The Vernal Cemetery is located at 1700 South Vernal Avenue, south of the City within the Impact Area.

**Open Space**

Although open space is not designated as a specific land use in Vernal City at present, large tracts of open space are located throughout the City and Impact Area. The largest and most significant open spaces are found in the vicinity of Ashley Creek and smaller waterways that crisscross the community. Much of the land that is currently designated as agricultural and vacant is also important open space.



**Distinctive landscape around Red Fleet Reservoir, north of Vernal**

**Agricultural and Vacant**

Almost 240 acres, or just over eight percent of the land located in Vernal City is agricultural. In the Impact Area, agricultural and vacant land occupies slightly more than 7,100 acres, representing 43% percent of the total.



**Formations of the Colorado Plateau loom above agricultural fields in the Ashley Valley**

Agricultural parcels within Vernal City are typified by the large tracts located along the west, south and east edges of the community. These parcels represent the primary opportunity for accommodating future growth and expansion within the existing City boundaries. In comparison, the distribution of agricultural land in the Impact Area becomes increasingly prevalent as one travels outward from the core and away from roads, eventually becoming the dominant land use. In addition to fields and farm buildings, many agricultural

properties in the Impact Area also include a home or multiple homes, which are typically located close to the adjacent roads.

Vacant land in Vernal City occupies nearly one-fifth of the total land area (577 acres), while approximately one-sixth of the land in the Impact Area (2,589 acres) is classified as vacant. There is more than twice the amount of vacant acres in Vernal City than agricultural land. In the Impact Area the situation is reversed, with more than three times the number of agricultural acres compared to vacant acres.

Vacant and agricultural uses in total account for approximately 60 percent of the total land in the Impact Area. These are the prevalent uses in the study area, and are obvious sites for accommodating future growth and development. Vacant and agricultural sites in the City core are generally quite small, increasing to large swaths of land on the edges of the city and beyond. In comparison, agricultural fields in the Impact Area are generally quite large throughout, becoming increasingly large toward the outskirts of the study area. In some cases individual agricultural lots in the Impact Area encompass several miles of contiguous land, occasionally under single ownership.

Vacant and agricultural sites within or near the municipal boundaries have historically transitioned into development sites, with little consideration of the negative impacts to local agricultural production or the visual properties of the region that make the Ashley Valley unique. Although the current Vernal City General Plan and Vernal City policy supports agricultural uses within the City Limits, it can be assumed that agricultural sites will be developed to accommodate future growth. Public input indicates strong support for the preservation of open space and agricultural land, particularly on the outskirts of the developed City and within the Impact Area.

### **Utilities**

Approximately ten acres of land are occupied by various utilities in the existing City limits, and only four acres are occupied by similar uses in the Impact Area. Examples of these uses include power substations, utility distribution facilities and field operation sites. Existing sites range from small lots to sites of several acres.

### **Miscellaneous Land Uses**

Nearly 1,300 acres or 6.6 percent of the total study area is occupied by miscellaneous uses, which include the various roads, streets, rivers and stream corridors not mapped as specific land uses. The following is a list of some of the most significant miscellaneous uses:

- US40/Main Street
- US191/Vernal Avenue
- Miscellaneous roads and tracks
- Ashley Creek and associated sensitive lands
- Other stream corridors, storm water facilities, ponds and water bodies
- Power and utility corridors
- Canal corridors

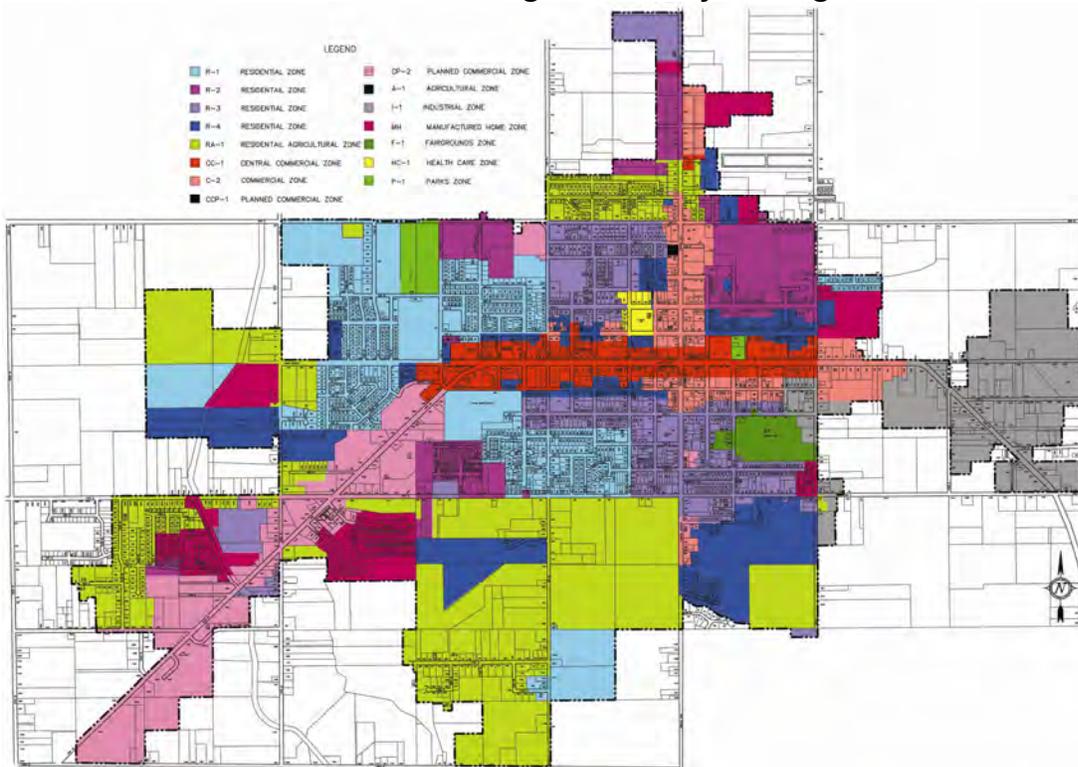
## Existing Zoning

### Zoning and the General Plan

The General Plan is an official document that identifies policies to guide future growth and development in the City and its surroundings. The Zoning Ordinance is also an official document, and is the primary tool for interpreting the General Plan. Together, both documents work together to ensure the planning vision and policy suggestions contained in the General Plan are achieved. The Vernal City Planning and Zoning Ordinance consists of written text and an official map, which together identify the location of specific land use zones, and define the permitted uses, development standards and requirements of each.

As illustrated in Figure 2-2, the existing Vernal City Planning and Zoning Map includes several residential zones, ranging from low-density single-family agricultural uses (R-1A Residential) to high density zones appropriate for multiple family units (R-4 Residential).

**Figure 2-2**  
**Existing Vernal City Zoning**



Commercial zones are broken into specialty areas that address the needs of downtown (CC1 Central Commercial), larger-scale uses along the west edge of the City (C2 Commercial), and other commercial areas in the City (CCP-1 Planned Commercial and CP-2 Planned Commercial). Other zones address uses allowed in agricultural and

industrial areas (I-1 Industrial), manufactured home areas (MH Manufactured Homes), the fairgrounds (F-1 Fairgrounds), parks (P-1 Parks) and health care uses (HC-1 Health Care).

The following is a summary list of current zoning categories in Vernal City:

<b>R-1</b>	Residential	<b>CCP-1</b>	Planned Commercial
<b>R-2</b>	Residential	<b>CP-2</b>	Planned Commercial
<b>R-3</b>	Residential	<b>A-1</b>	Agricultural
<b>R-4</b>	Residential	<b>I-1</b>	Industrial
<b>RA-1</b>	Residential Agriculture	<b>MH</b>	Manufactured Home
<b>CC1</b>	Central Commercial	<b>F-1</b>	Fairgrounds
<b>C-2</b>	Commercial	<b>HC-1</b>	Health Care
		<b>P-1</b>	Parks

## **Planning Analysis**

Performing adequate analysis is one of the most critical parts of the planning process. In addition to helping synthesize the wide range of data assembled, a thorough analysis process helps establish future planning directions, and helps to indicate changes that are necessary to meet future needs.

The following is a summary of the key analyses that were undertaken as part of the update process:

- Existing Conditions Analysis
- Public Scoping Analysis
- Public Planning Workshop Analysis
- Visual Preference Survey Analysis

A detailed description and summary of the key results of each analysis process follows.

### **Existing Conditions Analysis**

Analysis of existing land use and demographic conditions was undertaken as part of the planning process. The following is a summary of the key findings.

### ***Selecting a Reasonable Growth Scenario***

Although growth pressure has been high in the past few years, the slumping economy and corresponding slowdown which took place during the planning process clearly illustrates the volatile swings that have traditionally marked Vernal City's development history. In order to accommodate future growth, the Baseline Growth Projection was selected. Based on historical growth trends, the Baseline Projection estimates that 3,338 new residents will live in Vernal by 2028.

### ***Accommodating Future Growth***

Accommodating future growth in Vernal is an essential consideration of this planning effort. While a limited amount of growth may be accommodated through densification and urban infill development, the bulk of new development will continue to take place through the transformation of vacant and agricultural land into other uses.

As illustrated in Figure 2-3, slightly more than one-quarter of the land in Vernal is agricultural or vacant (818 acres). Assuming that the bulk of this land is available for development, the growth envisioned in the Baseline Population Scenario can be reasonably accommodated<sup>4</sup>. In comparison, the amount of agricultural and vacant land in the Impact Area is extensive, encompassing nearly 60 percent of the total area, or 9,730 acres. This far exceeds the amount of land necessary to accommodate the Baseline Growth Scenario. In other words, the amount of land in Vernal City that is available to accommodate future growth is limited. Unless adjacent land within the Impact Area is annexed, Vernal will likely reach built-out. Under to this scenario, the responsibility for accommodating longer-term growth would fall on Uintah County, Naples and other nearby places.

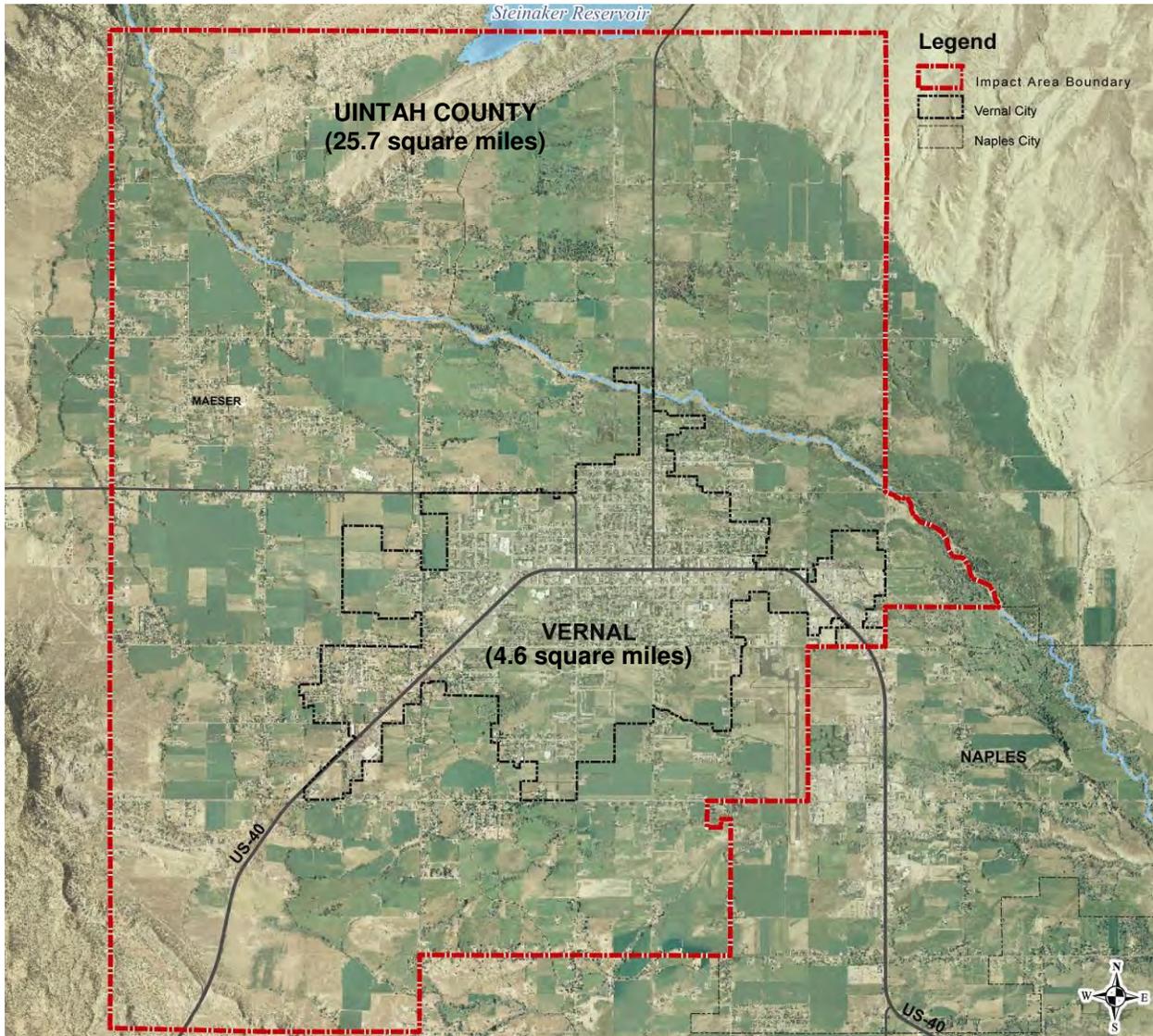
The lack of long-term growth options is a key concern for Vernal City, and illustrates the need to develop a common planning vision for the Ashley Valley. Both Uintah County and Naples have been updating their respective General Plans concurrently with this Plan. Unfortunately, there has been little or no coordination between the various efforts. For example, the proposed Uintah County Ashley Valley Land Use Plan (2008) indicates a significant switch from low density residential and agricultural uses to higher-density growth (see Figure 2-4). According to this scenario, Uintah County is assuming a primary community-building and development role for the region, which is a departure from present practices and policies.

More specifically, the proposed County Ashley Valley Land Use Plan (2008) envisions that large areas of Uintah County land that is currently slated for low-density residential and agricultural uses will be developed as higher density residential districts capable of accommodating tens of thousands of new residents. The plan also envisions unprecedented economic growth in nearby unincorporated areas, and the conversion of

---

<sup>4</sup> It should be noted that this assumes that efficient development patterns will prevail. It should also be clear that little surplus land remain for unanticipated needs or to accommodate growth beyond the 20-year horizon.

**Figure 2-3**  
**Size Comparison of Vernal City and Surrounding Impact Area**

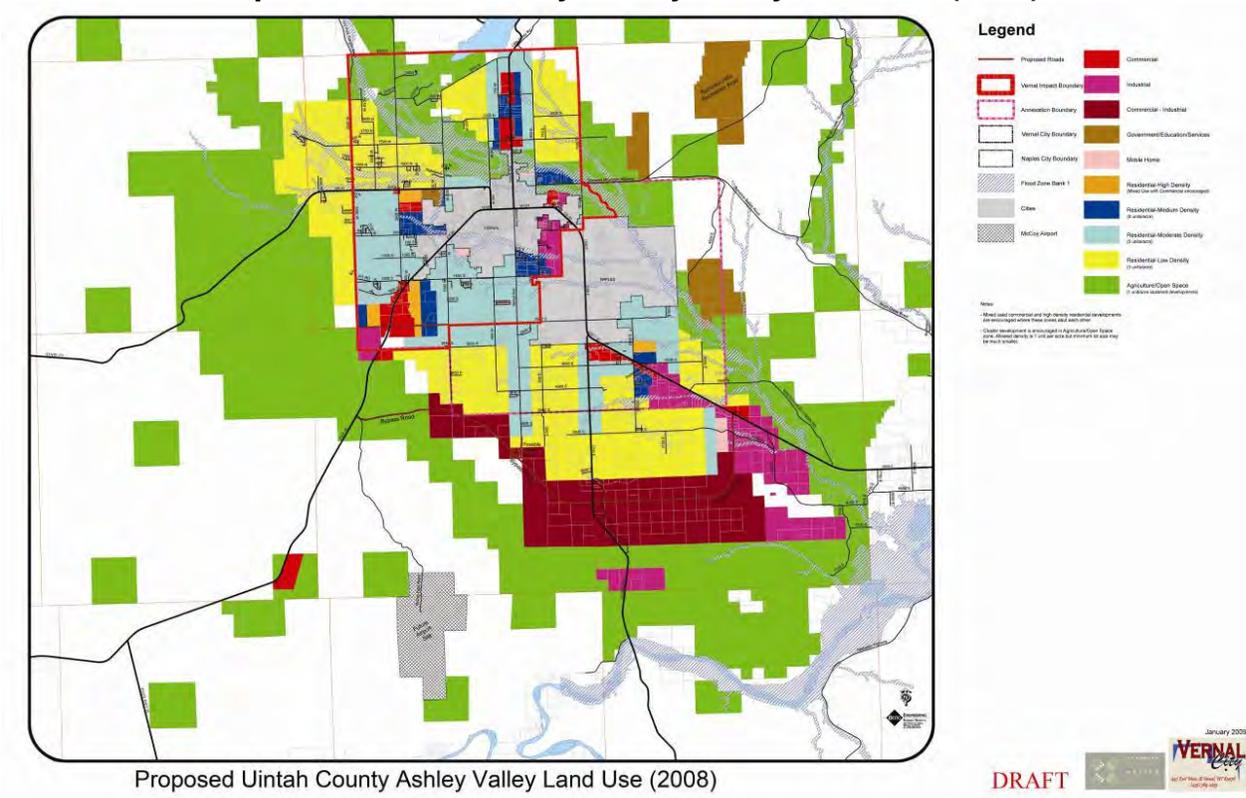


**Area within the Vernal City municipal boundary = 2,964 acres or 4.7 square miles**

**County land between current city boundary and impact area boundary = 16,424 acres or 25.6 square miles**

**Combined area = 19,389 acres or 30.3 square miles**

**Figure 2-4  
Proposed Uintah County Ashley Valley Land Use (2008)**



dozens of square miles of agricultural land into commercial and industrial uses. In essence, the proposed Uintah County General Plan reflects a complete makeover of the Vernal region, a new role for the county, and an extremely optimistic outlook for growth and development. The envisioned changes are also a direct threat to Vernal maintaining its role as the key population and service center for the region.

Not all of the ideas contained in the Uintah County Ashley Valley Land Use Plan (2008) bode poorly for Vernal. There are several ideas which are major improvements from current practice, including the proposed preservation of Ashley Creek and the sensitive lands that surround it. Ashley Creek is an important natural feature that provides water to the valley and areas beyond, and has significant influence on Vernal and its surroundings. Preserving this important natural resource is an important step toward maintaining the ecological integrity of the region.

The residents of Vernal City have high expectations for the future of their City and the quality of life it offers. Recent rapid growth, the lack of land to accommodate long-term growth without expansion of existing boundaries, and a sprawling residential development pattern are the primary threats to sustainable growth and development in the City. In order to proceed in a sustainable manner, these conditions must be addressed.

**Future Uses and Patterns of Growth**

In addition to addressing the general location and directions of growth, a wider range of land uses should be encouraged to accommodate projected growth. **Downtown Vernal** in particular should reflect a more urban, mixed use model of development that supports infill development and the conversion of underutilized existing buildings and sites into more appropriate uses.



Vernal Main Street, circa 1950

Vernal's **Main Street** is the traditional heart of the community and region. In order to re-establish the area as a thriving neighborhood and regional destination, actions should be implemented that support existing uses which contribute to the area while facilitating positive change. The intent of these actions is to make downtown Vernal a great place that is both commercially viable and economically competitive.

In addition to being the commercial hub of the region, Main Street also serves as the primary gateway into the community. While traffic will remain heavy in the future, efforts should continue that will make Main Street a more **pedestrian friendly** environment, and help ensure that retail, restaurant and shopping experiences match the potential. In order to create a more balanced and sustainable commercial profile, "strip development" should be curtailed along Main Street.



New Uintah Basin Applied Technology Center campus on the northwest edge of Vernal

**Governmental offices** and functions are an important part of a more vibrant Downtown. City Hall is crowded and dated, and a new facility is under construction on the opposite side of Main Street from the existing building. Additional civic and cultural uses should be encouraged downtown, helping to create a critical mass of amenities and activities and further supporting downtown Vernal City as a primary regional destination.

**Historic downtown buildings** should be respected and preserved to the greatest degree possible. Improvement ideas suggested in past studies and designs for

the Downtown/Main Street area should be reviewed, confirmed and implemented to help ensure downtown and its surroundings thrive.

New **neighborhood commercial centers** should be encouraged to locate in key areas of Vernal and the Impact Area in a manner that does not conflict with Downtown Vernal. In addition to providing a variety of neighborhood commercial goods and services, new Neighborhood Commercial Centers should be designed to accommodate a mix of other uses that strengthen and support the surrounding neighborhoods. Examples of such uses include housing, offices, park and recreation amenities, and civic/cultural facilities.

The Uintah Basin Regional Campus of Utah State University and the Uintah Basin Applied Technology Center are valuable community partners, providing a range of community services and support that would otherwise not be available in the region. Both facilities should continue to have a strong and visible role in the community. In addition to implementing the vision that the two institutions will become a discernable **Educational District** on the northern extents of the city, certain uses and functions should be encouraged to develop in Downtown Vernal. Conversely, a limited number of neighborhood commercial uses and cultural facilities should be located in close proximity to the schools. Together, these actions will help strengthen the role of both facilities in Vernal, and help create a more dynamic “gown - town” relationship.

**New schools and religious institutions** will be needed in the upcoming years. The location of schools should be coordinated with the Uintah School District to ensure the needs of Vernal City and the district are met. The development of new churches and religious facilities should generally be located in residential neighborhoods.

**New roads and transportation** infrastructure should be provided to meet the needs of the growing community and region. The need for better roads to accommodate vehicular traffic should be balanced with the needs of accommodating the needs of pedestrians and cyclists. Safe crossings along Main Street and other busy roads are particularly important.

Although the **Vernal Regional Airport** is not located within the municipal boundaries, it is an important transportation facility for the City and region as a whole. The existing facility is located close to Vernal City and other population areas. Consequently, it impacts and is impacted by growth. In order to continue to have a safe and accessible airport to serve region, a new facility may be needed in the future. Vernal City, Uintah County and Naples should continue to coordinate with the Federal Aviation Administration to ensure that the needs of the airport are met. If it is determined that a new facility is required, Vernal City should play a strong role in determining the location of the new facility, and help establish a plan for the alternative use for the existing facility.

Development of **vacant and non-critical agricultural land** within the current municipal boundaries should be encouraged before looking outward. This is a paramount principle for making Vernal City a more sustainable community.

Adequate **parks, trails and recreation facilities** will be required as the community grows. Trails and open space corridors are particularly important for connecting Vernal City’s neighborhoods and destinations. Natural open spaces, utility corridors, canals and similar facilities should be further analyzed to determine their value as park and trail sites.

### Public Scoping Analysis

The following is a summary of land use issues that were identified during scoping meetings held with the public and the Vernal City General Plan Update Management Committee.

- There is a need to link Vernal City planning efforts with the Bioregional Plan being prepared by USU.
- Vernal City is not currently bicycle or pedestrian friendly.
- Trails and pathways are important amenities that are currently lacking.
- The City needs a new Cultural Center and City Hall.
- The City needs housing that is affordable.
- Development patterns should reinforce the sense of neighborhood.
- Desired community amenities include a new golf course, a university and trails.
- Historic communities that are located in close proximity to Vernal City, such as Maeser, are important to the city, and should be preserved and enhanced.
- Vernal's neighborhoods are generally not named but exist nonetheless.
- Housing choices and options in Vernal are limited.
- Mixed use housing located above downtown retail stores is desired.
- There are few retirement options for healthy seniors; a wider range of housing types should be provided to meet these needs.
- Retirees desire "country club" neighborhoods with golf courses and amenities, not high density apartments and condominiums.
- Incentives are necessary to help owners of historic structures restore and preserve their homes. This will have significant positive impact on the greater downtown area and the community as a whole.
- There is concern that the unprecedented rapid growth of recent years will return in the future, destabilizing efforts for better planning, sustainable development and increased affordability.
- There is concern that water resources will be insufficient in the future.
- The decline of Main Street and the Downtown Core is a concern.
- Downtown parking is lacking; this is one of the main problems for the area.
- There is a desire to preserve agricultural land and maintain the sense of openness which defines the area.
- The recreational and tourism draw should be expanded, encompassing active sports such as mountain biking and regional trail resources, and stabilizing the dinosaur connection.
- Ashley Creek and smaller streams, canals, waterways and utility corridors should be explored as multi-purpose facilities to meet needs as functional and recreational resources.

### Public Planning Workshop Analysis

The following is the summary analysis of public input received during Planning Workshops held throughout Vernal in February 2009. The workshops were held to explore

planning ideas and alternatives. The workshops were conducted as hands-on community exercises, providing residents and stakeholders an opportunity to clarify the future land use vision of the City.

As detailed in Appendix B, more than 200 members of the public participated in the workshops. Separate workshop sessions were conducted with the General Plan Update Management Committee, Uintah High School civics class students, elderly citizens and the public at large. Workshop groups ranged from five to twelve participants, resulting in the creation of nine Planning Alternative Maps. Once the workshops were completed, the maps were reviewed by members of the planning team and key planning issues and ideas were synthesized. The following are highlights of the composite Workshop Analysis Map that resulted:

- Downtown Vernal is transformed into a thriving mixed-use place.
- A wide range of residential uses, forms and densities are envisioned throughout Vernal and the surrounding Impact Area.
- Four community nodes are envisioned:
  - Downtown Vernal is transformed into a mixed use place with a mix of residential, housing, office, hospitality and similar uses;
  - A new Neighborhood Commercial Center is established in the area north of downtown along Vernal Avenue (in the Impact Area);
  - A new Neighborhood Commercial Center is envisioned in the vicinity of Maeser and the Educational District on the northwest edge of Vernal (in the Impact Area); and
  - A new Neighborhood Commercial Center is developed near the southwest edge of Vernal along US-40.
- Ashley Creek, other critical open spaces and other sensitive lands are preserved.
- A comprehensive trail system is established, providing links between Ashley Creek, local neighborhoods and regional amenities and destinations.
- New roads are developed to enhance traffic flow, increase connections and improve circulation. The needs of vehicles, cyclists and pedestrians are addressed as part of a holistic transportation system.

### **Visual Preference Survey Analysis**

A Visual Preference Survey was conducted as part of the Public Planning Workshops. The Visual Preference Survey was used to help identify the visual qualities that participants like about Vernal City and the surrounding area, and to clarify the visual characteristics they would like Vernal City to embody in the future.

Twenty-two members of the General Plan Update Management Committee and 43 members of the public participated in the survey. As detailed in Appendix C, the Visual Preference Survey ranked a variety of images of existing and possible land uses and visual elements in Vernal City. To summarize the results, images representing non-urban environments and activities were most preferred. The least liked images included traffic

congestion, wide streets and intersections; higher-density dwelling units; and strip malls, both older and more contemporary styles ).

### Future Land Use Concept

As detailed in Appendix D, three alternative plan concepts were developed to explore future land use options and test future planning ideas. The concepts were presented to the Vernal General Plan Update Steering Committee in March 2009, and were later reviewed in detail by City Staff, members of the planning commission and city council, and other interested parties. The concepts were also presented to Uintah County and Naples City representatives in an effort to help coordinate regional planning efforts.

After careful consideration, a preferred Future Land Use Concept was identified, which is a variation of Alternative 1: Maintain Current Direction. The concept supports future growth that corresponds with existing planning and growth directions (see Appendix D for details). The concept also calls for sustainable development; integration of growth with existing patterns; encouragement of a wider range of housing options; and focusing new development within the established Vernal City Limits during the 20 year planning horizon.

Rather than planning for unprecedented growth, the historic growth trends reflected in the Baseline Population Scenario have been used to project land use needs. Sustainable growth can be achieved in large part by limiting future growth within the existing Municipal Boundaries through 2028, avoiding the lure of uncontrolled expansion. The concept also embraces the results of the Visual Preference Survey, which indicates strong public support for preserved open spaces and sensitive lands, new parks and trails, and maintaining the open feel of the community and its surroundings.

The Future Land Use Concept also envisions more compact forms of residential development, including urban infill in the downtown and the developed core; and Open Space Subdivision/Clustered development on larger tracts of land near the outskirts of the community (see Figures 2-5 to 2-8 for examples). In addition, a wider range of housing and mixed use development strategies are supported, including the establishment of Neighborhood Commercial Centers within the community structure (Figures 2-9 to 2-11).

Land uses beyond the municipal boundaries are beyond the jurisdiction of this plan, but are nonetheless important to Vernal City and the region as a whole. The Future Land Use Concept supports the development of mixed use Neighborhood Centers in key areas near Vernal City, including Maeser, the area north of downtown along Vernal Avenue, and the southwest city edge along US-40. These should be designed to serve the day-to-day shopping and service needs of the surrounding neighborhoods. The size and mix of uses at these centers should be carefully considered to match future needs with existing uses.

The Future Land Use Concept also supports the rehabilitation and/or redevelopment of Downtown Vernal into a mixed use place. A wide range of urban housing is envisioned, including lofts, apartments, condominiums and similar uses. The goal is to transform Main

Street into a dynamic, exciting and vital mixed use core. As part of these actions, existing streetscape enhancements should be continued along Main Street and extended onto connecting roadways such as Vernal Avenue.

The Future Land Use Concept envisions the continued concentration of industrial uses east of town toward Naples, in areas zoned for such uses. If additional oil and gas industry sites are needed in the area, they should be located in areas that do not require large trucks to travel through the center of Vernal City as part of their operations.

It is assumed that airport services will be enhanced in the future, and the airport will eventually be relocated to an area further from the center of the City. Such a change is not likely during the 20-year planning horizon.

Existing natural features such as Ashley Creek and smaller drainages and canals should be preserved to the greatest degree possible. These features should be integrated into the community open space system, with trail connections provided to nearby neighborhoods, parks and community destinations. The preservation of key open spaces should be a mandatory requirement of all major projects, utilizing “Clustered Development” and similar site planning models.

Finally, the Future Land Use Concept envisions new streets and roadways to be designed to serve the needs of both motorists and pedestrians. Crosswalks, sidewalks, curb and gutter systems, landscaping and street trees should be provided throughout the community as part of a “Complete Street” program, including a fully-interconnected system of off-road trails and roadside trails.

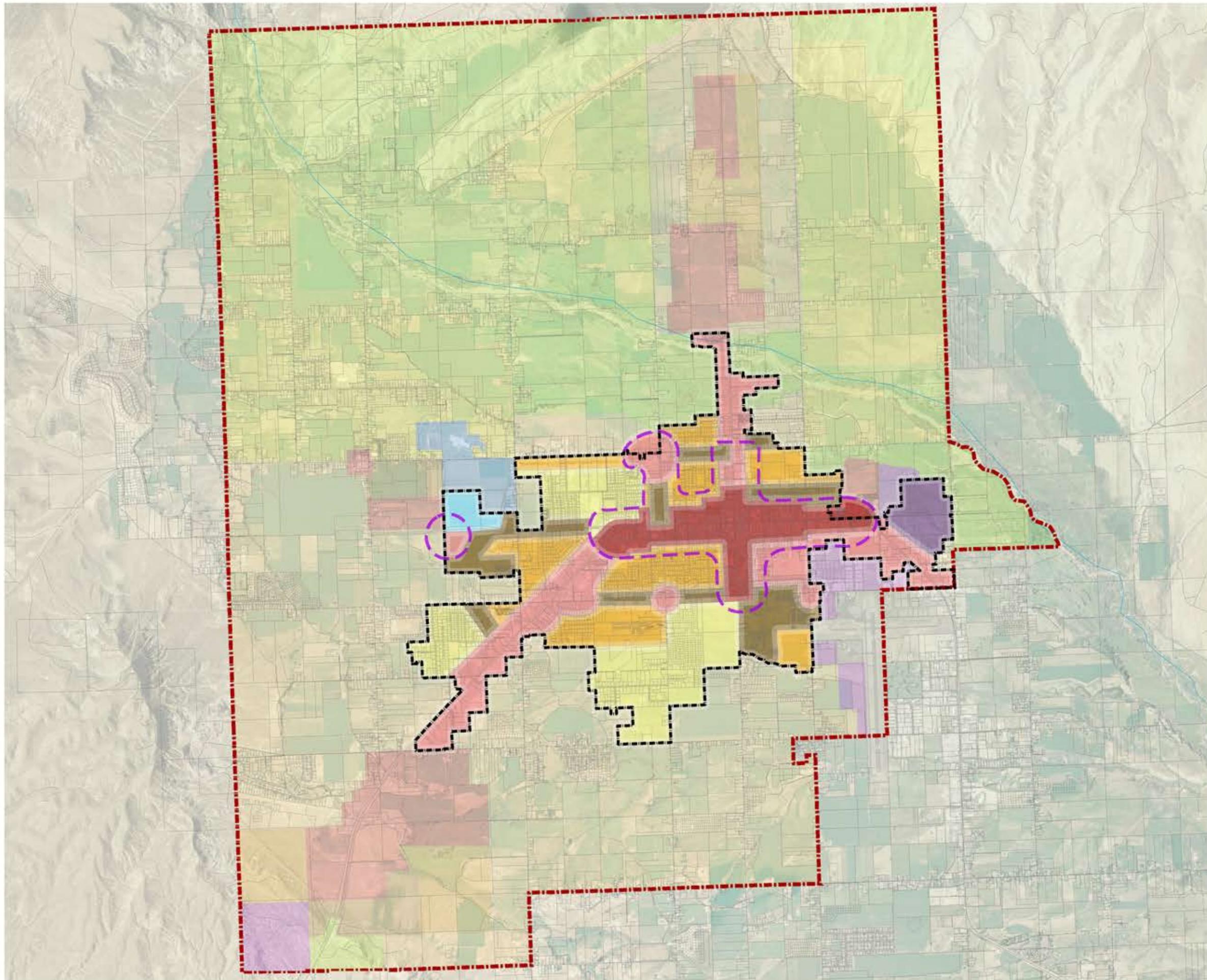
## **Future Land Use**

The Future Land Use profile reflects the Future Planning Concept described above. Map 2-3 presents a general “snapshot” of future land use in Vernal in 2028. Table 2-2 summarizes the amount of future land uses, both within the existing Vernal City municipal boundaries and the surrounding Impact Area. A description of future land use categories follows.

### **Residential**

#### ***Low Density Residential***

Low Density Residential areas are intended to provide transitions from agricultural land located on the outskirts of the community to urban areas in the city core. Large-lot rural residential uses should be discouraged, and Open Space Subdivisions/ Clustered Residential development patterns should be encouraged where appropriate (see Figures 2-5 to 2-8 for examples and illustrations).



**PROPOSED LAND USE:  
Including Annexation Area**

-  Vernal City Limit
-  Mixed Use Areas
-  Annex
-  Low Density Residential
-  Medium Density Residential
-  High Density Residential
-  Institutional
-  Commercial
-  Central Commercial
-  Industrial
-  Land Use Transition Areas  
(Faded Colors)

\* Transition areas may be considered for land uses indicated in the directly adjacent areas

**Adjacent Proposed Land Use  
Within Annexation Area**

-  Low Density Residential
-  Medium Density Residential
-  Moderate Density Residential
-  High Density Residential
-  Open Space/ Agricultural/ Rural Residential
-  Institutional
-  Commercial
-  Industrial
-  Parks
-  Airport

Vernal General Plan Update  
Map 2-3: Future Land Use



April 2015



**Table 2-2  
Future Land Use**

PROPOSED LAND USE	1		2		3	
	Located within Existing Vernal City Boundary		Located Between Existing Vernal City Boundary and Impact Area Boundary		Located within Existing Vernal City Boundary and Impact Area Boundary	
<b>Residential</b>	<b>1859.0</b>	<b>0.6</b>	<b>14717.0</b>	<b>0.9</b>	<b>16576.0</b>	<b>0.9</b>
<i>Low Density</i>	959.0	32.2%	3703.0	22.6%	4662.0	24.1%
<i>Medium Density</i>	609.0	20.5%	5251.0	32.1%	5860.0	30.3%
<i>Moderate Density</i>	0.0	0.0%	1131.0	6.9%	1131.0	5.8%
<i>High Density</i>	290.0	9.7%	356.0	2.2%	646.0	3.3%
<i>Open Space/Agricultural/Rural Residential</i>	1.0	0.0%	4276.0	26.1%	4277.0	22.1%
<b>Institutional</b>	<b>168.0</b>	<b>5.6%</b>	<b>176.0</b>	<b>1.1%</b>	<b>344.0</b>	<b>1.8%</b>
<b>Commercial</b>	<b>547.0</b>	<b>18.4%</b>	<b>930.0</b>	<b>5.7%</b>	<b>1477.0</b>	<b>7.6%</b>
<b>Industrial</b>	<b>248.0</b>	<b>8.3%</b>	<b>364.0</b>	<b>2.2%</b>	<b>612.0</b>	<b>3.2%</b>
<b>Parks</b>	<b>155.0</b>	<b>5.2%</b>	<b>21.0</b>	<b>0.1%</b>	<b>176.0</b>	<b>0.9%</b>
<b>Airport</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0%</b>	<b>165.0</b>	<b>1.0%</b>	<b>165.0</b>	<b>0.9%</b>
<b>TOTAL ACRES</b>	<b>2977.0</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>16373.0</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>19350.0</b>	<b>100.0%</b>
<b>TOTAL SQUARE MILES</b>	<b>4.7</b>		<b>25.6</b>		<b>30.3</b>	

**Medium Density Residential**

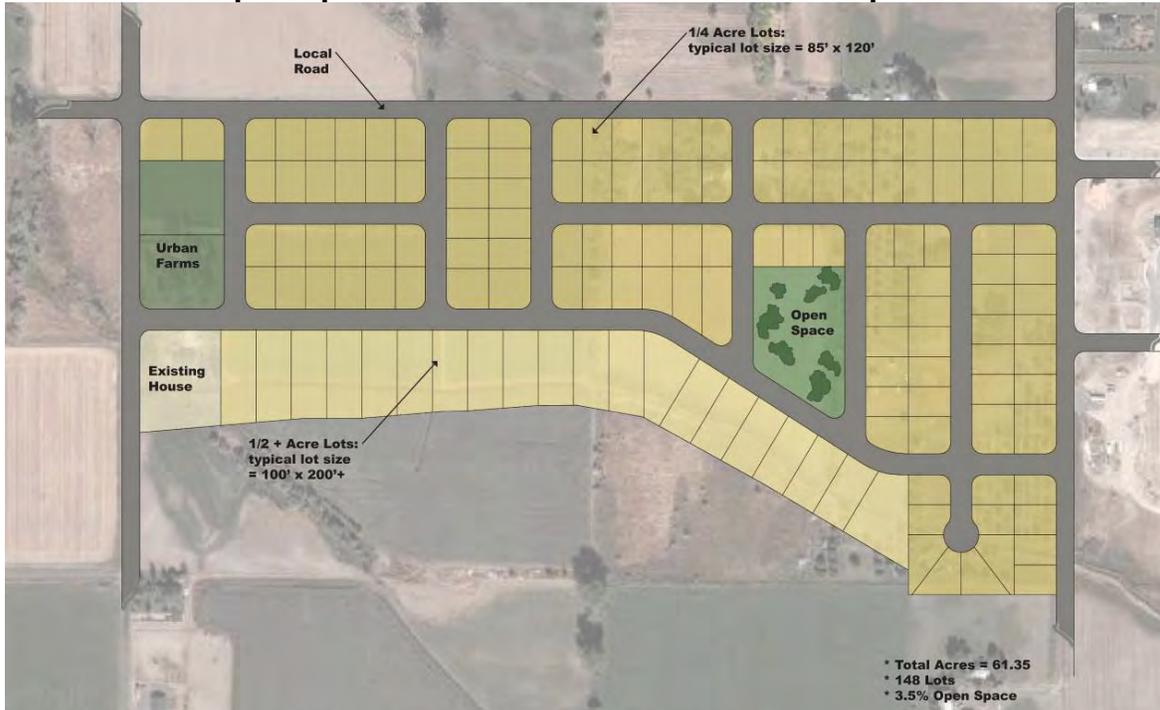
Medium Density Residential development is encouraged along the outer edges of the City and in new neighborhoods in the Impact Area. Typical densities should range from two to four units per acre. Typical uses include single-family homes on smaller lots and duplexes.

**Moderate Density Residential**

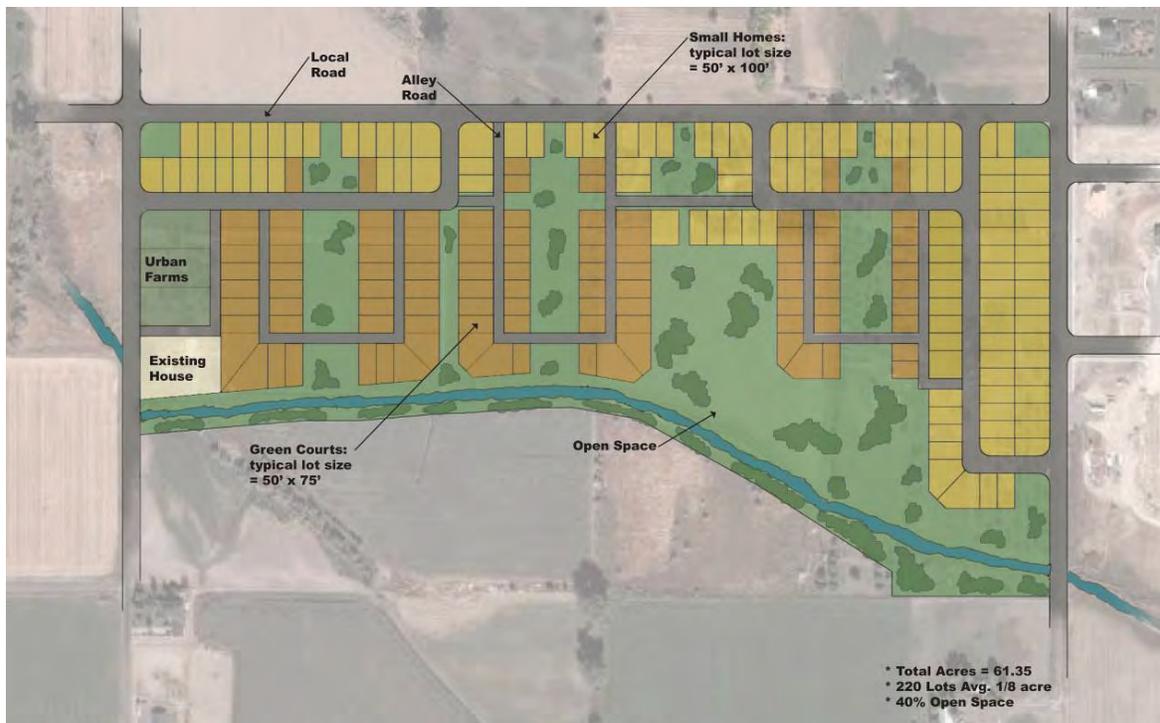
Areas designated as Moderate Density Residential currently contain much of the existing residential uses in the City, in addition to large tracts of land suitable for future residential development or already approved for residential development. Densities should range from four to eight units per acre, with typical uses including single family homes sited on small lots, townhomes, small-to-medium apartment buildings, Planned Unit Developments (PUDs) and Open Space Subdivisions/Clustered Residential development projects.

Open Space Subdivisions/Clustered Residential Development should be encouraged in new projects with ample land. This type of development provides a range of benefits to the community and developer alike, including (1) increasing residential amenities, recreational opportunities, municipal economy and environmental protection through the conservation of open space, scenic areas, views, streams and other community assets; (2) promoting efficiency and economy of street and utility layout; (3) reducing storm runoff, erosion and sedimentation normally associated with more conventional patterns of residential development; (4) retaining natural drainage courses and wetlands; and (5) promoting the health, safety, convenience and welfare of the community. Moderate Density Residential developments are envisioned to include a wider variety of housing styles and types, which will result in more interesting neighborhoods and districts.

**Figure 2-5**  
**Example: Standard Residential Subdivision versus**  
**Open Space Subdivision / Clustered Development**



**Standard Subdivision**



**The same site utilizing an Open Space Subdivision /Clustered Residential Development concept. The layout results in more units, a greater diversity of housing types and styles, an extensive shared open space, and high-level neighborhood amenities such as trails and parks**

**Figure 2-6**  
**Photo Examples: Open Space Subdivisions/ Clustered Development**



*A wide variety of housing types are easily accessed by alleys and small roads*



*Individual homes have smaller private yards adjacent to shared open space*



*Open Space Residential neighborhoods incorporate a variety of homes and amenities, such as parks, sports fields and playgrounds. Small homes are generously proportioned on smaller yards in exchange for greater open space and other amenities*

**Figure 2-7**  
**Photo Examples: Open Space Residential/ Clustered Development**



*Clustered Development can help integrate residences with the natural attributes of the site and the surrounding landscape. The provision of neighborhood gardens, parks, corrals, trails and other amenities are all possible, depending on the concept developed for each new neighborhood*

**Figure 2-8**  
**Photo Examples: Open Space Subdivision/ Clustered Development**



*Clustered Development provides access to large tracts of open space and recreation amenities not otherwise available in a standard subdivision development*

***High Density Residential***

Approximately 650 acres of High Density development is envisioned within the existing municipal limits and as part of new Mixed Use neighborhoods. Typical densities range from eight to sixteen units per acre, with even higher densities allowed under special circumstances. Typical projects may include P.U.D. developments, Open Space Subdivision/ Clustered Development projects, apartment buildings and condominiums.

High density residential uses may be particularly appropriate as part of Neighborhood Commercial Centers, Downtown Infill projects and similar mixed-use projects. Both vertical mixed use (high density housing above ground-level commercial, for example) and horizontal mixed use (high density residential units co-located with commercial, office and similar uses on a single site) are supported, depending on the specific site requirements.

***Institutional***

Existing public uses should be maintained and enhanced to meet the future needs of the community. A new City Hall is currently being built on Main Street, opposite from the existing facility. The new building will not only present a more positive impression of the City, but will also help indicate that Vernal City supports downtown as the “heart” of the community where important business is undertaken.

Additional sites for fire stations, police stations, public offices, maintenance facilities and similar uses should be located and reserved in appropriate areas to meet the institutional needs and requirements of the future community.

**Schools**

Future school sites should be reserved in appropriate areas to meet the future needs and requirements of the community. The location of specific school sites should be determined in cooperation with the Uintah School District. In general, new schools should be located within residential neighborhoods, well away from primary roads.

**Uintah Basin Applied Technology Center (UBATC)/ Utah State University Campus Area**

The UBATC and USU facilities are located in close proximity to each other, forming a "defacto “Educational District” on the northwest edge of the City. These facilities should have a unified appearance and feel, supporting the sense of a coordinated campus district. Both facilities should be encouraged to locate key campus uses and functions in Downtown Vernal, including student housing. This will help create a strong bond between the institutions and the community.

**Religious and Church Facilities**

New religious institutions and places of worship should generally be located in residential neighborhoods, as outlined in existing zoning policy.

***Commercial***

Downtown/Main Street

A wide range of commercial uses should be encouraged in downtown Vernal. Existing commercial operations that contribute to the formation of holistic town center should be preserved and enhanced. In contrast, uses that detract or fail to contribute to downtown should be phased out, relocated, and redeveloped with new retail, office, residential and similar uses that will make downtown a more lively and vibrant place.

The distinction between commercial and residential uses should be muted in the downtown area. The core downtown area should encourage a mixed-use feeling and a more dynamic, user-friendly place.

The greater downtown area should encourage new development that acknowledges existing uses and patterns. The range of envisioned uses is broad, including high density residential, commercial, hotels and hospitality uses, professional and office uses and mixed-use developments. Industrial uses should be prohibited in downtown Vernal, and existing industrial uses should be phased out and relocated to more appropriate locations.

Maintaining the special charm and pleasant scale of Main Street is particularly critical in downtown. Past studies suggest a range of good ideas for improving downtown Vernal, addressing the physical form as well as the commercial viability of the area. These studies should be reviewed, confirmed and incorporated into future development efforts as part of establishing a more vibrant downtown district.

Neighborhood Commercial Centers

Three new Neighborhood Commercial Centers are proposed near Vernal within the Impact Area. Each center is intended to provide smaller-scale shopping and services for the surrounding neighborhoods, providing a better fit than the typical “Big Box” commercial model which prevails. Figures 2-9 through 2-11 illustrate examples of Neighborhood Centers, each incorporating a mixed land use profile.

Neighborhood Commercial Centers should be developed as distinct places and destinations. They should be designed to become community nodes where people are encouraged to meet while carrying out their daily routines.

Neighborhood Commercial Centers should be particularly oriented to meet the needs of pedestrians, incorporating linkages with local trail and pathway systems; high-quality plazas and small parks; outdoor dining and sidewalk cafes; and similar pedestrian amenities.

***Office/Professional***

Office and Professional uses should be distributed throughout the commercial spectrum, supporting a range of services. Office and professional uses should be carefully sited in order to maximize their potential to serve as buffers between residential and commercial/retail areas.

**Figure 2-9  
Big Box Stores versus Neighborhood Commercial Center**



**Figure 2-10  
Neighborhood Commercial Center Concept**



*Neighborhood Commercial Centers are designed in a holistic manner with a mixed land use profile (residential, commercial and office uses integrated into a common design, for example).*

*The result is a unique destination with a discernable “sense of place”. Neighborhood Commercial Centers Typically include high level landscaping and street furnishings, pedestrian-oriented streets and parking areas, trail connections, small parks and a range of public, semi-public and private open spaces.*

**Figure 2-11**  
**Photo Examples: Neighborhood Commercial Centers**



*A mix of diverse commercial and residential uses can help create a more diverse and exciting Neighborhood Commercial Center. Streetscape treatments should provide clear clues that help create a unique character for the area and provide connections with the surrounding neighborhood .*



*Neighborhood Commercial Centers should blend residential uses together with a variety of commercial and civic uses. The result can be a highly satisfying place that fits with the surrounding neighborhood. Pedestrian amenities, programmed events and activities, and a range of parks and urban spaces are key components of successful Neighborhood Centers.*

***Industrial***

A limited number of new industrial uses are feasible within the existing municipal boundaries, particularly on the eastern fringes of the community near the airport. However, it should be clearly understood that such development will further exacerbate the lack of land that is available to accommodate residential growth within the city.

New industrial uses should be limited to light industries such as warehousing, storage/ office developments, small business parks and similar uses. Oil and gas operations and related facilities such as depots and trucking centers should not be allowed within the city limits. Such uses should be located well away from Vernal City in order to minimize the negative impacts of heavy truck traffic on Main Street and the community as a whole.

***Parks***

As detailed in Chapter 4 - Parks, Recreation and Trails, existing parks should be preserved, maintained and fully developed to meet existing and future needs. Open spaces should be preserved wherever possible in order to provide recreation opportunities, visual relief and habitat areas.

Public and private parks, trails and golf courses should be maintained and improved as required. New public parks should be provided to meet the various needs of the community. A system of trails should be developed to connect open space throughout the City.

Prime agricultural land should be maintained to protect local agricultural production, as “passive” recreation land and for visual relief. The establishment or maintenance of agricultural buffers between incompatible land uses such as industrial and residential uses should be considered as a means for limiting land use conflicts.

***Airport***

The Vernal Regional Airport is sufficient for existing needs. Since the facility is landlocked, enhanced air service will be difficult at the current site. If it is determined that a new airport is necessary and/or desired, Vernal City leaders should coordinate with Federal Aviation Administration officials, Naples City and Uintah County officials, and other regional partners to ensure that the new site meets the consensus needs of all parties, including air service operators.

Future land uses surrounding the airport should be carefully considered in order to avoid use and safety conflicts. Appropriate surrounding uses might include light industrial, manufacturing, commercial, and business parks. Specific federal aviation and airport standards should be consulted as part of the design and decision-making process.

***Land Uses not Illustrated on the Proposed Land Use Map***

In addition to the primary land use categories described above, there are a number of other uses that are supported as future uses in the City. Due to the small size and the site specific nature of these uses, they are not specified on the Proposed Land Use Map. The following is a description of some of the key future uses of this type:

Utilities

Existing utility corridors (pipelines, canals, power lines and similar conveyances) will remain in the future. These uses should be maintained and land for similar uses reserved to meet the future utility needs of the community. Existing and future utility corridors should be considered part of the community open space and trail corridor system, incorporating parks and trails as appropriate.

Roads and Transportation Facilities

Future road, rail and similar surface transportation rights-of-way should be maintained and extended to meet the transportation needs of the community.

Rivers, Stream and Water Bodies

Ashley Creek and the sensitive lands that surround it should be preserved and protected from future development. Smaller drainages, canals, ponds and lakes should be similarly protected in order to maintain their utility and integrity.

**Goals and Policies**

**Goal: To limit future growth to within the existing Municipal Boundaries during the 20-year planning horizon.**

Policy: Continue to investigate areas suitable for incremental annexation adjacent to the City boundaries to accommodate long term growth beyond the 20-year planning horizon

Policy: Continue cooperative efforts with Uintah County, Naples and other regional partners to establish a sustainable long-term growth and development vision for the Ashley Valley.

*Implementation Measure:* Organize a Regional Planning Team consisting of Vernal City and its regional partners to ensure individual planning efforts are coordinated.

**Goal: To encourage a wider range residential uses and mixed uses to help meet projected future population growth.**

Policy: Allow and encourage new residential development models that meet the future needs of the community.

*Implementation Measure:* Modify existing ordinances and codes to allow Open Space Subdivision/Clustered Development in Vernal City.

*Implementation Measure:* Encourage Uintah County to allow Open Space Subdivision/Clustered Development in appropriate areas of the Impact Area.

*Implementation Measure:* Modify existing ordinances and codes to allow Mixed-Use development in downtown and other appropriate areas of Vernal City.

*Implementation Measure:* Encourage Uintah County to allow Mixed Use development within Neighborhood Commercial Centers and other appropriate areas in the Impact Area.

*Implementation Measure:* Create detailed guidelines and educational information regarding the benefits of new residential models, including Open Space Subdivision/Clustered Development and urban infill.

Policy: Encourage Uintah County to plan for residential development in the Impact Area that is both sustainable and coordinated with existing and future residential uses in Vernal City.

**Goal: To encourage the re-establishment of Main Street Vernal City as the “heart” of the community.**

Policy: Promote and encourage new and appropriate downtown housing models, including lofts, downtown infill and other urban models.

Policy: Encourage mixed use development in downtown.

*Implementation Measure:* Modify existing ordinances and development codes to allow and encourage mixed use development downtown and elsewhere in the community.

*Implementation Measure:* Modify the existing Zoning Ordinance, replacing the existing commercial/industrial classification of Mixed Use with the definition in this Plan.

Policy: Establish physical and programmatic links between downtown Vernal City and other key neighborhoods in the nearby region.

*Implementation Measure:* Investigate physical and programmatic options to enhance the link between downtown Vernal and the Campus District. Specific options may include bus routes, streetscape enhancements, signage programs, etc.

Policy: Implement specific improvements to enhance Main Street.

*Implementation Measure:* Investigate a variety of improvements within the public realm (road right-of-way) and private realm (parking lots, front yards, etc.). Specific ideas to be investigated include streetscape

enhancements, parking coordination and reconfiguration, redevelopment ideas, coordinated signage, etc.

Policy: Establish a wider range of commercial uses in downtown Vernal City.

*Implementation Measure:* Determine the viability of attracting both small and large-scale redevelopment within or adjacent to downtown Vernal.

Policy: Continue to implement programs and ideas developed by previous studies and plans.

*Implementation Measure:* Review, confirm and implement the *Downtown Master Plan*, *Stormwater Master Plan* and other studies, as appropriate.

Policy: Introduce additional cultural and arts events and incorporate new programs to attract people downtown.

*Implementation Measure:* Coordinate with the Chamber of Commerce and other downtown groups to enhance downtown programs and events.

**Goal: To improve the commercial profile and operations along the outskirts of the community and along other major road corridors.**

Policy: Determine a program of streetscape and public right-of-way improvements and investigate potential funding opportunities.

Policy: Investigate the possibility of implementing a Special Improvement District (SID) or similar program for implementing streetscape, parking, signage and other improvements.

Policy: Encourage Uintah County to plan for commercial development in the Impact Area that is sustainable and coordinated with existing and planned commercial use in Vernal and the surrounding region.

**Goal: To encourage the development of Neighborhood Commercial Centers in order to meet the needs of nearby residents and others.**

Policy: Encourage Uintah County to modify existing development ordinances and codes to foster the development of new Neighborhood Commercial Centers in the areas indicated on the Proposed Land Use Map.

**Goal: To strengthen the role of the Uintah Basin Applied Technology Center and USU campuses in Vernal City.**

Policy: Modify existing ordinances and codes to allow limited commercial and service uses in close proximity to campus areas.

Policy: Encourage key campus uses and functions to locate in downtown Vernal City.

**Goal: To ensure the future needs for schools and other public services meet future demand.**

Policy: Cooperate with Uintah School District officials and other public service providers to locate and reserve appropriate sites for schools and other public services.

**Goal: To protect and conserve critical agricultural land.**

Policy: Maintain Agricultural zoning for prime agricultural land within the municipal boundaries.

Policy: Change the zoning for non-critical agricultural land within the municipal boundaries to accommodate future growth and development needs.

Policy: Encourage Uintah County to maintain existing Agricultural zoning within the Impact Area to the greatest degree possible.

Policy: Encourage Uintah County to modify existing ordinances and codes to protect critical open space within the Impact Area and elsewhere in the Ashley Valley.

**Goal: To protect and conserve sensitive lands and critical natural features in the community.**

Policy: Modify existing ordinances and codes to ensure sensitive lands and critical natural features in Vernal City are preserved.

Policy: Encourage Uintah County to modify existing ordinances and codes to protect sensitive lands and critical natural features in Impact Area and elsewhere in the Ashley Valley.



### 3 Sensitive Lands and Natural Systems

#### Introduction

Vernal City is located in Ashley Valley and Uintah County in northeastern Utah. The northern edge of the City's impact area stretches north toward the Uintah Mountains, and is surrounded on the south and east with the Book Cliff Mountains and the Blue Mountains respectively. Most of this land is publicly owned and contains numerous internationally known natural resources including Dinosaur National Monument, Flaming Gorge Reservoir, and numerous other lakes, geologic features, and cultural sites.

The Ashley Valley has long been an agricultural center to the State of Utah, which is made productive by harnessing water, constructing canals, and irrigating vast fields of crops. Today, oil and gas exploration and extraction fuel the economy, and at the same time create uncertain pressures for change and development that will continue to affect the natural systems and sensitive lands of the area. Setting aside and protecting some of those lands now is critical to preserving the open spaces, important vistas and views, and the cultural landscapes that characterizes the region.

A search of Utah State's Automated Geographic Reference Center (AGRC) website reveals that there are no concerns in the area regarding liquefaction, landslides, fault lines, volcanic cones, or other geologic conditions. AGRC information indicates that the depth to water table is at least 10 feet below the surface, and areas where slopes exceed 30 percent are limited, presenting little environmental concern, AGRC does not indicate the presence of wetlands, however, it is likely that they are present but have not been delineated. If present, they will need to be evaluated by the United States Army Corps of Engineers (COE), if and when properties are proposed for development. Those environmental characteristics that are identified by AGRC and which have planning implications include sensitive wildlife habitats and numerous categories of agricultural land use. Floodplain data was obtained from the *Ashley Valley Store Water Master Plan, 2008*.

While much of the information in this Chapter is not immediately relevant to the lands within the current Vernal City boundary, it is very relevant to the undeveloped portions of the Impact Area which surrounds the City. If these lands ever become developed, consideration of the sensitive lands and natural systems that abound can play a major role in distinguishing the City from other areas of the valley and County, adding significantly to the quality of life of its residents, and contributing to a growing tourist industry and economic health.

## Existing Resources

### Setting and Topography

Vernal City is located almost in the center of Uintah County and Ashley Valley in a relatively flat basin surrounded by hills and mountains. Ashley Creek flows through the northern edge of the existing City boundary and approximately in the middle of the Impact Area. Numerous smaller creeks and drainages are tributary to Ashley Creek, and a network of canals that are fed by Ashley Creek traverse the City, all flowing generally from the northwest to southeast. Small portions of land exceed 30 percent slope and should be avoided for development (see Map 3-1).

### Wildlife Habitat

The Utah Division of Wildlife Resources (UDWR) has mapped the extent of important habitat areas for various wildlife species and high-interest species in the State. Several different wildlife habitats occur within the study area, including pheasant, bighorn sheep, pronghorn antelope, mule deer, chukar, California quail, wild turkey, elk, and sage grouse. Of those, the most critical habitat appears to relate to mule deer, which essentially surround the City's current boundary and are common throughout the impact area. Wild turkey habitat occurs throughout the northern portion of the Impact Area, while brooding and wintering areas for sage grouse occur in the southwestern corner. Map 3-1 shows the critical and high value habitat areas as determined by the UDWR.

Habitat for other species occurs throughout the area (California quail and ringneck pheasant) or along the edge of the Impact Area boundary (pronghorn antelope, big horn sheep, and elk).

The Division of Wildlife Resources also identifies key drainages such as Ashley Creek and its tributaries as important to migratory songbirds and some water fowl and riparian birds.

As development occurs, steps should be taken to ensure that growth does not encroach on key areas of wildlife habitat or diminish the natural systems that wildlife rely on for survival and reproduction. At a



**Ruffed Grouse**

*(Photo courtesy of Utah DWR)*



**Rocky Mountain Elk**

*(Photo by Lynn Chamberlain, courtesy of Utah DWR)*

minimum, corridors which provide for safe migration and movement of species should be incorporated into future master plans for the Impact Area. (see Map 3-1)

**Floodplains**

Existing floodplains are shown on Map 3-1. The recently completed *Ashley Valley Storm Water Master Plan (2008)* has defined the floodplain for Ashley Creek and several of its tributaries. The natural beauty of waterways increases the desire to develop nearby, and as growth continues riparian areas are increasingly threatened. This not only increases the potential for resource degradation, but it also increases the potential for property damage caused by seasonal flooding.



***Mule Deer in the Vernal Region***

The *Ashley Valley Storm Water Master Plan, 2008* encourages protection of natural drainages as a means of controlling flooding. When these lands are protected from future development, they can become a valuable resource for recreational opportunities, such as trails, nature parks, wildlife viewing sites, and as places to study natural systems.

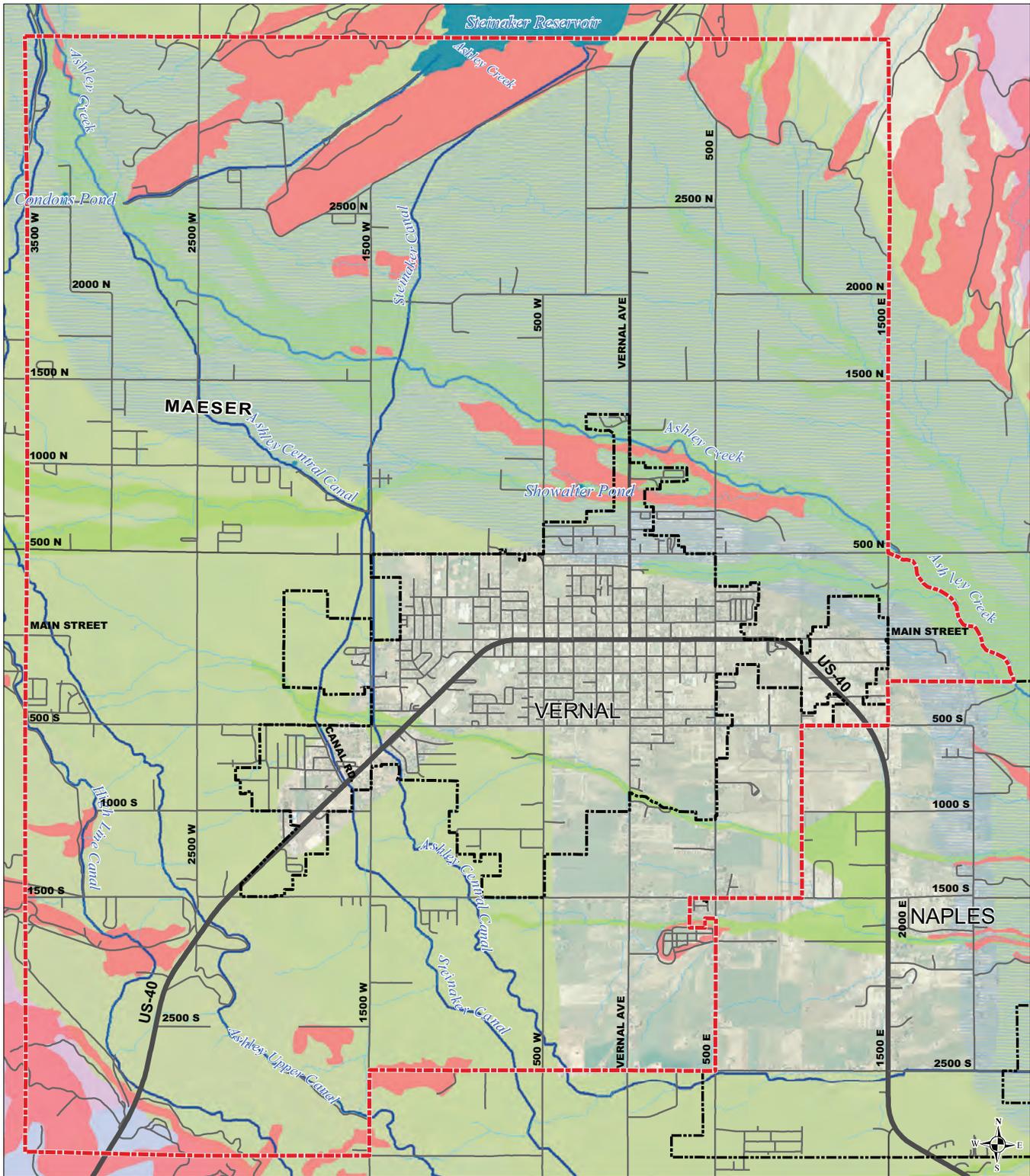
During the Public Workshops and at specific workshops held with high school seniors and senior citizens, one of the most common themes to emerge concerned preservation of the Ashley Creek corridor. Residents had in mind a number of potential uses, including parks and trails, nature study, wildlife viewing, and continued agricultural uses. Much of this creek corridor occurs within the impact area and is currently outside the boundary of Vernal City. However, the floodplains, creeks, and canals have great potential to provide a “green infrastructure” element to the City, the City’s Impact Area, Ashley Valley and Uintah County.



**Ashley Creek at 500 North Street**



**Ashley Creek at 1500 North Street**



Adopted: May 19, 2010



# Vernal General Plan Update

## Legend

- Impact Area Boundary
- Vernal City Limit
- Naples City Limit
- US Hwy. 40
- US Hwy. 191
- State Roads
- Streets
- 100 Year Flood Plain
- >30 Percent Slope (from soils)
- Wild Turkey Habitat
- Mule Deer Critical Habitat
- Sage Grouse Winter Habitat
- Sage Grouse Brooding Habitat

Map 3-1:  
Sensitive Lands



## **Agricultural Land Use**

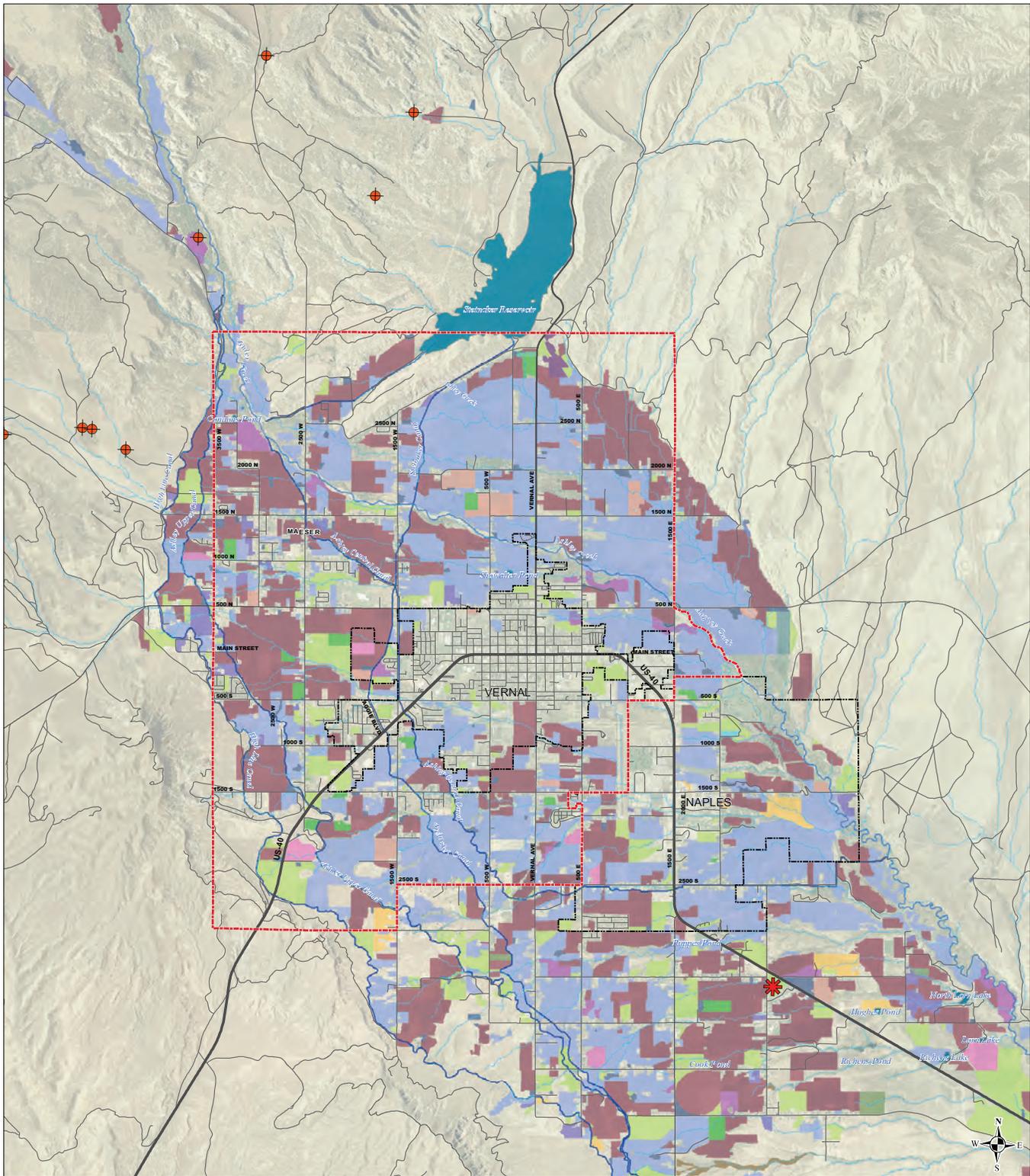
Map 3-2 illustrates the large extent of agricultural and vacant land uses in Vernal City and the surrounding Impact Area. Agricultural land is a traditional use in the Ashley Valley that contributes to the inherent qualities of openness, the broad views, pastoral scenes, and working landscapes of the area. These are highly-valued qualities by local residents, and are equally attractive to visitors who come to enjoy the great outdoors, the public lands and trails that surround the valley, and the magnificent landscapes within Ashley Valley.

By working directly with local land owners, particularly those who value the agricultural heritage of the area and understand its role in providing diversity in the local economy, it may be possible to initiate voluntary agricultural preservation areas that protect agricultural uses from encroaching development, and perhaps create conservation easements to protect agricultural lands into perpetuity. The variety of agricultural land uses shown on Map 3-2 clearly shows the breadth of agricultural uses that surround the developed areas of Ashley Valley.

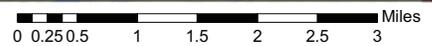
There is no language in the current code which protects agricultural land. The Agricultural Zone A-1 allows agricultural uses but assumes that at some time the use will change to residential, commercial, or industrial.



**Typical Agricultural Land in the Ashley Valley Area**



Adopted: May 19, 2010



# Vernal General Plan Update

## Legend

Impact Area Boundary	Conservation Easement	Fallow	Pasture
Vernal City Limit	Spring	Farmsteads	Pasture-subirrigated
Naples City Limit	Alfalfa	Grain	Potatoes
US Hwy. 40	Corn	Grass Hay	Range Pasture
US Hwy. 191	Dry Alfalfa	Idle	Sorghum
State Roads	Dry Idle	Orchard	
Streets	Dry Pasture	Other Vegetables	

Map 3-2:  
Agricultural Land Use



## Preserving Sensitive Lands

In order to preserve sensitive and valued lands and landscapes, they must be designated as some sort of open space and their preservation must be institutionalized into the development review and approval process. There are a number of options and techniques available to preserve open spaces and sensitive lands that can be administered through the development review process or other administrative and institutionalized means. The following is a summary of promising methods for Vernal and the Impact Area:

- **Density bonuses** can be provided for properties in the floodplain, allowing sensitive lands to be preserved while maintaining opportunities to develop;
- Requirements for **cluster development or “conservation subdivisions”** can be instituted, which mandate development to be compact, thus preserving open space;
- **Zoning and development restrictions** can be instituted that prohibit development in the floodplain;
- **Sensitive land can be purchased or a Conservation Easement instituted** in order to protect critical land from future development; and
- **Transfer of Development Rights** can be considered which will allow denser development in “receiving areas” in order to offset less density or no development at all in “sending areas”.

## Possible Implementation Tools for Protecting and Developing Sensitive Lands and Preserving Open Space

Several tools are available for communities and individuals to preserve open space and develop parcels that contain lands with development restrictions due to environmental or sensitive land issues. The tools which follow are not intended to reflect general plan policy or to be all inclusive. Rather, they are provided as information to be considered when situations arise in which developing land is not in the best interests of the community or the individual property owner. No one technique or tool is appropriate for all properties or situations. Each must be considered separately based on the unique characteristics of the situation, property ownership, economic conditions, and overall community-wide goals.

The use of open space preservation tools, such as those discussed below, could provide a compromise solution acceptable to differing views on density and patterns of development in the region. Some of these tools offer land owners the opportunity to sell density from areas where low density or land preservation is desired, to areas where greater density is desired. Developers seeking greater density may then offer to purchase development value from willing land owners, thus expanding the opportunities to preserve agricultural land and working rural landscapes, wildlife habitat, and

community-desired open spaces, while concentrating development where it is desired, appropriate, and where adequate services are available.

**Open Space Design Standards as part of Open Space Subdivisions/ Clustered Development**

Open Space Design Standards (OSDS) can be used to preserve agricultural land, wildlife habitat, and open spaces while allowing an equal or higher level of development on a smaller area of land. OSDS's may establish and dictate sites to be preserved such as sensitive lands, farmlands, stream corridors, rural road buffers, view corridors, and other open space features that have been identified by the community as important. OSDS's generally require the "clustering" of development as part of Conservation Subdivisions, helping to preserve open space and protect property rights.

OSDS's allow, encourage or require density or increased density to be "clustered" onto a portion of the site. The remaining property is preserved as open space through a conservation easement.

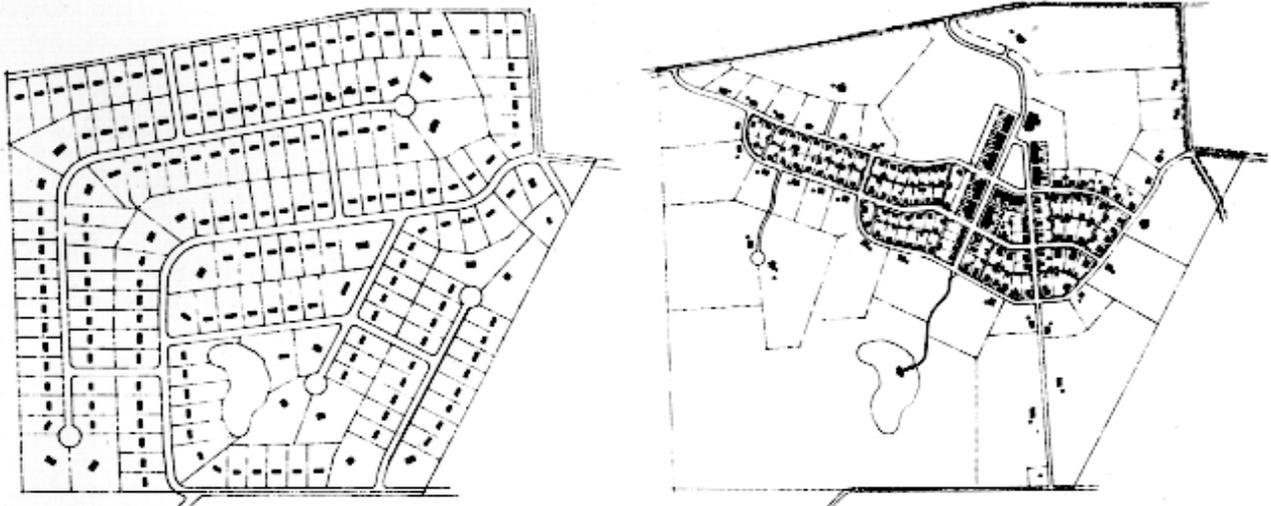
Open space preservation in new development can be encouraged through incentives, such as allowing full density with clustering or reduced density without clustering. These mechanisms are not considered a "taking" because there is still reasonable and beneficial use of the property. They do not regulate density per se, just the pattern of development.

To encourage and facilitate Conservation Subdivision development, it is important to: 1) treat cluster developments equally with conventional subdivisions in the development review process; 2) favor clustering in special areas; and 3) encourage cluster development as a standard specifically for the preservation of open space. As a general rule, OSDS's are a part of an overlay or special district.

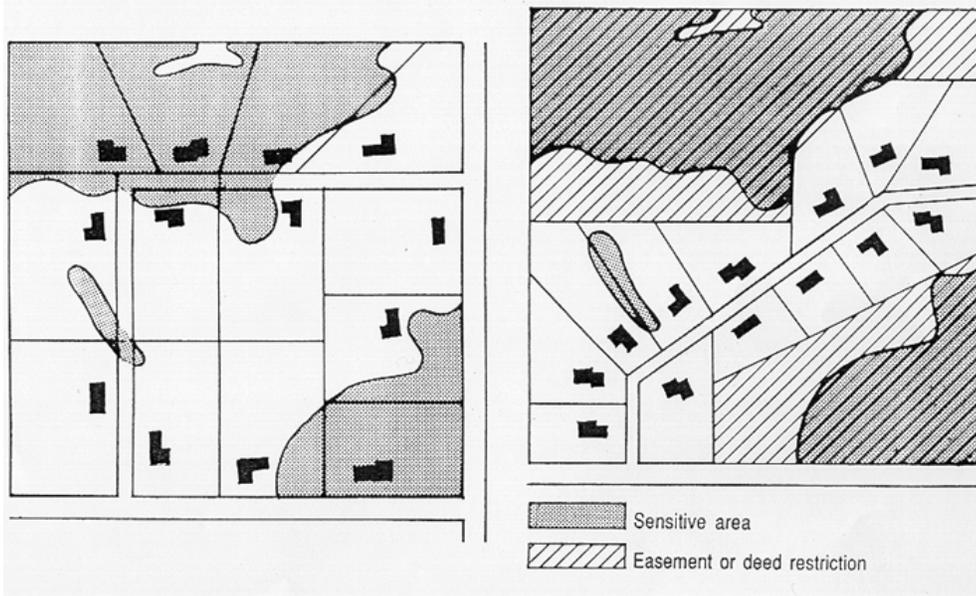
As described below, Open Space Design Standards have several advantages over other means of preserving open space. They:

- do not require public expenditure of funds such as for the purchase of property;
- do not depend on landowner charity or benevolence such as in land or easement donations;
- do not need a high-end market to make them affordable;
- do not involve complicated regulations for transfer of development rights; and
- do not depend on cooperation between two or more adjoining property owners.

The figures which follow illustrate two examples of a Typical Subdivision Design (in the Left panel of both plans) versus a Cluster Subdivision Design (Right)<sup>1</sup> for the same property.



Typical Subdivision Design (left, above and below) spreads development around the site with little concern for site conditions and preservation of unique features. The application of Open Space Design Standards (right, above and below) clusters development in areas where development is most appropriate while preserving unique and sensitive site features as part of a shared open space system.



<sup>1</sup> Source: Randall Arendt, *Rural By Design*, 1994.

Open Space Design Standards and Clustered Development can simulate a transfer of development right process (see TDR discussion later in this section) by allowing the transfer of development density between two or more non-adjacent parcels.

Most cluster subdivision ordinances specify that multiple parcels may participate in a clustered development provided the parcels are adjacent to each other. This allows the transfer of density from one or more parcels onto a single parcel, or portion of a single parcel. Similarly, non-adjacent parcels could be allowed to combine density and transfer it onto a concentrated site where services such as sewer and culinary water may be available. This technique allows land owners to seek development partnerships that may not otherwise be available between adjacent owners, and may encourage the free market to preserve more continuous greenbelts of open space, and concentrate development of new homes and businesses into a more compact growth pattern. The advantages of this development pattern include reduced costs to service growth, greater opportunities for farming or wildlife habitat activities, and larger, more continuous open space areas.

### **Sensitive Lands Overlay**

This tool requires additional regulation on underlying zoning districts, with special restrictions on unique resources, hazards or sensitive lands. However, the Sensitive Lands Overlay does not provide for complete control of the land. Such overlays might be applied over agricultural land or stream and river corridors, where the sensitive lands are identified and described in a corresponding Sensitive Lands Overlay Zone. Specific measures are then created to protect these areas. Within each category of protected land, specific regulations can be devised to treat specific density, open space, site design and building design requirements.

### **Fee Simple Title (Outright Purchase)**

Desirable open space properties (recreational or agricultural) may be purchased and held by a responsible agency or organization for that purpose. Because of the potential for a very high cost of acquisition, fee simple acquisition should be reserved for highly important, critical parcels for which no other strategy can feasibly be used. Although fee simple title or out-right purchase can be the most expensive option, there are other opportunities that are available to help recover some of the initial investment.

### **Purchase and Sellback or Leaseback**

***Purchase and Sellback*** enables a government agency purchase a piece of land along with all the rights inherent in full ownership, and then sell the same piece of land without certain development rights, depending on the preservation objective related to that parcel of land. The restrictions placed on development can range from no development to requiring clustered development. ***Purchase and Leaseback*** is similar, although instead of selling the land, the agency leases it with restrictions in place. In this manner the agency is able to recoup some of its investment in the form of rent.

## Conservation Easements

### (Through Donated Development Rights, Purchased Development Rights or Transfer of Development Rights)

Conservation Easements are rapidly gaining favor and popularity with property owners and preservation groups alike. These easements remove the right to develop from the usual bundle of property rights. Separation of development rights is accomplished in three ways:

- Donations: The property owner willingly donates the development value of the property to a land trust or other organization, and agrees that the property will never be developed. Tax incentives are available for such donations.
- Purchases: The property owner sells the right to develop the property to a land trust or other organization, which agrees that the property will never be developed.
- Transfers: The property owner transfers or trades the value of the right to develop the property to another entity, which may use that right on another property agreed upon by the jurisdiction administering the trade.

Conservation Agreements prevent alterations to a designated piece of land. Most land uses are prohibited, although certain uses such as farming, nature conservation, passive recreation and other “open space” uses may be allowed. Of the three methods (donations, purchases and transfers), transfers are the most complicated and are the most complicated.

Under Utah State law, Conservation Easements are a legal means of limiting development of real property for the purpose of “*preserving and maintaining land or water areas predominantly in a natural, scenic, or open condition, or for recreation, agriculture, cultural, wildlife habitat or other use or conditions consistent with the protection of open land.*” (CU 57-18-2.)

Utah law only recognizes conservation easements acquired by a charitable or non-profit organization or a government entity. Several states have land trusts, including Utah. If easements are held by a government entity, future elected leadership will be prevented from relinquishing the conservation easement by adding additional parties to the easement contract. Additional contract parties may include land trusts, neighboring landowners, home owner associations, private organizations, or other government entities. *Utah Open Lands (UOL)* is a non-profit land trust conservation association with a mission is preserve and protect open space in order to maintain Utah’s natural heritage and quality of life for present and future generations. The organization achieves this by assisting private landowners, government agencies and communities in the voluntary preservation of the agricultural, scenic, recreational, historic and wildlife values of open land. UOL currently holds conservation easements or enforcement rights to conservation easement for thousands of acres of open space in Utah.

The conservation easement “runs” with the land and is recorded with the deed. Typically, the easement is granted to a land trust, land conservancy, or a government entity. The easement is typically agreed upon with the property owner who retains ownership of the property, but gives up the right (by selling, donating, or trading) to develop it or to use it in ways that are incompatible with the open space goal. The entity receiving the development rights agrees to hold the development rights in order to maintain the area as open space. Often there are IRS tax advantages to the benefactor for the value of the donated development rights.

### **LeRay McAllister Fund**

This fund is administered by the Utah Quality Growth Commission and provides funds each year to preserve or restore critical open and agricultural lands in Utah, and targets lands deemed important to the community such as agricultural lands, wildlife habitat, watershed protection, and other culturally or historically unique landscapes. Money from the fund must be used preserve or restore lands. Applicants must provide matching funds equal to or greater than the amount of money received from the fund. Funds must be spent within one year from the date of the grant award. The size of parcels for a purchase is limited to 20 acres or less. Purchase of conservation easements or restoration projects are exempt from this size restriction.

### **Transfer of Development Rights (TDR)**

Transferable Development Rights programs (TDRs) can be used to encourage land owners to shift development from one area (a sending zone) to another area where development is more desirable (a receiving zone). This practice occurs without altering the amount of development potential allowed in the community. TDR programs allow development rights to be separated from the usual bundle of property rights so that they can be traded in the free market. The seller of the development rights is paid and all future rights to develop that particular piece of land are restricted by a conservation easement. A conservation easement completes a TDR transaction to ensure that current and future owners of preserved land do not attempt to develop the property beyond the remaining amount of development rights.

To launch a successful TDR program, a local government should consider the following:

- Support for TDR requires a strong educational effort to community stakeholders and officials. Preliminary economic studies must take place to understand land values, development trends and development markets. Finding a price that developers will pay for an increased unit of density is integral to the economic structure of a TDR program.
- The value or price of a TDR is set in a private transaction between landowners. A community can encourage TDR transactions by providing a bonus. For example, a 5:1 bonus would provide one additional TDR for every 5 TDRs transferred. A bonus may apply to both the purchaser and seller of TDRs.

- TDRs are market driven – there has to be someone willing to buy them. A city, county or private non-profit organization may create a TDR “bank” and purchase some rights so that they can be used elsewhere at a later date.
- TDR zoning can require more administrative effort than most other zoning ordinances. The advantages gained however may be worth additional training or staffing. In addition to preserving agricultural or sensitive lands, TDR guides growth into a more desirable or efficient development pattern. A more efficient development pattern means less cost to a community to maintain and requires less road miles and infrastructure to service homes and businesses.
- Increased TDR use nation-wide and statewide suggests that local governments are becoming more aware and capable of implementing the tool. TDR programs are becoming more common in the intermountain west, with new programs emerging in Idaho, Wyoming, Colorado, and Utah.
- TDR programs may be voluntary or mandatory. A voluntary program is more likely to be viewed as an additional development option rather than as a development restriction. Tahoe Regional Planning Agency in Summit County, Nevada has a mandatory TDR program that was challenged and taken to the US Supreme Court. The Court found that TDRs could be challenged in court, not because they are a taking, but because there may be an issue of adequate compensation.

### **Land Banking**

Local governments have used this option only rarely as a means for preserving land, primarily due to its often-prohibitive costs. This tool involves the purchase of land and holding it for possible future development. Often the land is purchased and leased back to the original owners so as to continue its immediate use, such as agricultural production. Agencies interested in this option should have the ability to purchase and condemn land, to hold and lease land, and to obtain debt financing for its purchase.

### **United States Department of Agriculture Programs**

These funds are available to farmers for land preservation and conservation improvements on their land. Programs in Utah are available through USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, which manages them. Available programs may include the Farm and Ranchlands Protection Program, Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP), Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP), and Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP). Interested landowners should contact the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service office in Salt Lake City. Programs typically have a time-frame attached ranging from 5 to 15 years, or into perpetuity. Farmland in communities or regions that plan to encourage a pattern of farmland preservation earn additional ranking in USDA’s scoring criteria.

EQIP funds are available for improvements to irrigation systems, animal waste processing systems, and range improvements. It funds vegetation enhancements,

where the amount of funding depends on the length of time the land is committed to the program.

WRP funds are available for riparian (creek and stream bank) restoration and agricultural land restoration. The length of time the land is committed to such programs varies by restoration program, which affects the amount of funding available.

WHIP funds are available exclusively for fish and wildlife habitat enhancement. Funding is available for development and enhancement of shelterbelts, and is administered by the Utah State Conservationist.

## **Goals and Policies**

**Goal:**           **To maintain and protect sensitive lands and valued agricultural lands in Vernal City and its impact area.**

Policy:            Create language in the development code which emphasizes the desire to protect sensitive lands and agricultural lands.

*Implementation Measure:* Identify and map sensitive lands and valued agricultural lands with a priority for protection and preservation.

*Implementation Measure:* Develop a Sensitive Lands Overlay Zone which address creates special measure for protection and preservation, and allows for creative means of transferring density, requiring cluster development, and avoiding sensitive lands.

*Implementation Measure:* Work with Uintah County initiate similar codes changes and preservation processes for sensitive lands and agricultural lands.

**Goal:**           **To maintain and protect the Ashley Creek floodplain and other creek floodplains within Vernal City and its impact area.**

Policy:            Adopt the “Ashley Valley Storm Water Management Plan” guidance in evaluating development within the floodplains.

Policy:            Regulate future development in floodplains by following the guidelines of the Federal Emergency Management Agency and the “Flood Insurance Rate Maps”.

*Implementation Measure:* Incorporate special review into the development review process to assure that adequate protections are known and identified prior to development.

*Implementation Measure:* Adopt ordinances requiring development setbacks from creek corridors to protect wildlife corridors, provide space for parks and trails and provide a buffer between the corridors and future development. Recommended setback is 100 feet from Ashley Creek floodplain, and 50 feet from tributary floodplains.

*Implementation Measure:* Begin work with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers in the delineation of wetlands within the City and impact area.

*Implementation Measure:* Work with Uintah County to apply consistent policies on County lands.

**Goal:** **To maintain and protect agricultural land uses within the City of Vernal City and its impact area.**

**Policy:** Encourage property owners who are engaged in agricultural production and business to identify agricultural protection areas.

*Implementation Measure:* Adopt an agricultural protection area zone into the local code.

*Implementation Measure:* Adopt measures in the development code that allow property owners engaged in agricultural uses to sell density to locations where density is desired, or use other creative means to preserve traditional agricultural lands and working landscapes.

*Implementation Measure:* Work with Uintah County to apply consistent policies on County lands.

**Goal:** **To conserve water on public and private landscapes.**

**Policy:** Encourage water conservation through policies and ordinances that require water conserving landscapes and conservation of indoor water.

*Implementation Measure:* Adopt a water conservation landscape ordinance for Vernal City, which will apply to the impact area in the future.

*Implementation Measure:* Adopt an indoor water use ordinance that requires low flow plumbing fixtures and other means to conserve water.

*Implementation Measure:* Implement water conservation on public projects to set an example for private development.

*Implementation Measure:* Work with Uintah County to apply consistent policies on County lands.



## 4 Parks, Recreation, and Trails

### Introduction

The Uintah Recreation District is a Special Service District that was formed to benefit the citizens of Vernal City and the surrounding area by providing year round recreational opportunities for the community<sup>1</sup>. In February 2006, the Uintah Recreation District (URD) completed a *Draft Parks Master Plan*<sup>2</sup> that addressed park and recreation facilities throughout Uintah County. The Plan documents existing parks, recreation facilities, and programs, and makes recommendations for future facilities. Since completion of that Plan, which recommended a recreation center, the URD has funded and built the Uintah Community Center located in Vernal City.

The URD's *Draft Parks Master Plan* is a valuable resource to the City, as it included public participation comments from City residents, and it provides guidance for future facility developments and improvements. The analysis and recommendations presented in this Chapter build on that information and the URD's *Draft Park Master Plan* goals which are summarized in the box to the right.

The URD's *Draft Park Master Plan* only addresses parks and recreation facilities and programs; it does not address trails. Therefore, the trails section of this Chapter is the first step in the development of a plan for a City-wide trail system that connects to a regional trail system.

The purpose of this Chapter is to look specifically at the availability of park and recreation facilities to residents in Vernal City and its impact area, and how readily people have access to them. It will also take a broad brush approach to trails and trail

#### Summary of Draft Uintah Recreation District Master Plan Goals

- Provide recreation opportunities for youth and adults.
- Meet current and future demand for parks and recreation amenities.
- Enhance, preserve, and conserve natural systems and landscapes.
- Obtain land for future parks.
- Ensure that park lands are not decreased in quantity or quality.
- Provide safe, function, durable park amenities for all interests and abilities.
- Improve the quality of parks and park development.
- Involve citizens in the planning of parks and recreation facilities.

---

<sup>1</sup> Uintah Recreation District website: <http://www.uintahrecreation.org>.

<sup>2</sup> Aspen Resource Consultants, VCBO Architects, *Uintah Recreation District Parks Master Plan (Draft)*, February 2006.

development within Vernal City, and connections to regional trails in the County. Following the discussion on parks, recreation and park facilities, and trails, specific goals, policies, and implementation measures are identified.

**Parks**

**Public Comment on Parks**

Based on the *Uintah Recreation District Draft Parks Master Plan (2006)*, 85 percent of those who responded to a citizen survey rate parks in Uintah County as being either good or excellent, and they identify the most-used parks as Ashley Valley Community Park, Freestone Legacy Walking Park, Remember the Maine Park, and Naples City Park as the top four among several others.

When evaluating the most-used parks in the County, survey respondents indicated that there are improvements needed such as additional restroom facilities and cleaner restrooms, better overall maintenance, lighting and security measures, picnic tables, pavilions and concession stands, benches at the soccer fields, water conserving landscapes, drinking fountains, parking, and trees. Looking broader at the park system at-large and not specifically focusing on an individual park, respondents indicated that needed facilities should include restrooms, drinking fountains, lighting, swimming pool, walking paths, trees, toddler play equipment, pavilions, fencing, and benches. Table 4-1 summarizes those findings.

**Table 4-1  
Most-Needed Park Improvements**

<b>Needed Improvements in Most-Used Parks</b>	<b>Park System Improvements Needed</b>
Adding and Cleaning Restrooms	Restrooms
Better Maintenance	Drinking Fountains
Lighting/Security	Lighting
Picnic Tables	Swimming Pool
Pavilions and Concessions	Walking Paths
KOA Soccer Field Benches and water conserving landscape	Trees
Drinking Fountains	Toddler Equipment
Parking	Pavilions
Nothing Needed	Fencing
Increase Park Size	Benches

Additionally, many people elected to “write in” needed improvements, such as a recreation center with indoor pool and other facilities. Since the URD’s *Draft Park Master Plan* was completed in 2006, the Uintah Community Center at Kay Memorial Park has been constructed which includes a swimming pool, climbing wall, indoor track, gymnasiums, aerobic and dance studios, exercise equipment, and space for classes and gatherings.

During the Public Scoping Meeting for the General Plan Update, participants noted a need to make sure that open space and parks are planned, especially to protect sensitive lands like the Ashley Valley floodplain, and agricultural lands. Generally, they expressed a need for more parks and open spaces. Similar results were derived from the Public Workshops held City-wide, and with specific groups including senior citizens, high school seniors, and the Vernal City General Plan Update Management Committee.

In summary, the *Uintah Recreation District Draft Master Park Plan (2006)* focuses on existing parks and the kinds of facilities that need to be included or improved. The public input through the Vernal City General Plan Update process focuses on making sure that there is adequate park land, and that special lands are preserved. The *Draft Park Master Plan* notes that there is adequate park land in the County, it is recommended that there is a need for more diverse recreation opportunities, and upgrades and improvements to existing parks. These findings are consistent with those expressed by Vernal City residents during this planning process.

### **Existing Parks Serving Vernal City**

Generally, when park need is addressed it is expressed in two ways: as a ratio between population and acres of developed park land, and as an assessment of residents’ ability to access park lands - essentially, an assessment of the amount of land set aside for parks based on the population in the community, and how closely parks are located to the people who use them.

Vernal City is served by a variety of park categories as shown in Table 4-2. Park categories are defined in the *Uintah Recreation District Draft Master Park Plan (2006)*; those that apply to parks serving Vernal City are included herein with some minor modifications. Vernal City has one Mini-Park identified in the draft master plan. It is not included because it does not provide the facilities typical of a small park serving residential neighborhoods or a community park serving multiple interests.

**Table 4-2  
Existing Parks Serving Vernal City**

	Ownership	Completed Acres	Uncompleted Acres	Parking	Signing	Trash Receptacle	Playground	Picnic Tables	Drinking Fountain	BBQ Grills	Seating/Benches	Walking Paths	Pavilion/Shelters	Restroom	Open Lawn Areas	Trees/Shade	Baseball Diamonds	Softball Diamonds	Multi-Use Fields	Basketball Courts	Volleyball	Horseshoe Pits	Other
<b>EXISTING PARKS</b>																							
<b>Neighborhood Parks</b>																							
Freestone Legacy Walking Park	VC	5		X							X	X	1		X								
Independence Park	School Dist.	2.2		X	X	8	1	6					1		X	X							
Kiwanis Park	VC	2		X			1	X							X	X							
<b>Community Parks</b>																							
Ashley Valley Community Park	VC, UC, URD	30		X	X	40	2	34	2	6	8	X	3	1	X	X	4	3	2		3	8	Skate/bike park
KOA Soccer Complex	URD	11		X											X						3		
Naples City Park	Naples City	24		X	X	15	1	14	1	3		X	1	1	X	X		2	1	3	2	4	Splash Park
Remember the Maine Park	UC	17		X		5	2	X	30	3	7	X	2	1	X	X						1	2
<b>Regional Parks</b>																							
Kay Memorial	URD	12	68	X								X			X	X							Recreation Center
<b>Total Existing Parks</b>		<b>103</b>	<b>68</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>68</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>14</b>	

VC = Vernal City  
UC = Uintah County  
URD = Uintah Recreation District

**Neighborhood Parks**

Neighborhood Parks are developed recreation areas that are generally between one and five acres in size, but they may be larger depending on land availability. Neighborhood Parks are deliberately close to residential areas (within one mile radius) so they are accessible by walking or biking, and have limited automobile parking and no lighted athletic fields. Neighborhood Park development should include the following minimum facilities: one basketball court; one multi-purpose open play area with room for informal baseball/softball, soccer, and football activities; one sand volleyball court; one accessible playground; one pavilion with six picnic tables; one drinking fountain; one small parking lot; lighted walkways/trails; trash receptacles; identification signing; and lawn and trees. Neighborhood Parks may also include additional amenities, depending on the size of the park and neighborhood needs. Restrooms are not generally provided in Neighborhood Parks.



**Freestone Legacy Walking Park**



***Community Parks***

Community Parks are developed recreation areas that are generally between ten and fifty acres in size, but they may vary depending on land availability and intended use. Community Parks have a two-mile service area radius, attract residents from throughout the community, and have adequate automobile parking. Community Park development should include the following minimum facilities: restroom, one basketball court, two defined baseball/softball fields with space provided for soccer and football, one sand volleyball court, one playground, two pavilions with nine picnic tables in each, two drinking fountains, 100 car parking lot and lighting, lighted walkways/trails, trash receptacles, identification signing, lawn, and trees. Community Parks may include additional amenities depending on size and neighborhood needs.



**Ashley Valley Community Park**

***Regional Parks***

Regional Parks are developed recreation areas that serve a broader purpose. They generally include park amenities such as those found in neighborhood and community parks, but may also include special landscapes and open spaces, as well as community-based recreation facilities such as a recreation center. Regional Parks generally serve residents County-wide, but for purposes of addressing access to parks in Vernal City a two-mile service area has been assumed, similar to a community park.



**Uintah Community Recreation Center**

**Additional Recreational Opportunities**

In addition to those previously discussed, there are other recreational facilities that provide for special or unique opportunities, but do not necessarily serve the need for individuals and families to have access to public park land for informal play, sports, picnics, and other passive leisure activities. These facilities include the Uintah Community Center (recreation center), Dinaland Golf Course, and Western Park, as well as other County-wide facilities and the public lands and recreation areas nearby. These facilities are not included in the Park Needs Analysis; neither is Cobble Rock Mini-Park which is too small to provide the appropriate park facilities.

**Park Acreage Needs Analysis**

Table 4-3 indicates that there are about 103 acres of park land (see Table 4-2) serving residential neighborhoods in Vernal City. The 2008 population in Vernal City was 10,040 residents, which equates to a ratio of about 10.3 acres of developed park land for every 1000 residents in the community. It does not include the undeveloped land at Kay Memorial Park which once developed, could serve some of the park land need into the future, nor does it include Cobble Rock Park or the other recreation opportunities available to Vernal City residents.

**Table 4-3  
Existing Population and Park Land Ratio**

EXISTING CONDITION			PARK ACRES PER 1000 POPULATION
YEAR	POPULATION	PARK ACRES*	POPULATION
2008	10,040	103	10.26

Assuming that the current level of park development (10.3 acres per 1000 population) is acceptable to the community, Table 4-4 illustrates the future need for park acres based on the City-recommended growth scenario which assumes that the City will continue to grow at a moderate pace (baseline) and will not experience a boom or bust economy. Essentially, it illustrates that in the baseline scenario about 35 acres will be needed.

**Table 4-4  
Park Acreage Need Analysis at a Moderate Pace of Growth (Baseline)**

BASELINE			PARK ACRES PER 1000 POPULATION	NEEDED TO MAINTAIN 10.3/1000	OVERAGE OR DEFICIT
YEAR	POPULATION	PARK ACRES*			
2008	10,040	103	10.26	103.00	0.00
2028	13,378	103	7.70	137.79	-34.79

The District currently has about 68 acres at the Kay Memorial Park which once developed, will adequately serve the community's need for additional park acreage into the year 2028. This assumes a moderate rate of growth where the City does not experience a boom in the economy, and that new residential development occurs within the current developed area of the City. If the City expands to the impact area, additional park land may be needed to service new neighborhoods with conveniently-accessible parks.

### **Park Distribution Analysis**

While the ratio of park land to population is an accepted way of analyzing park land need, in many respects it is more important that residents have good access to parks. The Park Distribution Analysis assigns a service area to each kind of park, which has been adopted from the *Uintah Recreation District Draft Master Park Plan (2006)*. Service areas are one-mile for Neighborhood Park and two-miles for Community Parks. In the URD plan, Regional Parks are assumed to serve the entire County; this plan assigns a service area of two miles to Regional Parks assuming that they also serve a local Community Park need. Map 4-1 shows the parks included in the Needs Analysis and their Distribution Analysis with appropriately-sized service area radii.

Map 4-1 illustrates that residents in Vernal City have good access to parks, though some driving may be necessary. If the community grows into the impact areas, additional park land will need to be planned in order to provide parks that serve future residential neighborhoods. The Utah State University campus area was one location specifically identified as a good place for a recreation/community center and additional parks, as well as locations along Ashley Creek, and in the north and south areas of the City's impact area.

### **Future Parks**

Within the current boundary of Vernal City, there is no need for additional parks unless there is a specific use-oriented park desired by City residents, such as a dog park or shooting range that is not provided by the Uintah Recreation District elsewhere in the County and readily accessible to residents in Vernal City. Such facilities could expand and enhance the diversity of recreation opportunities available to City residents

If the City boundary were to expand into the impact area, additional parks would be needed. Map 4-1 identifies proposed locations for new parks in the impact area that reflect growth in residential development reflected in the Land Use Map (Map 2-1). The new parks would serve the new residential areas, and as such should meet the definition and requirements of Neighborhood and Community Parks contained within this document.

Based on the nature of growth anticipated in the City's impact area, four new Neighborhood Parks or Community Parks will be needed. Two parks are needed in the northern impact area on either side of US 191 to serve new residential neighborhoods, and two in the southwestern area of the City on either side of US 40. These parks should meet the definition of Neighborhood Parks at a minimum and should be at least 5 acres in size. They could also be Community Parks and provide more facilities and services, in which case they should be a minimum of 20 acres in size so there is adequate space for fields and open play areas.

Four smaller parks are recommended rather than two larger parks because of the barriers imposed by crossing US 191 and US 40. Four parks will provide adequate access to parks from nearby residential areas and will be large enough to provide the most desired facilities and activity areas. Two specific locations were identified in the Draft Master Park Plan. These include the BOR property adjacent to US-191 north of Vernal city; and the Old Kiwanis Park (10 acres), which is located adjacent to Ashley Creek.

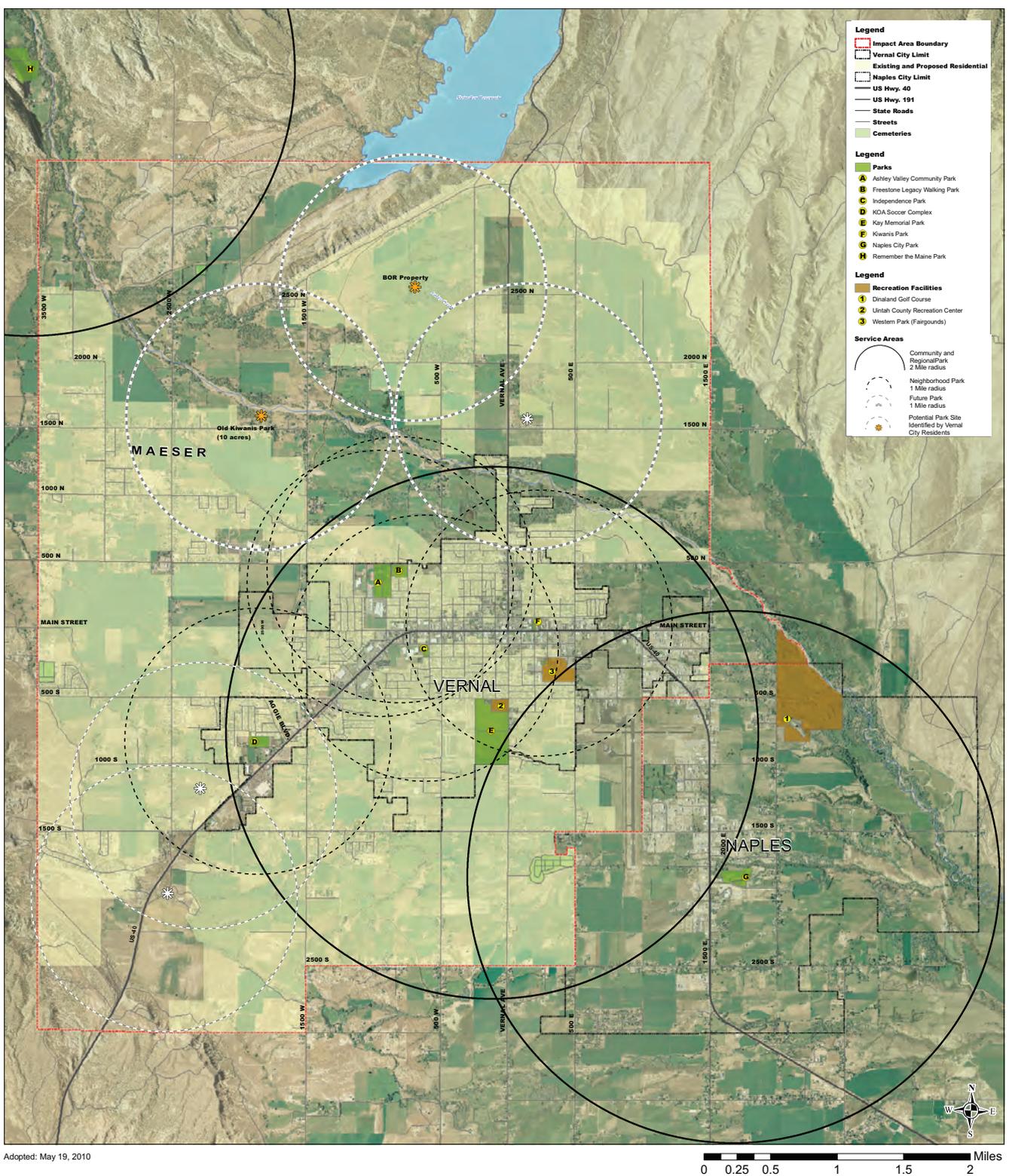
As the community grows, it will be important to work with Uintah Recreation District to provide some of the planning, design, and implementation funding for new parks. It will also be necessary to plan in advance and master plan these areas of the City so that when development occurs, it is understood and expected that parks will be a part of the development plan. To the extent possible, the dedication of land and park development should be negotiated with proposed developers in a partnership between the City, the developer, and the Uintah Recreation District.

## **Recreation and Park Facilities**

The kind and number of recreation facilities and park facilities needed are more a reflection of community-expressed desires than actual guidelines, though the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) has in the past developed guidelines that have become somewhat institutionalized. They are not adopted standards, but something to consider in determining the need for facilities.

The URD used the NRPA guidelines in its analysis for determining need for County-wide facilities. Table 4-5 illustrates the NRPA guideline ratio between a facility type and the number of people it might serve, the existing number of facilities available to Vernal City residents, and the number of facilities that might be needed assuming the community grows at a moderate pace (baseline) and experiences no booms or busts in the economy.

Unless residents indicate otherwise, it appears that no new facilities of the type compared by NRPA are needed until the population reaches about 20,000. However, looking back to Table 4-1 and the results of the County-wide community survey, the most needed facilities are the amenities typically found in Neighborhood and



# Vernal General Plan Update

Map 4-1:  
Existing and Future Parks and Service Areas



Community Parks, i.e. restrooms, playgrounds, picnic tables, pavilions, trees, drinking fountains, walking paths, etc. (see Table 4-1).

**Table 4-5  
Current Recreation Facilities and Park Facilities Serving  
Vernal City Compared to 2028 Growth Projections**

Regional/Special Use Facilities	NRPA One Per	Vernal 2008 10,040	2028 Growth Scenario Baseline 13,378
Archery Range	50,000	0	0
Shooting Range	50,000	0	0
Golf Course	50,000	1	0
Ice Skating/Hockey (Western Park)	100,000	1	0
Football Fields	20,000	4	1
1/4 mi. Running Track (Middle School)	20,000	1	1
Swimming Pool	20,000	2	1
<b>Community/Neighborhood Facilities</b>			
Baseball (standard)	5,000	4	3
Baseball (lighted)	30,000	4	0
Basketball Courts	5,000	3	3
Multi-Use Fields	10,000	6	1
Soccer Fields (Multi-Use Fields)	10,000	6	1
Softball Fields	5,000	5	3
Tennis Courts (High School)	2,000	4	7
Volleyball Courts	5,000	7	3

*Source: NRPA (1987), Uintah Recreation District Draft Parks Master Plan (February 2006).*

**Public Comment on Recreation and Park Facilities**

There were no comments regarding recreation facilities received as a result of the Public Scoping Meeting except the need for walking, jogging, and biking trails. These will be addressed in the Trails section of this Chapter. However, in the workshops conducted with senior citizens and high school seniors several kinds of facilities were mentioned. Specifically, senior citizens at the Golden Age Center desire walking paths and sidewalks reporting that they often see women and children walking in the roadway because there are no sidewalks. Again, these are addressed in the Trails section of this Chapter. They also desire wider roads with room for bike lanes, a new senior center that incorporates physical activities like walking outdoors, a community center at the recreation center, a dog park, and more facilities like bike racks around town and at schools.

High school students report that they have very few recreation opportunities, stating that the Recreation Center (Uintah Community Center) is for “little kids”. They would like a better skate park, a community center and additional parks with facilities matching their

interests, a quarter-mile race track, shooting range, and motocross tracks. Suggested additions to the recreation center include a weight room and other activities and events that are specifically geared toward teens.

More information may be needed to determine exactly what kinds of activities and events are desired. As the recreation center and Kay Memorial Park grow, polling high school students or organizing a teen focus group may be a good way to get targeted ideas. The students also mentioned the need for sidewalks and trails for recreational purposes, and just to have safe ways to get around town other than in vehicles.

### Summary

In summary, it appears that one of the roles that the Uintah Recreation District could serve is provision for regional and special use facilities, and specifically more activities, facilities, and events for teens which appear to be needed now and into the future. Vernal City may wish to focus on assuring that residents have access to Neighborhood and Community Parks and the facilities they provide. This will take cooperation with the Uintah Recreation District and other partners in the community. While a golf course was included by one of the workshop groups during the Public Workshops, it does not appear to be warranted at this time, unless there is a community-wide desire and priority for another golf course over other types of facilities.

### Recreation Programs

Recreation Programs are managed by the Uintah Recreation District (URD). The latest achievement of the URD is completion of the Uintah Community Center located in Vernal City. The Uintah Community Center currently occupies approximately 12 acres of an 80-acre parcel known as Kay Memorial Park. When complete, the park will include a variety of recreation-oriented facilities and activities.

The many programs that are offered by URD occur in the District's 13 parks throughout the County, but most often occur in Ashley Valley Community Park. Additional programs occur in the Community Center, or by agreement with the school district at the junior high and middle school.

#### Uintah Recreation District Mission Statement

Providing high quality services, programs and facilities throughout our diverse community while maintaining financial stability; thereby promoting:

- **Pride in our community**
- **Lifelong healthy lifestyles**
- **Activities for the whole family**
- **Youth enrichment and self-esteem**

### Recreation Programs Offered

**Adult Programs:** Adult recreation programs include a variety of activities such as basketball, softball, kickball, volleyball, ultimate Frisbee, dodge ball, soccer, flag football, and tennis.

**Teen Programs:** Teen programs include programs and events to engage teens in recreational activity, such as the Flashlight Hunt, ski and other trips, soccer, tennis, basketball, volleyball, futsal, and a skate/bike challenge.

**Youth Programs:** Youth programs include itty bitty ball; ralleyball; T-ball; youth tennis; indoor soccer; basketball clinics; shootout; flag football; volleyball; put, pass and kick.

**Family Fun Events:** Family Fun Events encourage families to recreate and be active utilizing available parks by offering prizes for “getting caught” having a good time. Concerts and movies in the park are also provided throughout the summer months. Events are generally free, open to all ages, and are planned monthly.

**Enrichment Programs:** Enrichment programs are generally offered in cooperation with local interest groups or interested individuals. The programs are coordinated with local providers and generally take place at the Community Center. Programs have included martial arts programs and hunter safety programs to enhance skills and improve safety; tumbling, yoga, belly dancing, painting, beading, and others. The Center provides a convenient place for these activities to take place.

**Dinaland Golf Course:** The course offers both 9-holes and 18-holes and is an important element to the URD service district. It offers programs for all ages, including lessons, free clinics for beginners, and special events that pair golf course facilities with watching football games and enjoying food. Dinaland Golf Course is managed by the Uintah Recreation District.

**Aquatic Programs:** The Community Center pool includes water play activities, as well as leisure swimming, lap swimming, exercise, and swimming lessons. The pool is also available for private parties for all ages and occasions.

**Naples Family Splash Park:** The splash park is open during the warm months of the year (Memorial Day weekend through Labor Day) and includes a variety of water play activities and equipment. It is open for private parties by reservation.

### **Public Comment on Recreation Programs**

Recreation programs and facilities are very closely entwined, thus the public comment reviewed earlier coming directly from teens and senior citizens apply to the recommendations for recreation programs as well. As new facilities are developed, the recreation program needs of teens and senior citizens should be addressed. It may be necessary to specifically target high school students (teens) to determine their specific recreation program needs in order to broaden the variety of facilities and programs available at the Uintah Community Center and in Neighborhood and Community Parks.

## Summary

The URD does offer important recreation programs and is currently cooperating with other local agencies and entities to share facilities and expand programs. These efforts could be expanded to include more cooperation with local businesses and interest groups who might offer classes, special events, and/or other opportunities for expanded recreational opportunities. Vernal City should work with the URD to identify these special interests.

## Trails

Currently, there are very limited trails in Vernal City: the Kid's Canal Trail which runs from Main Street to 500 North along 1500 West, and a portion of the Steinaker Canal that runs along the canal right-of-way from 500 North to Highway 40. At this time, neither Vernal City nor Uintah County has a trails master plan. There are regional trails managed by the Bureau of Land Management and U.S. Forest Service that provide hiking and mountain biking opportunities nearby, but there are very limited walking and biking trails within the City and they do not connect to existing regional trails. Additionally, there are few bike lanes or routes designated on City streets.

### Public Comment on Trails

During the Public Scoping Meeting, residents expressed a desire for biking/walking trails, particularly along Ashley Creek, that link with the canal rights-of-way and Red Mountain, and from Vernal City to LaPoint. Trails were also a major point of discussion with the Management Committee members. A summary of their comments are shown in the box to the right.

Many of these same comments were reiterated during the public workshops and at special meetings with high school students and senior citizens. The key elements of the desired trail system are:

- connections to regional trails in the nearby public lands using the canals and Ashley Creek;
- preservation of the Ashley Creek floodplain that could include a nature

### Management Committee Comments Regarding Trails

- Vernal City is not bicycle or pedestrian friendly.
- Trails within town should be linked.
- Walking paths should be added to Kay Memorial Park when it develops.
- Safe walking and biking routes to schools are needed.
- Trails provide an alternative mode of transportation.
- Neighborhoods need to be connected to downtown with trails.
- Provide trails along the canals.
- There is the potential for a regional trail system that rivals Moab
- The existing mountain trail system is already known as an international destination.
- Trails are an essential component of a desirable community.

- park and publicly accessible natural areas;
- sidewalks on all major streets that connect important destinations like schools, parks, public places, and neighborhoods; and
- safe places for biking and walking.

Support for trails is very broad and important to Vernal City residents. Public Workshop attendees also participated in a Visual Preference Survey where photographs were evaluated regarding their appropriateness and desirability to residents. All of the top 10 photos (some of which are displayed below) show trails and other recreation facilities.

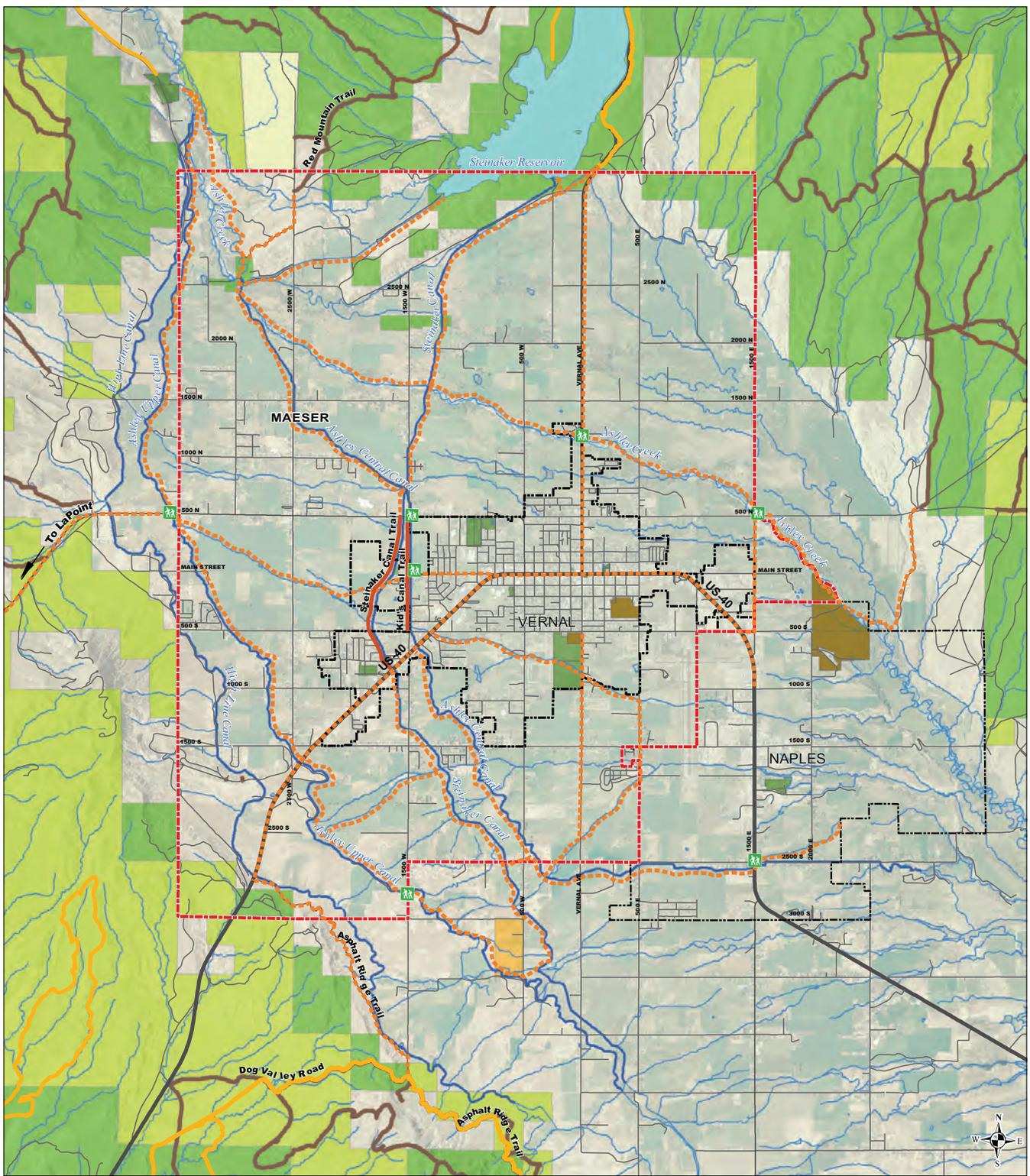


**Examples of the types of fully-separated trails**

### **Regional Trails**

Map 4-2 shows the Existing and Proposed Regional Trails provided for mountain biking, hiking, and off-road vehicle use that are primarily located on public land managed by the BLM, and proposed regional trails along Ashley Valley Creek and many of the existing canals. The proposed regional trails are intended to connect with the trails on public lands, and provide additional opportunities for hiking and biking in particular. They are proposed as non-motorized, multi-use trails that may or may not be paved, but provide sufficient width (at least 10', and more preferably 12' for safe two-way traffic) to allow for a variety of trail users (hikers, bikers, joggers, horse-back riders). Most of these trails can be off-street; however, in order to make connections to other trails within the City it is necessary to include some sections that are on-street along major roadways.

The trails shown utilize the canal rights-of-way and other relatively open lands to make loops. The map also suggests locations for trail heads which should include at a minimum parking, trail information, bike racks, and perhaps public information about trail etiquette and behavior. The intent is to provide trails of various levels of difficulty to accommodate many user types, and to loop trails whenever possible. Implementation of a regional trails system will require the cooperation and coordination of many parties including hiking and trail interest groups, public land managers, private property owners, as well as Vernal City and Uintah County. Although potential regional trails are shown on the map, a Regional Trails Committee made up of representatives of all types of trail users will be needed to refine it, add to it, and begin the process of implementation.



Adopted: May 19, 2010

0 0.25 0.5 1 1.5 2 Miles

# Vernal General Plan Update

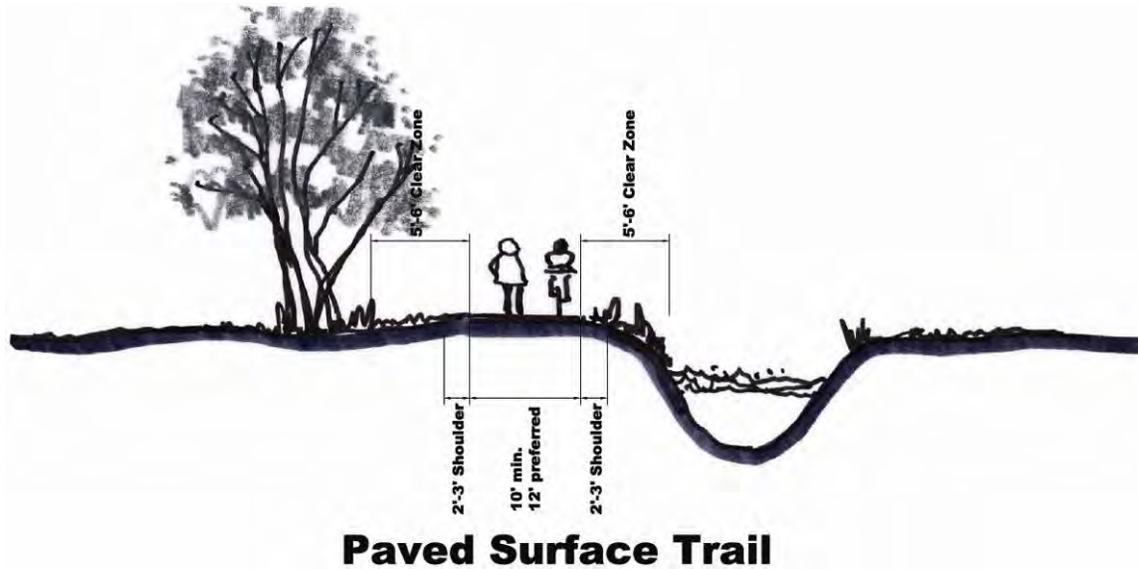
## Legend

- |                      |                                     |                      |
|----------------------|-------------------------------------|----------------------|
| Impact Area Boundary | Proposed Trail Heads                | <b>LandOwnership</b> |
| Vernal City Limit    | Existing Vernal City Trails         | BLM                  |
| Naples City Limit    | Proposed Multi-Use Regional Trails  | SITLA                |
| US Hwy. 40           | Hiking/Biking Trails On Public Land | UDWR                 |
| US Hwy. 191          | OHV Trails On Public Land           |                      |
| State Roads          | Parks                               |                      |
| Streets              | Recreational Facilities             |                      |
| Canals               | OpenRide                            |                      |
| Watercourses         |                                     |                      |

Map 4-2:  
Regional Trails



The section below illustrates the typical requirements for an off-road, non-motorized, multi-use paved surface trail. Though it is shown as paved, it can also be unpaved.



### Vernal City Trails

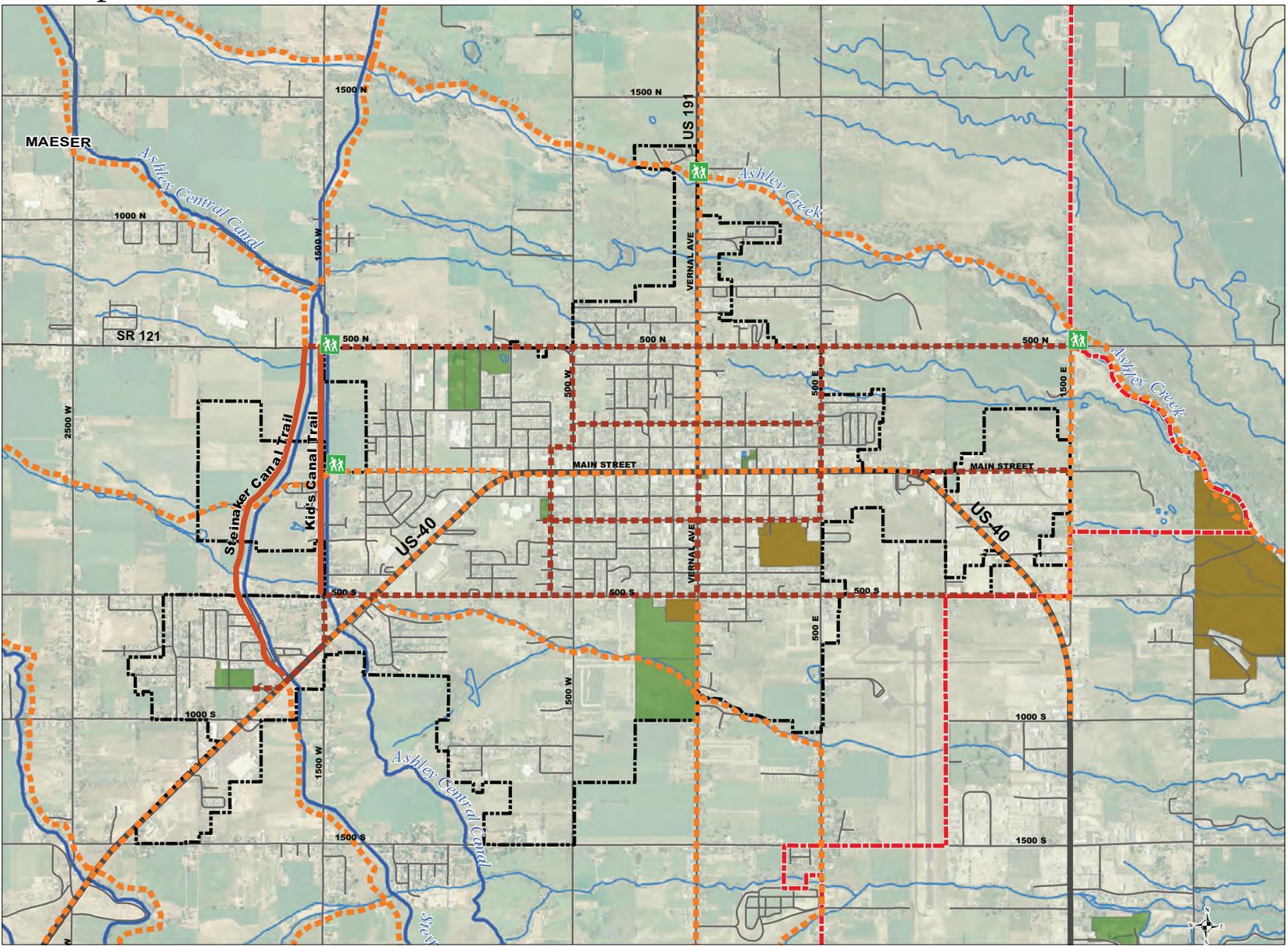
Map 4-3 shows the very limited Existing Vernal City Trails, as well as proposed local and City trails. The intent is to link residential neighborhoods with schools, public and cultural facilities, shopping areas, and other destinations that can be accessed by modes of transportation other than a personal vehicle. Therefore, many of the major existing roadways are utilized to incorporate on-street bike lanes, on-street bike routes, or bike and pedestrian paths. These bicycle facilities should be incorporated into the City's Transportation Plan, so that as new roadways are constructed bicycle traffic is accommodated. Similarly, bike racks are needed at key destinations to accommodate riders.



**Kid's Canal Trail**

# Vernal General Plan Update

- Legend**
- Impact Area Boundary
  - Vernal City Limit
  - US Hwy. 40
  - US Hwy. 191
  - State Roads
  - Streets
  - Canals
  - Watercourses
  - Proposed Trail Heads
  - Existing Vernal City Trails
  - Proposed Local and Vernal City Trails (On and Off Street)
  - Proposed Multi-Use Regional Trails
  - Parks
  - Recreational Facilities

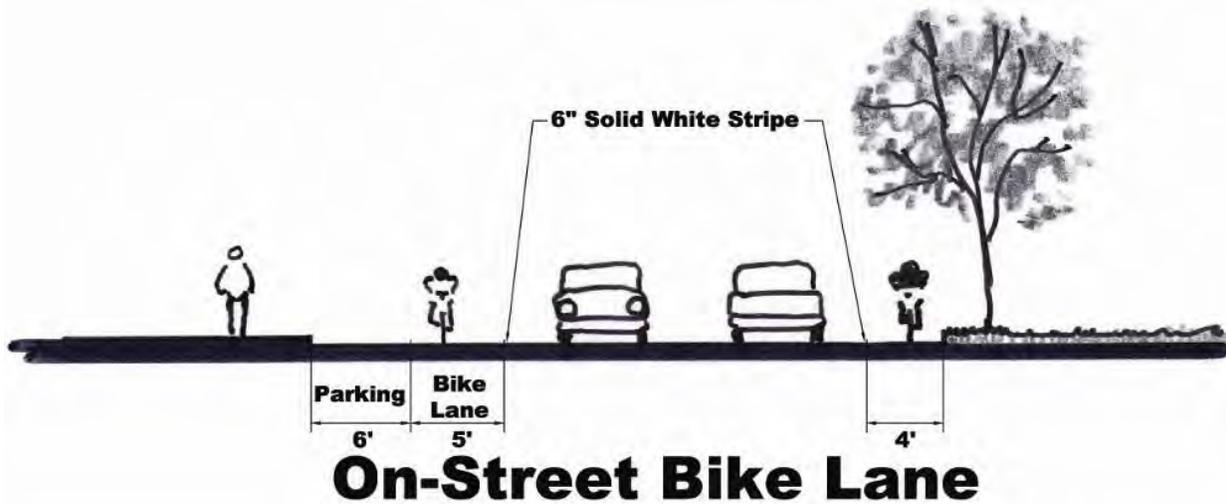


0 0.25 0.5 1 Miles Adopted: May 19, 2010

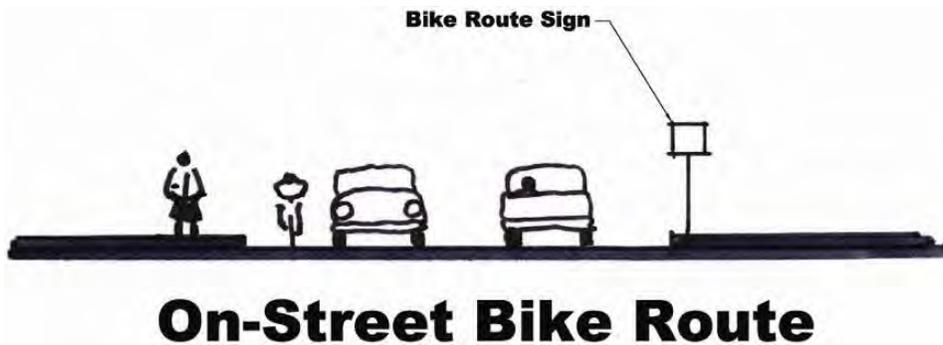
Map 4-3:  
Vernal City Trails



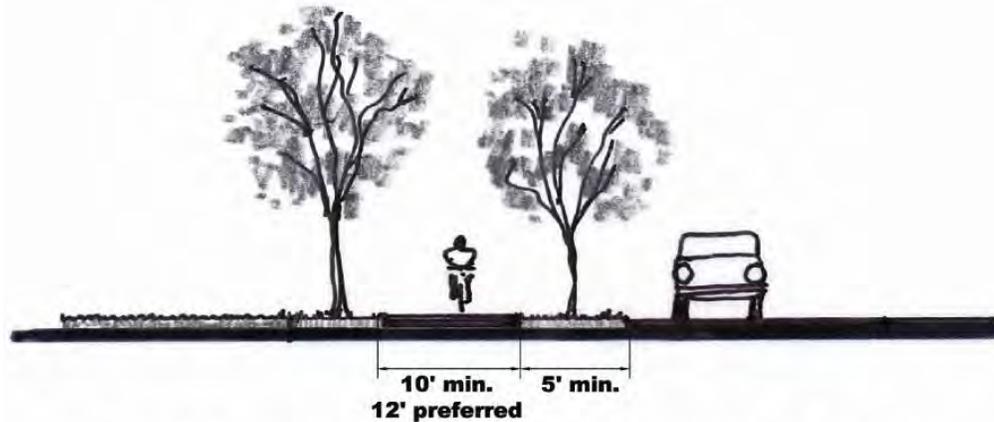
On-street Bicycle Lanes are lanes designated on the roadway for bicycle traffic. The lanes are striped and signed, and designed into the roadway if possible, or retrofitted into an existing roadway where space allows. They give bicyclists and motorists clearly designated lanes in which to travel. The section below illustrates a typical bicycle lane and recommended dimensions.



On-street Bike Routes are roadways that accommodate bicycles but do not designate a specific lane. Bicycles typically travel in-traffic with motorists, and are accommodated by providing signing indicating to motorists that bicycles will be using the roadway and that they should be aware of them and drive safely. The section below illustrates a roadway that is also a bike route.



Bicycle and Pedestrian Paths are separate off-street facilities that typically follow a roadway. Often they are expanded sidewalks that are multiple-use. Bicycle and Pedestrian paths are enjoyed by recreational bicycle users and children generally, whereas bicycle lanes and routes are preferred by bicycle commuters.



## **Bikeway/Pedestrian Path**

Existing and proposed Vernal City trails and local trails also link to the regional trails identified in Map 4-2, and make use of the same canal rights-of-way. Whenever possible, the paths should be off-street, but there will be many times when on-street trails are the only viable option to make connections.

### **Sidewalks**

Sidewalks are essential to safe pedestrian use along roadways. At a minimum, they should be incorporated into the design of any new major or minor roadways including Primary Arterials, Minor Arterials, Major Collectors, and Minor Collectors designated on the Vernal City Function Class Roadway Map (see Figure 7-2). Where sidewalks are currently insufficient or non-existent, especially on important routes to schools, every effort should be made to identify the deficiencies and prioritize sidewalk improvements in those areas. The City policy that disallows bicycles on sidewalks should also be re-evaluated, especially where they could provide safer routes for children.

### **Trail Liability Issues**

Many Utah communities are working with canal and irrigation companies to negotiate ways of using canal rights-of-way and access/maintenance roads for trails. There is precedence for canal use for trails, but issues always arise about liability and the danger of allowing public use adjacent to what may be perceived to be hazardous conditions. Title 57, Chapter 14 of the Utah Code is called Limitation of Landowner Liability. The purpose of the act is to “encourage public and private owners of land to make land and water areas available to the public for recreational purposes by limiting the owner’s liability toward persons entering the land and water areas for those purposes” (57-14-1 Legislative Purpose). The act essentially relieves property owners of responsibility for dangerous conditions when private lands are made available to the general public free of charge or for a nominal fee of one dollar per person per year. In this light, concerns about liability should not be considered a deterrent to negotiated agreements for canal right-of-way uses.

Property owners may also be concerned about trails through their property for reasons other than liability. Specifically mentioned were the presence of livestock, and just not wanting the general public to have access to private property. These issues can sometimes be resolved with education, reassurance, and negotiation; however, it will always be necessary to have a willing property owner involved in determining final trail alignments. Those that are shown on the Map 4-2 and 4-3 as proposed will need cooperation with the canal companies and private property owners in order for them to be implemented, and implementation will certainly take place in phases over time. Having a trail system documented and contained in the General Plan Update will make it easier to implement in the future.

### **Conflicts and Safety on Multi-Purpose Off-Street Trails**

The potential for conflicts on multi-use trails is always a consideration and primarily revolves around the diversity of trail users which may include mountain bikers, cyclists, joggers, hikers and walkers, mothers with strollers, small children on bikes, people with dogs, equestrian interests, rollerblade users, and others. The various users all have different skill levels and interests, as well as preferences for surfacing.

Conflicts are likely to be relatively low initially, but may increase in the future. When it becomes apparent that conflicts are increasing, a well-designed signing system coupled with a comprehensive public information and education campaign which includes maps, flyers, newspaper articles, public service announcements, and other community-specific means may be needed to get information out to the public about how to use trails safely.

In the end, a variety of trail types will likely be needed to meet the needs of children, families, seniors, commuters, and others. A published trail map is essential to provide more than just the physical location of the trail, but also its condition, difficulty, suitability for various users, what might be enjoyed along the trail, the length of the trail, what services are provided, and trail etiquette and behavior.

### **Trail Implementation**

At the Draft Plan Open House, several individuals expressed frustration that trails are seldom considered when roads are constructed or up-graded, or when development occurs. It is clear that trails are highly valued by the community, thus taking every opportunity to assure that they are implemented is needed.

- Whenever roadway improvements are planned, an appropriate multi-use trail/sidewalk should be incorporated as a matter of policy within Vernal City and county-wide. This will take partnerships and cooperation between agencies and municipalities.
- Whenever possible, existing roadways that have adequate space should be retrofit to include on-street trails or off-street multi-use trails.

- Whenever new development occurs adjacent to a proposed trail alignment or a major roadway designated for trail development, the easement or right-of-way for that trail should be required as a condition of development approval, and the developer should be required to construct the trail or sidewalk according to the City's development standards.

Opportunities to assure trail development will inevitably occur as the community grows; making trail development a high priority means every development or redevelopment should be evaluated to assure that trails are accommodated, so they can be linked together in the future.

## **Goals and Policies**

### **Parks Goals and Policies**

**Goal:**           **To assure that Vernal City residents have the desired access to parks and park facilities.**

**Policy:**           Maintain a standard of 10.3 acres of developed park land per each 1000 residents in the community, regardless of park ownership and management. The standard shall be based on total acres of parks within the Vernal City boundary including Neighborhood, Community, and Regional Parks; and shall not include mini-parks, other recreation facilities, school facilities, or private park facilities that do not serve a neighborhood or community park function.

**Policy:**           Adopt the following definitions for parks:

Neighborhood Parks: Neighborhood Parks have a one-mile service area, and are deliberately located close to neighborhoods. Neighborhood Park development should include the following minimum facilities: one basketball court; one multi-purpose open play area with room for informal baseball/softball, soccer, and football activities; one sand volleyball court; one accessible playground; one pavilion with six picnic tables; one drinking fountain; one small parking lot; lighted walkways/trails; trash receptacles; identification signing; lawn; and trees. Neighborhood Parks may also include additional amenities, depending on the size of the park and neighborhood needs. Restrooms are not generally provided in Neighborhood Parks.

Community Parks: Community Parks have a two-mile service area radius, attract residents from throughout the community, and have adequate automobile parking. Community Park development should include the

following minimum facilities: restroom, one basketball court, two defined baseball/softball fields with space provided for soccer and football, one sand volleyball court, one playground, two pavilions with nine picnic tables in each, two drinking fountains, 100 car parking lot and lighting, lighted walkways/trails, trash receptacles, identification signing, and , lawn and trees. Community Parks may include additional amenities depending on size and neighborhood needs.

Regional Parks: Regional Parks generally serve residents County-wide, but for purposes of addressing access to parks in Vernal City a two-mile service area has been assumed, similar to a Community Park.

*Implementation Measure:* Acquire and develop additional park land to meet the standards and definitions as the community grows into the future.

*Implementation Measure:* Create a Vernal City Parks and Recreation Committee to spearhead implementation, and organize volunteer programs.

*Implementation Measure:* Adopt the *Uintah Recreation District Draft Master Park Plan (2006)* goals and the essential elements of the plan with the revisions expressed in this General Plan Update.

*Implementation Measure:* Work with the Uintah Recreation District to upgrade existing parks serving Vernal City with improvements expressed in the park definitions.

*Implementation Measure:* Work with the Uintah Recreation District to complete the remaining 68 acres in Kay Memorial Park to be sure that it ultimately includes the facilities needed to serve as a Community Park serving the residents of Vernal City.

*Implementation Measure:* Work with Utah State University to develop cultural and recreational facilities that are also available to the general public.

*Implementation Measure:* As new areas of growth are developed and annexed into the City, assure that the current level of service (10.3 acres per 1000 population) is maintained, and that parks are located and distributed throughout the community to adequately serve the public. This should be incorporated into the development review process.

*Implementation Measure:* Work with the Uintah Recreation District to determine the feasibility and actual need for a dog park.

*Implementation Measure:* Implement water conservation practices into park design and maintenance.

*Implementation Measure:* Work with Uintah Recreation District and others to assure that parks are maintained adequately.

### **Recreation Program and Facilities Goals and Policies**

**Goal:** To assure that Vernal City residents have the desired access to recreation programs and facilities.

**Policy:** Adopt the *Uintah Recreation District Draft Master Park Plan (2006)* goals and the essential elements of the plan with the revisions expressed in this General Plan Update.

*Implementation Measure:* Work with the Uintah Recreation District to determine the specific needs of youth and teens utilizing focus groups and/or a targeted survey.

*Implementation Measure:* Incorporate facilities of interest to teens and youth into future improvements at the Uintah Community Center and Kay Memorial Park

*Implementation Measure:* Work with the Uintah Recreation District and special interest groups to locate special use parks including a shooting range, quarter-mile race track, and motocross as identified by high school students.

*Implementation Measure:* As new public facilities are developed, assure that they include walking courses that are accessible to senior citizens.

*Implementation Measure:* Replace or expand the existing senior citizen center to include space and facilities for physical exercise.

*Implementation Measure:* As new parks are developed, survey residents to help determine and plan the most-desired and needed recreation programs and facilities.

*Implementation Measure:* Adopt maintenance standards for parks and facilities to assure they are adequately maintained in safe and useable condition.

## Trails Goals and Policies

**Goal:** To assure that City residents have safe and connected sidewalks throughout the City.

*Policy:* Plan for future sidewalks on all Primary Arterials, Minor Arterials, Major Collectors, and Minor Collectors designated on the Vernal City Functional Class Roadway Map.

*Implementation Measure:* Complete a sidewalk inventory for critical roads and streets and prioritize improvements based on safe access to schools, parks, cultural and public facilities, and important community destinations.

*Implementation Measure:* Implement sidewalk improvements based on priorities established.

*Implementation Measure:* As part of the development review process, require sidewalk development as a condition of project approval.

*Implementation Measure:* Re-evaluate the current policy which prohibits bicycles on City sidewalks, especially where they can provide safer routes for children.

**Goal:** To assure that Vernal City residents have access to regional trails, connecting communities and recreation areas throughout the valley.

*Policy:* Incorporate trail planning into the City and County-wide development review process to assure that trails are implemented in the future.

*Implementation Measure:* Organize a Regional Trails Committee made up of trail user interest groups, public land managers, private property owners, canal companies, and representatives from Vernal City and Uintah County to begin implementation of the regional trail system.

*Implementation Measure:* Work with local canal companies to secure public access agreements for canals needed to complete the regional trail system.

*Implementation Measure:* Work with adjacent property owners to secure public passage on private lands where there is an agreeable property owner and the section is needed to complete trail connections.

*Implementation Measure:* Identify and secure property or easements for the implementation of trailheads that are accessible to the general public at key locations throughout the system.

*Implementation Measure:* Work with adjacent public lands managers to implement a continuous regional trail system.

*Implementation Measure:* Utilize the many funding sources available for trail development from state, local, and federal sources.

**Goal: To assure that Vernal City residents have access to local trails, providing safe travel for bicycles and pedestrians.**

**Policy:** Incorporate trail planning into the development review process to assure that City and local trails are implemented in the future.

*Implementation Measure:* Organize a Trails Committee which provides planning assistance, promotes bicycle use and walking throughout the City, and advises City departments.

*Implementation Measure:* Adopt the recommended standards contained in the General Plan for trail widths and design features.

*Implementation Measure:* Utilize canal rights-of-way and other off-street non-motorized alignments whenever possible.

*Implementation Measure:* Utilize on-street alignments to make connections to off-street trails when necessary.

*Implementation Measure:* Provide on-street bike lanes or routes on major streets that facilitate bicycle commuters. Work with local bicycle organizations to identify key routes.

*Implementation Measure:* Provide bike racks at key destinations, trail heads, and other locations to accommodate riders.

*Implementation Measure:* Prioritize trail development on City-owned or controlled easements and rights-of-way.

*Implementation Measure:* As roadways are improved or new roads are developed, include trails adjacent to, but separated from the roadways.

*Implementation Measure:* Connect Vernal City trails to trail systems in adjacent municipalities and to regional trail systems.

*Implementation Measure:* Prioritize trail development that links schools, neighborhoods, and other destinations.



# 5 Economic Development

## Current Economic Conditions

### Employment

The most current employment information the Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA) provides is for 2006. While other government agencies provide more recent employment information (2007), they do not include agricultural workers like the BEA does. Since agriculture is still a fairly large industry in the Vernal area, the BEA numbers are presented here. In 2006, the major employment sectors in Uintah County were mining (19 percent), government (15 percent), and retail trade (11 percent). Sixteen percent of all people employed were non-farm proprietors. Five percent of Uintah County employment was engaged in farm work. Table 5-1 shows the breakdown of jobs in the County in 2006, compared to the State of Utah as a whole. Of note are Uintah County’s reliance on mining jobs and its lack of manufacturing jobs. Figure 5-1 shows how the number of jobs in the mining sector, which is almost exclusively made up of oil and natural gas production, affects other sectors. The construction sector, for example, is highly influenced by the mining sector. The manufacturing sector, however, is not.

**Table 5-1  
2006 Share of Employment by Industry, Uintah County and  
State of Utah**

	Uintah County	State of Utah	Difference
Total employment	100.0%	100.0%	0.0%
Proprietors employment	21.3%	20.8%	0.5%
Farm employment	5.4%	1.2%	4.2%
Forestry, fishing, & related activities	0.5%	0.2%	0.3%
Mining	19.0%	0.7%	18.3%
Utilities	0.8%	0.3%	0.5%
Construction	6.5%	8.0%	-1.4%
Manufacturing	1.8%	8.1%	-6.3%
Wholesale trade	3.4%	3.2%	0.1%
Retail trade	11.0%	11.3%	-0.2%
Transportation & warehousing	4.9%	3.3%	1.5%
Information	1.0%	2.3%	-1.4%
Finance & insurance	2.5%	5.6%	-3.1%
Real estate & rental & leasing	3.9%	4.9%	-1.0%
Professional & technical services	2.9%	6.2%	-3.4%
Management of companies & enterprises	(D)	1.3%	n/a

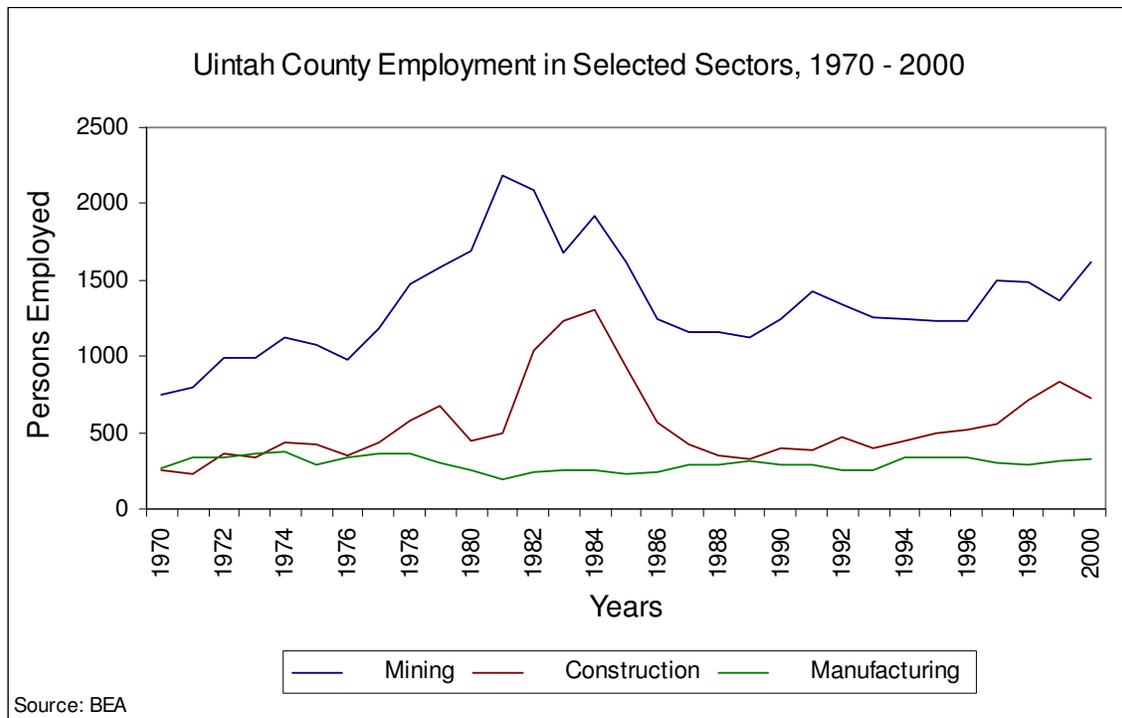
**Table 5-1**  
**2006 Share of Employment by Industry, Uintah County and State of Utah**

	Uintah County	State of Utah	Difference
Administrative & waste services	(D)	5.8%	n/a
Educational services	0.6%	2.5%	-1.9%
Health care & social assistance	5.6%	7.7%	-2.1%
Arts, entertainment, & recreation	0.8%	2.0%	-1.2%
Accommodation & food services	5.3%	6.1%	-0.8%
Other services	5.9%	5.3%	0.6%
Government & government enterprises	15.3%	13.9%	1.4%
Federal, civilian	2.3%	2.2%	0.1%
Military	0.8%	1.1%	-0.3%
State & local	12.3%	10.6%	1.7%
State government	0.8%	4.1%	-3.3%
Local government	11.5%	6.5%	4.9%

Source: Bureau of Economic Analysis, Wikstrom

Note: "(D)" signifies that the number of jobs in that industry could not be disclosed for confidentiality purposes.

**Figure 5-1**



Mining, government and trade were also the strongest sectors in Vernal City. The employment numbers for the City only cover non-farm employment. In 2006, mining accounted for 21.3 percent of jobs, and government accounted for 18.4 percent of jobs. The trade sector had the highest proportion of employment, accounting for 24.3 percent of jobs in Vernal City.<sup>1</sup>

**Table 5-2  
2007 Non-farm Employment by Sector, Vernal City  
and Uintah County**

	Vernal City	Uintah County
Mining	21.3%	24.7%
Construction	4.9%	7.3%
Manufacturing	1.3%	1.8%
Trade/Transportation/Utilities	24.3%	22.3%
Information	1.2%	1.0%
Financial Activities	4.4%	4.1%
Professional/Business Services	5.0%	5.1%
Education/Health/Social Services	8.6%	6.1%
Leisure/Hospitality Services	8.4%	7.0%
Other Services	2.3%	2.7%
Government	18.4%	18.0%
Total	100.0%	100.0%

Source: Utah Department of Workforce Services, Bureau of Economic and Business Research

Vernal City is the business hub of the County. In 2000, 74 percent of non-farm jobs in Uintah County are located in Vernal City, even though only 29 percent of the County's population lives in Vernal City.<sup>2</sup>

The oil and natural gas industry has become extremely important due to the number of jobs it has provided and the amount of wages paid to local employees. According to an economic baseline study of Vernal City and Ashley Valley prepared in 2008, nearly one in five workers in Uintah County is employed in the production of oil or natural gas. The oil and natural gas industry also generated more in direct wages in 2006 than any other industry at \$240 million. According to the study, approximately 50 percent of all jobs

---

<sup>1</sup> Bureau of Economic and Business Research. (2008). *Economic baseline study of Vernal and Ashley Valley*.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid. Data for 2007.

and 60 percent of all wages in the Uintah Basin are reliant on the presence of oil and natural gas production.<sup>3</sup>

#### Income

As noted in the demographic section of Chapter 1, Vernal City's median household income in 1999 was \$30,357 (2008\$). This is noticeably lower than the median household income for both the County at \$44,012 (2008\$) and the State at \$45,726 (2008\$). Interestingly, however, Uintah County has the highest average wage of any county in Utah.<sup>4</sup> This seeming discrepancy between low household incomes and high wages is likely due to the many oil and natural gas workers who live in non-housing units and are underrepresented in the census. The discrepancy is heightened by the fact that oil and natural gas wages tend to be relatively high.

#### Oil and Gas Extraction

Uintah County's oil and natural gas jobs have followed a feast and famine pattern. The first viable oil well appeared in Uintah County in the 1920's, with oil becoming a major part of Vernal City's economy in the 1940's. Vernal City feasted on oil through the 1950's and early 1960's before leaner times set in. Oil and natural gas production began to increase again in the early 1970's, but it wasn't until 1976 that the real boom occurred. In 1977 the number of mining (mostly oil and natural gas) employees surpassed the previous record set in 1962. Mining employment peaked in 1981 at over 2,100—nearly double the amount of the previous peak. Oil production peaked shortly after in 1984 and gradually declined until 2000 when it began to climb again. It was not until just recently—in 2007—that oil production reached levels seen in the 1980's.

The current boom is based in natural gas production, which has skyrocketed to levels never seen before in Uintah County. The County produced roughly the same amount of oil in 2007 as was produced in the last boom. Natural gas production in 2007 was six and a half times the amount produced during the last oil boom and three times the amount produced in the last natural gas production peak, which occurred in 1993.

When oil and natural gas prices increase, so does the production of both commodities in Uintah County. This also means more workers are needed, which then means increases in population. Vernal City saw a noticeable increase in population during the 1950's oil boom and another, much more massive increase from 1970 to 1980. Interestingly, even though the County's oil production has declined drastically from time to time, neither Vernal City, nor the County has ever shown a decline in population on Census records from 1900 to date, including between 1990 and 2000, when oil production declined consistently. This could be due to many factors. Certainly one important point is that from 1990 to 2000 natural gas production was increasing while oil production was decreasing. This increase in natural gas production probably allowed many people to stay in the area who otherwise might have been forced to leave.

---

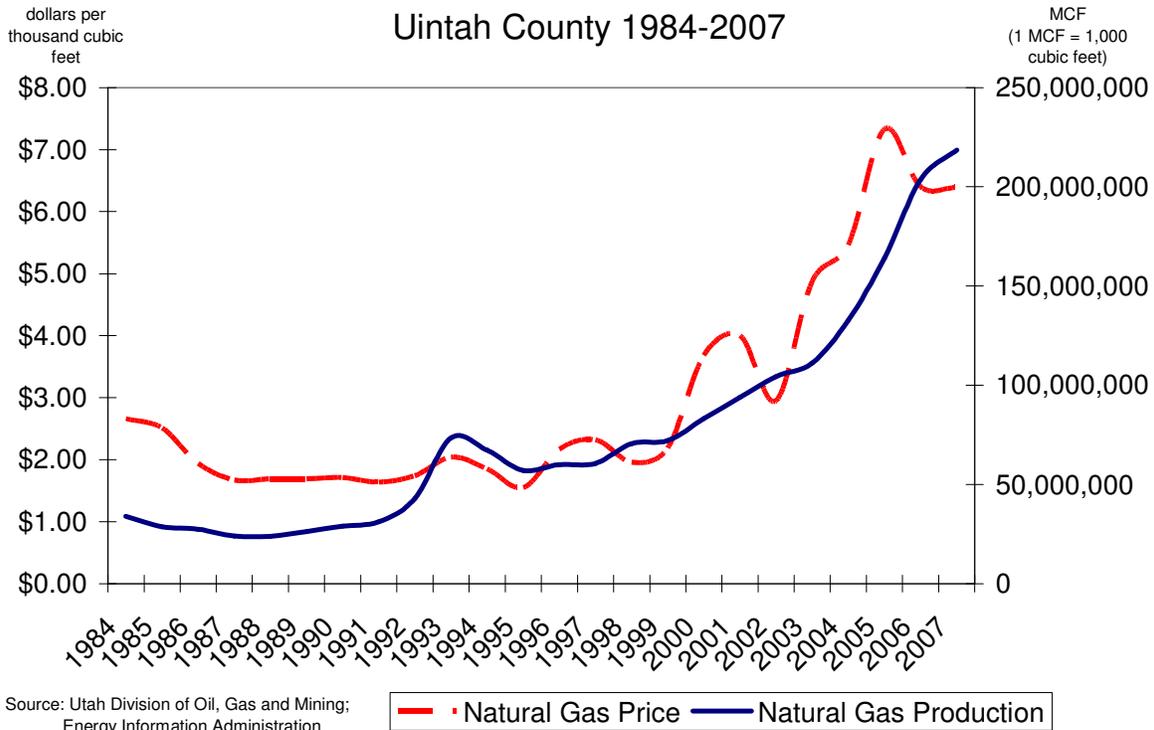
<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

Another explanation is that there actually have been times of declining population, but the 10-year counts are too far apart to show the yearly change. Intercensal population estimates do in fact show times of population decrease. The decreases between the censuses just happened to be offset by higher increases during the remaining years in the decade where population did not decline.

**Figure 5-2**

**Natural Gas Price and Production in Uintah County 1984-2007**

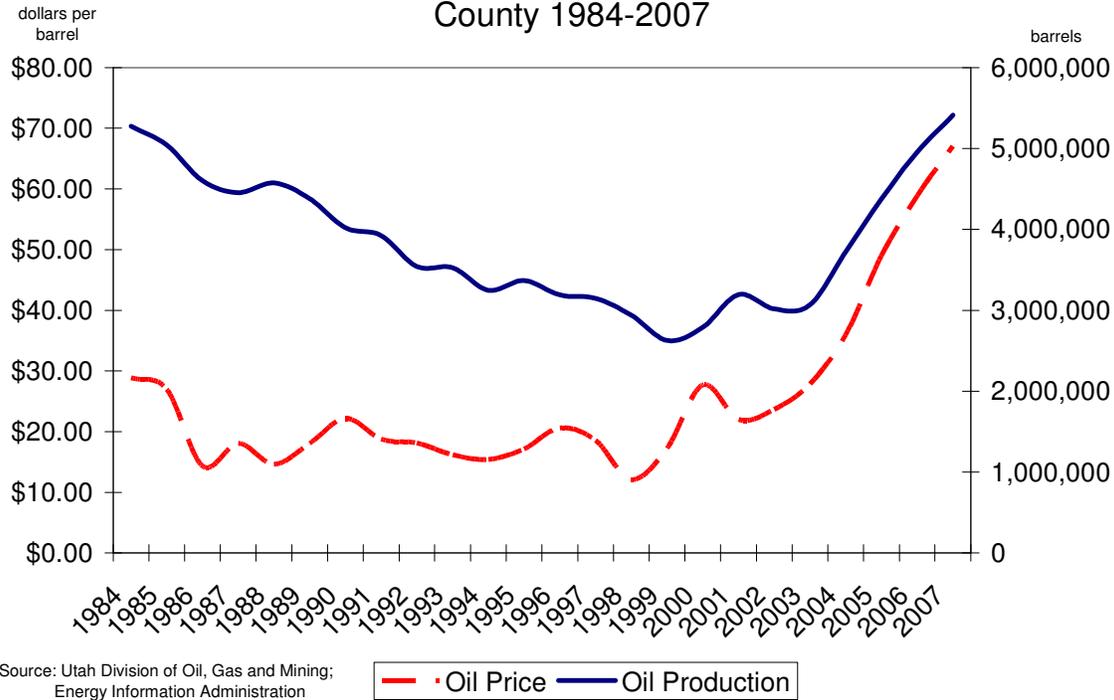


Unemployment statistics seem to confirm the common assumption that many people who lose their jobs choose to stay in a community during lean times and hope for better times ahead. Historical unemployment rates show an inverse relationship to oil production. In other words, when oil production is down, unemployment rates are up. Uintah County’s unemployment rate was much higher than the State’s during the 1990’s when oil production was falling and natural gas production was still relatively low. Uintah County’s unemployment rate finally converged with Utah’s rate in 2000 and has remained very close to Utah’s rate ever since. As of November 2008 Uintah County’s unemployment rate was 2.2 percent compared to the State of Utah’s 3.7 percent.

Unemployment data is available for both Utah and Uintah County from 1980 to the present. The data shows that, over the past three decades the unemployment rate for Uintah County has averaged 1.6 percentage points higher than the State of Utah’s rate. Put another way, in 22 of the past 29 years Uintah County had higher unemployment rates than the State. Those 22 years happened to fall between oil boom cycles. It

Figure 5-3

Oil Price and Production in Uintah County 1984-2007



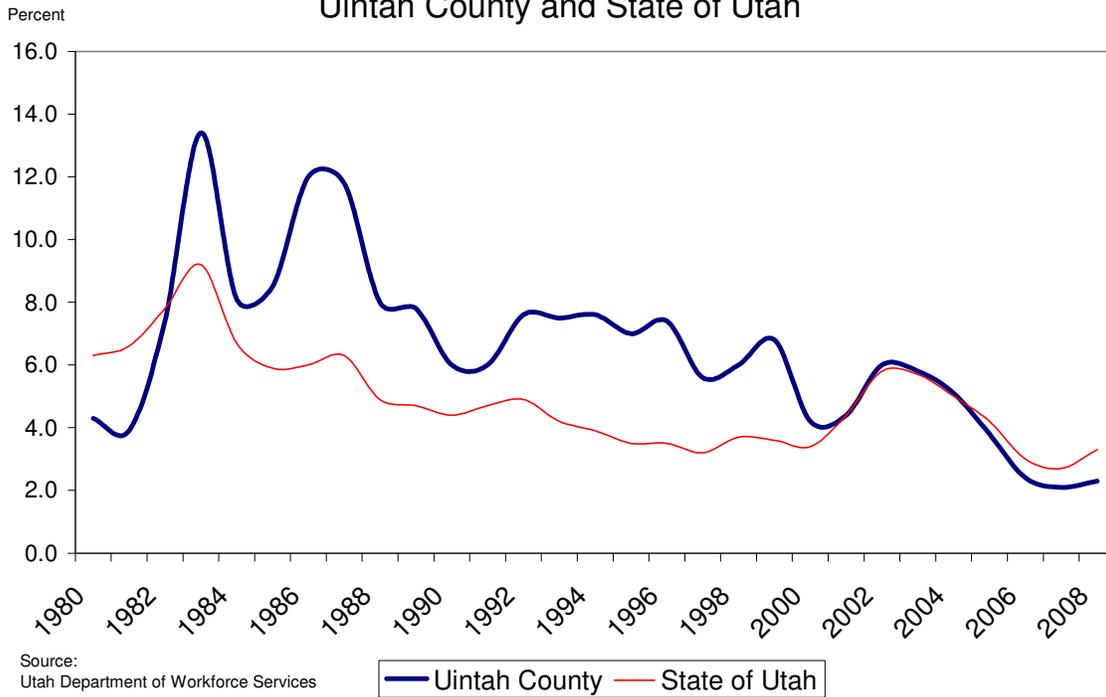
seems that long periods of above average unemployment could be the price Uintah County residents pay for living in an area with an undiversified economy and that is heavily dependent on natural resources.

While oil prices will always be volatile, it is generally agreed that prices will continue to trend upward over the long term as resources become more and more scarce. This makes it likely that oil and natural gas will continue to be critical components of Vernal City’s economy. The challenge is not the absolute depletion of resources—at least in the foreseeable future, but how to deal with the volatility that comes with a natural resource-based economy.

Vernal City is not like other communities in Utah. It is isolated and its economy is centered on a single industry. This is unlikely to change. While Vernal City can take steps to diversify its economy, it is likely that it will always be heavily based on natural resource extraction.

Other industries also feel the effects of the cycles in the oil and natural gas market. As shown before (Figure 5-1), construction is highly related to the amount of activity in oil and natural gas production. When jobs in oil and natural gas extraction are plentiful, other types of businesses lose employees to the high-paying extraction jobs. This causes wages in these other businesses to increase in order to compete. Increased wages mean higher costs for these businesses. The higher costs often translate into

**Figure 5-4**  
 Historical Unemployment 1980-2008:  
 Uintah County and State of Utah



higher consumer prices, which can be difficult for low wage earners. Housing prices can be especially high, since this pattern is also coupled with large population increases. Finding decent affordable housing is difficult for many people during boom times.<sup>5</sup>

## Understanding the Oil and Natural Gas Extraction Industry

It is important to understand the nature of the oil and natural gas production industry in order to understand future population and economic changes in Vernal City. This point is highlighted by the fact that other oil and natural gas dependent communities in the U.S. have exhibited remarkably similar patterns in population change over the last few decades.

### Oil

The oil production industry is extremely volatile and has been the cause of booms and busts in many small towns. The volatility in this industry stems from volatility in oil prices. As prices increase, there is an incentive to produce more, since the costs of

<sup>5</sup> Strategic Leadership Partners. (2008). *Uintah County Extraction Industry Impact Study*.

production remain fairly predictable, on average about \$50 per barrel.<sup>6</sup> Prices, however, are highly volatile due to an array of various global influences and the fact that 60 percent<sup>7</sup> of oil consumed in the U.S. comes from overseas. One of the biggest influences on price volatility is OPEC, a cartel made up of several of the world's largest oil producers. They seek to control prices to ensure profits for themselves. Another influence on volatility is that the biggest oil producing areas happen to also be in politically-unstable parts of the world. Rapid industrialization in large countries such as China and India has also led to rapid changes in demand, especially when the leaders of those countries have subsidized oil for their consumers.<sup>8</sup> Finally, government policies could have dramatic effects on the oil industry and the ability to produce. All of these factors end up having a very direct impact on cities such as Vernal City, which have economies based on the production of oil.

Since the oil industry can have such a large impact on Vernal City, it is worth explaining some of the idiosyncrasies of the industry. First of all, shale oil is an important topic for Vernal City, since the Uintah Basin has billions of barrels worth of oil in its shale deposits and could, therefore, become a major producer if shale oil extraction was to become viable. However, it currently costs about \$70 to produce a barrel of oil derived from shale.<sup>9</sup> Therefore, shale oil will only become viable if oil prices return to levels well above \$70 per barrel for a sustained period of time or if, for whatever reason, shale oil becomes cheap enough to produce profitably given current oil prices.

Large imbalances between oil prices and production costs demonstrate other important characteristics of the oil industry. Volatility can cause prices to soar far above production costs, but eventually the prices will always return to the production cost (which includes profit for the producers).<sup>10</sup> Higher prices will initially lead to increased production, likely causing increased migration to Vernal City. However, this will only last as long as the oil prices are higher than production costs. When things even out, in-migration will decrease and may even turn to out-migration depending on how much the market has to correct itself. Past experience shows that the farther out of balance prices get compared to production costs, the bigger the eventual crash. This is because bigger and bigger profits lead to more and more production, often leading to over-production.<sup>11</sup>

When prices decrease, producers can cut back very quickly. All they have to do is reduce output from wells and lay off workers. However, producers respond much more

---

<sup>6</sup> Tully, S. (June 6, 2008). Why oil prices will tank. *Fortune* on CNNMoney.com. Retrieved from [http://money.cnn.com/2008/06/06/news/economy/tully\\_oil\\_bust.fortune/index.htm?eref=rss\\_topstories](http://money.cnn.com/2008/06/06/news/economy/tully_oil_bust.fortune/index.htm?eref=rss_topstories)

<sup>7</sup> Energy Information Administration. (2008). *Annual energy outlook 2009 early release*.

<sup>8</sup> Tully, S. (June 6, 2008). Why oil prices will tank. *Fortune* on CNNMoney.com. Retrieved from [http://money.cnn.com/2008/06/06/news/economy/tully\\_oil\\_bust.fortune/index.htm?eref=rss\\_topstories](http://money.cnn.com/2008/06/06/news/economy/tully_oil_bust.fortune/index.htm?eref=rss_topstories)

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Production cost is the cost to produce the last, most-expensive barrel of oil needed to meet global demand.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

slowly to price increases. It takes a long time and a significant amount of investment to start drilling new wells, so producers will wait to do this until the market demonstrates that the prices will likely remain high for a long period of time.<sup>12</sup>

A couple other important details concerning the oil industry relate to workers. First, when oil companies refer to cutting costs, they usually mean laying people off.<sup>13</sup> And second, companies that provide services to oil producers are the most vulnerable to market changes. Employment in these companies tends to be the first to increase in times of higher prices and the first to disappear in times of decreasing prices.<sup>14</sup>

One final note of interest that concerns the oil industry is the Peak Oil Theory. To summarize, this theory says that since the easiest-to-extract oil is extracted first and since oil will become increasingly more difficult to extract over time, production will eventually top out and begin to decrease as extraction costs increase over time. As it applies to Vernal City, this means that eventually oil production will begin to consistently decrease, likely leading to out-migration. Most experts who predict a peak predict that worldwide peak production will occur between now and the year 2040.<sup>15</sup>

## **Natural Gas**

Many of the principles mentioned for oil can also be applied to the natural gas market; however, the natural gas market is its own unique creature, operating with a different set of influences that affect supply and demand. For example, excluding liquefied natural gas, most natural gas cannot be shipped globally. Because of its physical properties, it must be transported by pipeline, resulting in a market that is limited in scale by the extent the pipelines can reach. Therefore, the natural gas market tends to be more regional in scale, rather than global.<sup>16</sup> However, this does not make natural gas completely immune from global influences. For example, increased international interest in reducing carbon emissions has increased the demand for natural gas, since it burns cleaner than oil and coal.<sup>17</sup>

Gas also tends to be highly influenced by the weather. Since one of its major uses is for heating homes and other buildings, demand goes up in colder times and down in warmer times.<sup>18</sup>

---

<sup>12</sup> Texas Comptroller. (2001). *Rural Texas in transition*. Retrieved from <http://www.window.state.tx.us/specialrpt/rural/5oilngas.html>

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> U.S. Government Accountability Office. (2007). *Crude oil: Uncertainty about future oil supply makes it important to develop a strategy for addressing a peak and decline in oil production*.

<sup>16</sup> Texas Comptroller. (2001). *Rural Texas in transition*. Retrieved from <http://www.window.state.tx.us/specialrpt/rural/5oilngas.html>

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

In December 2008, the highest sources of demand for natural gas in the U.S. were for power generation (33 percent) and industrial uses (31 percent).<sup>19</sup>

Uintah County is Utah's major producer of natural gas, producing 57 percent of the State's total production.<sup>20</sup> The current energy-related boom in Uintah County is based on natural gas production.<sup>21</sup>

### Diversification

Because of the existence of important natural resources, such as oil and natural gas, in the Vernal area boom and bust cycles will always exist, at least for the foreseeable future. However, it may be possible to reduce the impact of boom and bust cycles by diversifying the local economy. This means strengthening a wide variety of industries, especially those not related to oil and natural gas production. Less reliance on one particular industry means more stability for the local economy.

The introduction of the new Bingham Entrepreneurship and Energy Research Center is a good step toward diversification. It gives local residents the ability to create their own successful businesses. Local jobs can be created that benefit local residents and allow them to be less reliant on a single industry for jobs.

Table 5-1 outlines the relative number of jobs in each general industry of Uintah County's economy. When thinking of diversification, there are some industries that are clearly lacking when compared to Utah as a whole. The manufacturing and professional and technical services industries are examples of industries that may be good areas for expansion. Other possible areas of job expansion may be in services for seniors, since 25 percent of the County's workforce is projected to retire in the next 10 years.<sup>22</sup>

### Using Community Impact Funds

The State of Utah has set up a fund to help local governments mitigate the impacts generated by resource extraction on federal lands. Impacts may be social or economic, direct or indirect. The source of this funding is mineral lease royalties, which the federal government gives to the state. The community impact fund can be used for planning, construction and maintenance of public facilities, and provision of public services. Formally, the fund is called the Permanent Community Impact Fund and takes the form of loans or grants. Brett Coulam at the Uintah Basin Association of Governments is the planner in charge of coordinating application for these funds with the government agencies in Uintah County.

---

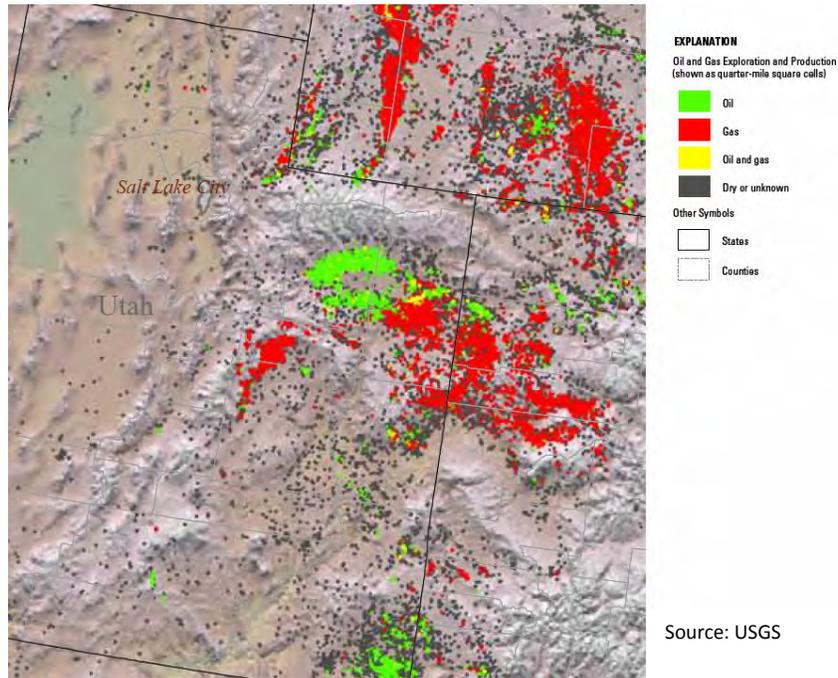
<sup>19</sup> Federal Energy Regulatory Commission. (December 5, 2008). *Natural gas market overview*

<sup>20</sup> Bureau of Economic and Business Research. (2008). *Economic baseline study of Vernal and Ashley Valley.*

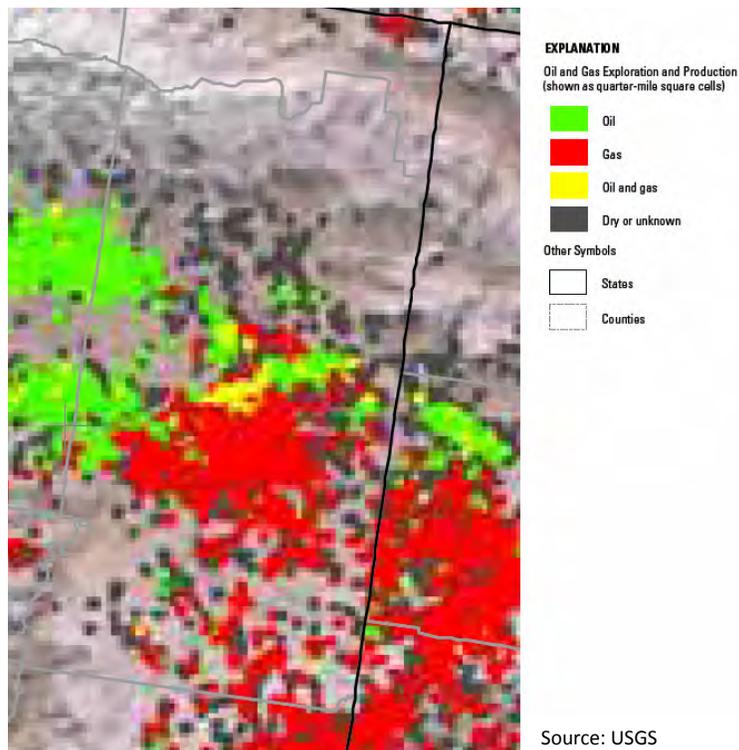
<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> Strategic Leadership Partners. (2008). *Uintah County Extraction Industry Impact Study.*

**Figure 5-5**  
**Oil and Natural Gas Production and Exploration**



**Figure 5-6**  
**Oil and Natural Gas Production and Exploration in Uintah County**



Vernal City has used these funds in the past. It will be important for Vernal City to keep economic development in mind when applying for these funds in the future, especially considering the direct impacts that natural resource extraction has on the economy. The new Bingham Entrepreneurship and Energy Research Center is a prime example of how impact funds can be used to enhance economic development.<sup>23</sup> See Chapter 6, Infrastructure, Capital Facilities, and Funding, for further discussion of community impact funds.

### Strategies of Similar Communities

Other resource-based towns in the U.S. deal with many of the same issues as Vernal City. Their strategies for economic development could provide some interesting ideas that could be applied to Vernal City.

In Converse County, Wyoming, a non-profit economic development agency created a strategic plan, which the agency seeks to have implemented. The agency has quite an extensive strategy that seeks to empower individual workers. Interesting specific strategies include selling lots in a local business park, responding to concerns of local workers and businesses (including growth concerns, recreational opportunities, youth support, housing shortage issues and exploring the utility of a Main Street program), training local manufacturers in management and business skills, offering computer training, and promoting quality schools.<sup>24</sup>

Many rural communities in Texas are dependent on natural resource extraction. The State of Texas has several programs to support the rural areas. Similar to rural areas in other states, rural communities in Texas have tried to capitalize on opportunities such as recreation, tourism, retirement patterns, hunting and fishing, birding and even providing places for new state prisons. However, Texas also has a special focus on developing broadband infrastructure in the rural areas. Good infrastructure is always an important part of economic development, but the focus on broadband is unique. This focus allows rural residents to stay in their towns during economic downturns by allowing residents to telecommute to jobs in urban areas. It also allows residents to create new Internet-based businesses. Existing small businesses are trained in how to use the Internet to grow their businesses by using the Internet for marketing and sales.<sup>25</sup>

Anchorage, Alaska is quite a bit larger than Vernal City; however, it once felt the pains of boom-bust cycles associated with a strong natural resource extraction sector. It has since been able to diversify by focusing on job expansion in the sectors of professional services, retail, health care and air transportation (particularly air cargo). The expansion

---

<sup>23</sup> (October 27, 2008). The blooming basin. *Uintah Basin regional campus news*. Retrieved from <http://uintahbasin.usu.edu/htm/news&nid=61>

<sup>24</sup> Converse Area New Development Organization. (2009). *2009 CANDO strategic plan*.

<sup>25</sup> Texas Comptroller. (2001). *Rural Texas in transition*. Retrieved from <http://www.window.state.tx.us/specialrpt/rural/6newpaths.html>

of professional services was particular noteworthy. When many local jobs were lost during a time of extremely-low oil prices, many of the engineers and technical experts that lost their jobs began their own consulting companies. Previous to that time, most consultants had come from outside the state, but that is no longer the case. The new entrepreneurship and energy research center in the Vernal area is a good step for helping educate residents in business skills and helping them start their own companies, similar to what happened in Anchorage.

Along with a focus on diversification, Anchorage sought to reverse the trend of having extraction companies come when commodity prices were high and disappear when prices were low, leaving a wake of high unemployment. The focus shifted to building local companies and helping them expand into other states, while bringing the profits back home. The key to Anchorage's success has been building and strengthening local companies.<sup>26</sup>

Durango, Colorado has also focused on diversification. Tourism has helped the local economy to a certain degree, but the city has found that tourism also has fluctuations, and tourism-related jobs tend to be low-paying service jobs. Durango has been able to achieve *better* economic development through increasing the light manufacturing and professional services sectors. They continue to focus on more diversification. The economic policies in their comprehensive plan include investing in parks, recreation, trails and open space, investing in the downtown business district, and supporting efforts to develop an additional business park or industrial area. Other economic policies include promoting a sustainable economy that reduces air pollution and excessive energy consumption.<sup>27</sup>

Campbell County, Wyoming has focused on promoting the area to businesses and people. In times of worker shortages, large job advertising promotions in depressed job markets (Flint, Michigan was given as an example) have been successful at bringing in needed workers.<sup>28</sup>

### Goals and Policies

**Goal: To diversify the local and regional economy to help counter cyclical employment of extraction industries and encourage tourism and recreation related industries and support the marketing of services related to regional attractions such as the Uinta Mountains, the Green River, surrounding public and tribal lands, regional cultural diversity and history, and Dinosaur National Monument.**

---

<sup>26</sup> Poe, B. (2007). Boom and bust? How about steady and stable? Anchorage boasts nearly two decades of uninterrupted job growth. *Alaska Business Monthly*, Jan 2007. Retrieved from Entrepreneur.com at [https://www.entrepreneur.com/tradejournals/article/158090703\\_2.html](https://www.entrepreneur.com/tradejournals/article/158090703_2.html)

<sup>27</sup> City of Durango 2007 Comprehensive Plan.

<sup>28</sup> Campbell County Economic Development Corporation. *Power. A five-year action plan.*

Policy: Support the development of local professional services through entrepreneurship and business retention strategies.

*Implementation Measure:* Continue support of and expand support of the Bingham Entrepreneurship and Energy Research Center.

Policy: Support the expansion and retention of manufacturing businesses within Vernal City.

*Implementation Measure:* Pursue funding sources and private investors to support the development of necessary public-private investment in Vernal City.

Policy: Support the existing and new businesses that provide regionally unique services and products.

*Implementation Measure:* Pursue a Main Street or Local First business support and networking strategy to engage local and regional stakeholders and the broader public in crafting community economic development strategies that promote local talent and markets regionally distinctive goods and services.

Policy: Capitalize on opportunities to involve local and regional educational institutions and their students to participate in crafting community economic development strategies and programs.

*Implementation Measure:* Develop a local economic development plan and establish benchmarks for community development objectives.

**Goal: To provide workforce housing for seniors, workers in the dominant oil and gas extraction industries, and those in supporting service sector industries.**

Policy: Pursue public-private partnerships that support community goals of workforce and senior housing provision.

*Implementation Measure:* Pursue funding sources (both public and non-profit) and private investors to support the development of necessary public-private investment in Vernal City.

**Goal: To develop infrastructure within Vernal City that supports local business and industry, as well as supports community development in the context of quality housing, livability for all socioeconomic groups and community design.**

Policy: Support the creation of better regional services for youth, seniors, and other groups with demonstrable need in Vernal City.

*Implementation Measure:* Pursue funding sources that support the development of appropriate infrastructure improvements that support public-private investment and enhance community livability.



## **6 Infrastructure, Capital Facilities and Funding Options**

### **Existing Facilities**

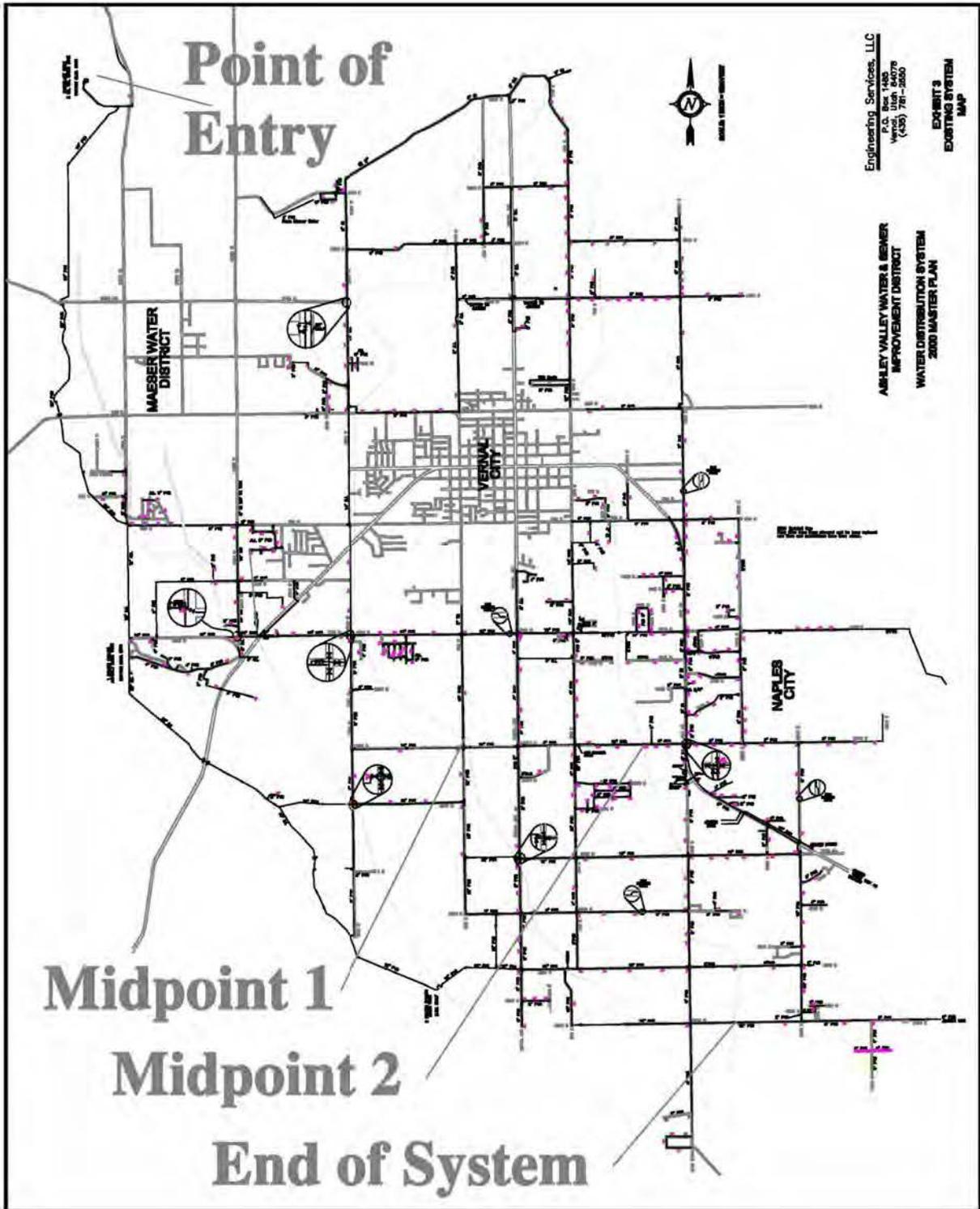
The infrastructure situation in Vernal City is somewhat unique. Unincorporated areas of Uintah County have access to higher levels of services and utilities than they typically would. Normally, an incorporated city provides those levels of services. This unique situation has led to considerable growth in the unincorporated areas. This growth has occurred to such an extent that Vernal City utilities are basically completely surrounded by other utility districts. It will be important for Vernal City to continually assess the way in which it interacts with these other service providers, since Vernal City will have much less opportunity to directly control utility expansion on the edge of the City.

All in all, there are three districts in Ashley Valley that provide water and sewer services. Vernal City provides service to its residents. Maeser Water and Sewer Improvement District provides service to a relatively small area northwest of Vernal City. Ashley Valley Water and Sewer District covers everywhere else in the Valley. Concerning sewer service, there is one main system in the Valley. Each of the three districts just mentioned has representation on the Ashley Valley Sewer Management Board which coordinates among the three districts to manage the sewer system for the whole valley. The Ashley Valley Sewer Management Board is funded proportionally by each district based on the number of users from the district. Maps of the existing water and sewer systems are shown below in Map 6-1 through 6-4.

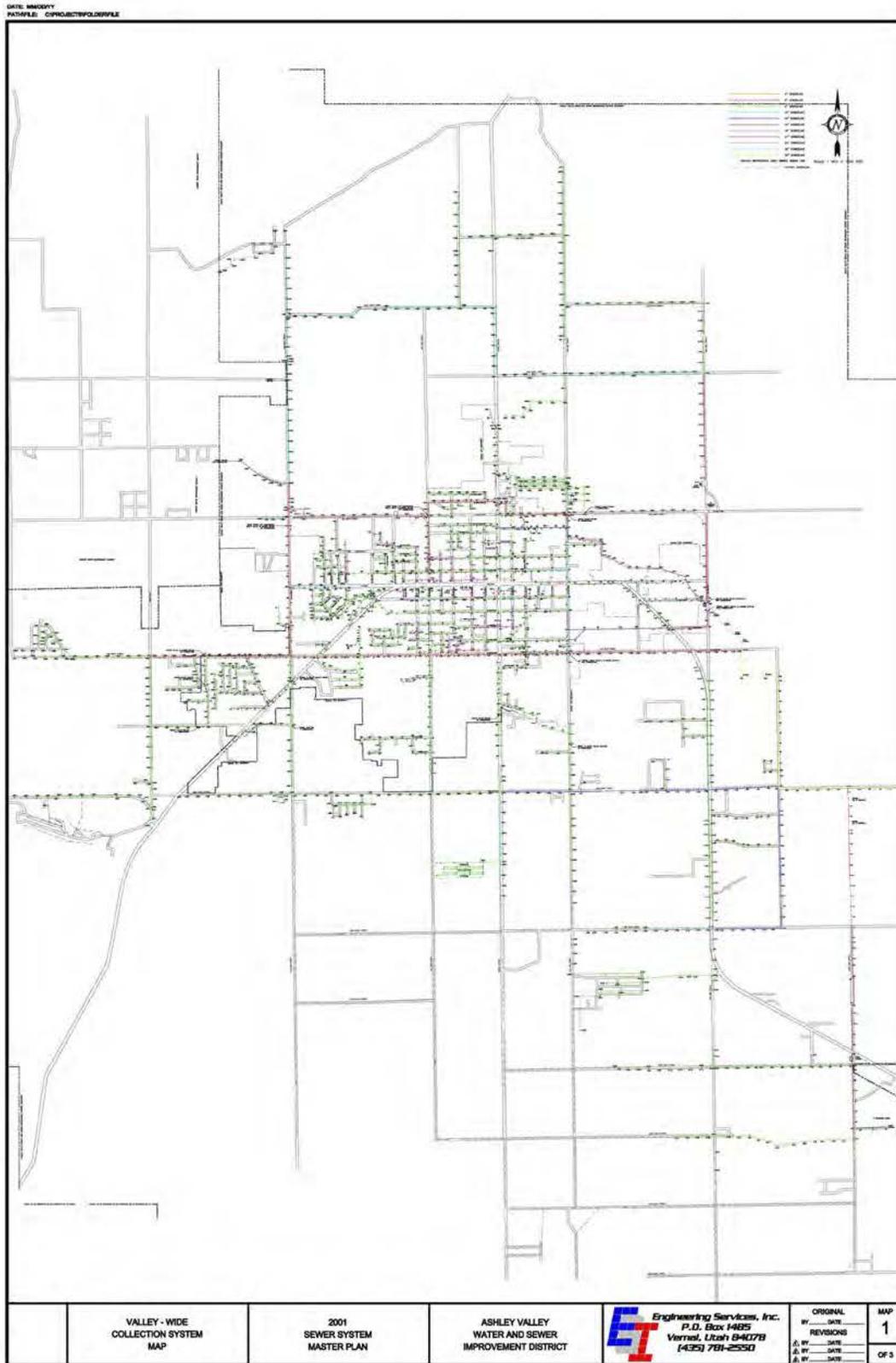
### **Approach to Infrastructure and Capital Facilities Expansion**

Given the observations of potential growth as presented in both the Population and Demographic and the Economic Sections of this plan, the large uncertainty in future growth due to the region's dependence on oil and natural gas extraction encourages the adoption of a conservative approach toward expanding existing infrastructure. Given the high costs associated with water and sewer expansion, future development should first be encouraged in areas where adequate facilities already exist and are controlled by the City. This means there should be more attention given to developing appropriate zoning regulations that encourage growth in vacant and underutilized land already available within the incorporated boundaries of the City than to planning the expansion of capital facilities. Particularly, in the case of residential growth, this approach will be reinforced by the increasing needs for affordable workforce housing and senior housing. Given current demographic and economic trends, the savings of residential development taking advantage of existing infrastructure would be directly passed on to current and future residents. Additionally, it is logical to encourage the provision of housing products that appropriately serve the needs of both the growing senior population and the regional workforce.

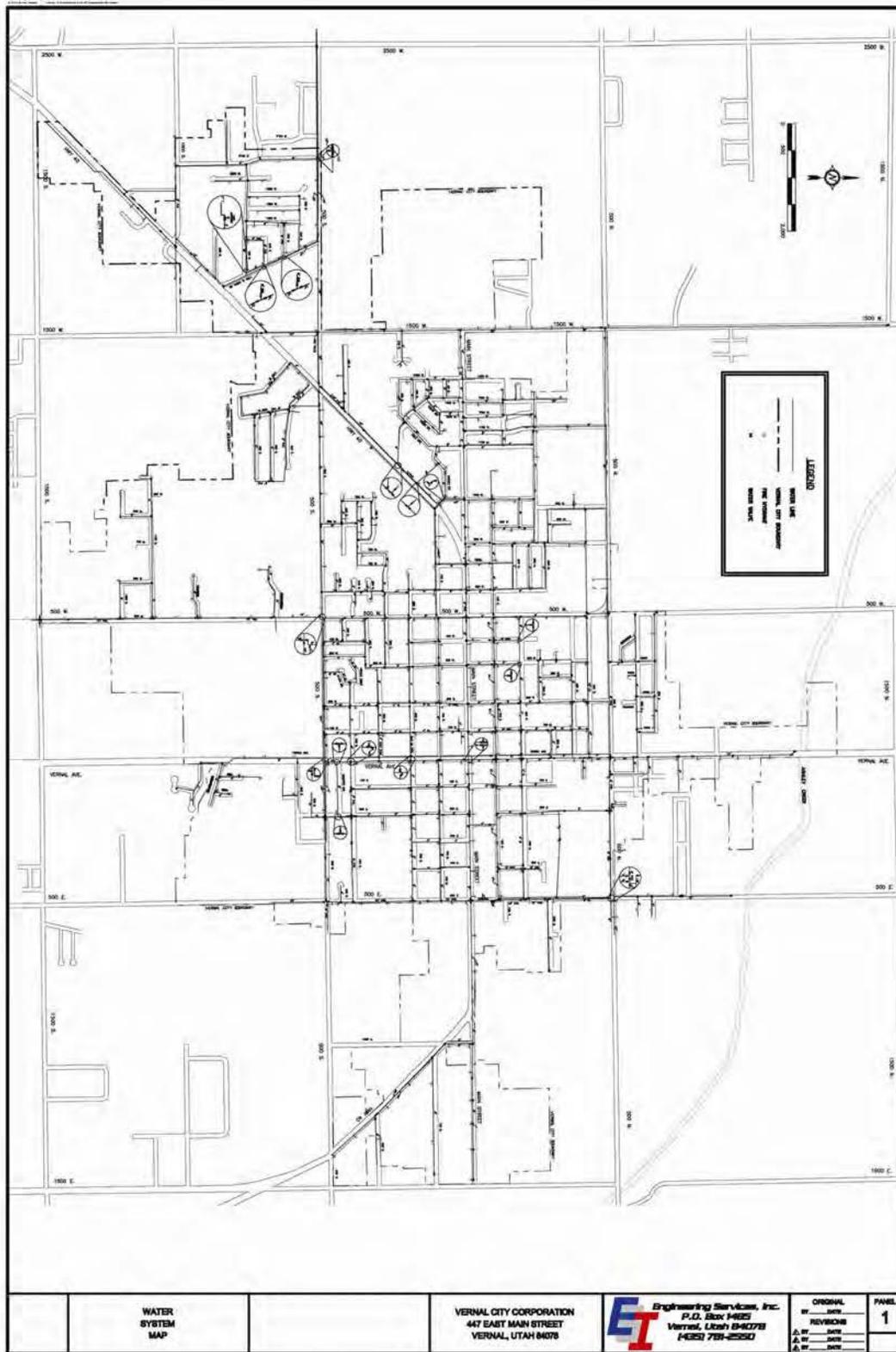
Map 6-1  
Ashley Valley Water Distribution System



**Map 6-2  
Valley-Wide Sewer Collection**



### Map 6-3 Vernal City Water System



### Map 6-4 Vernal City Sewer System

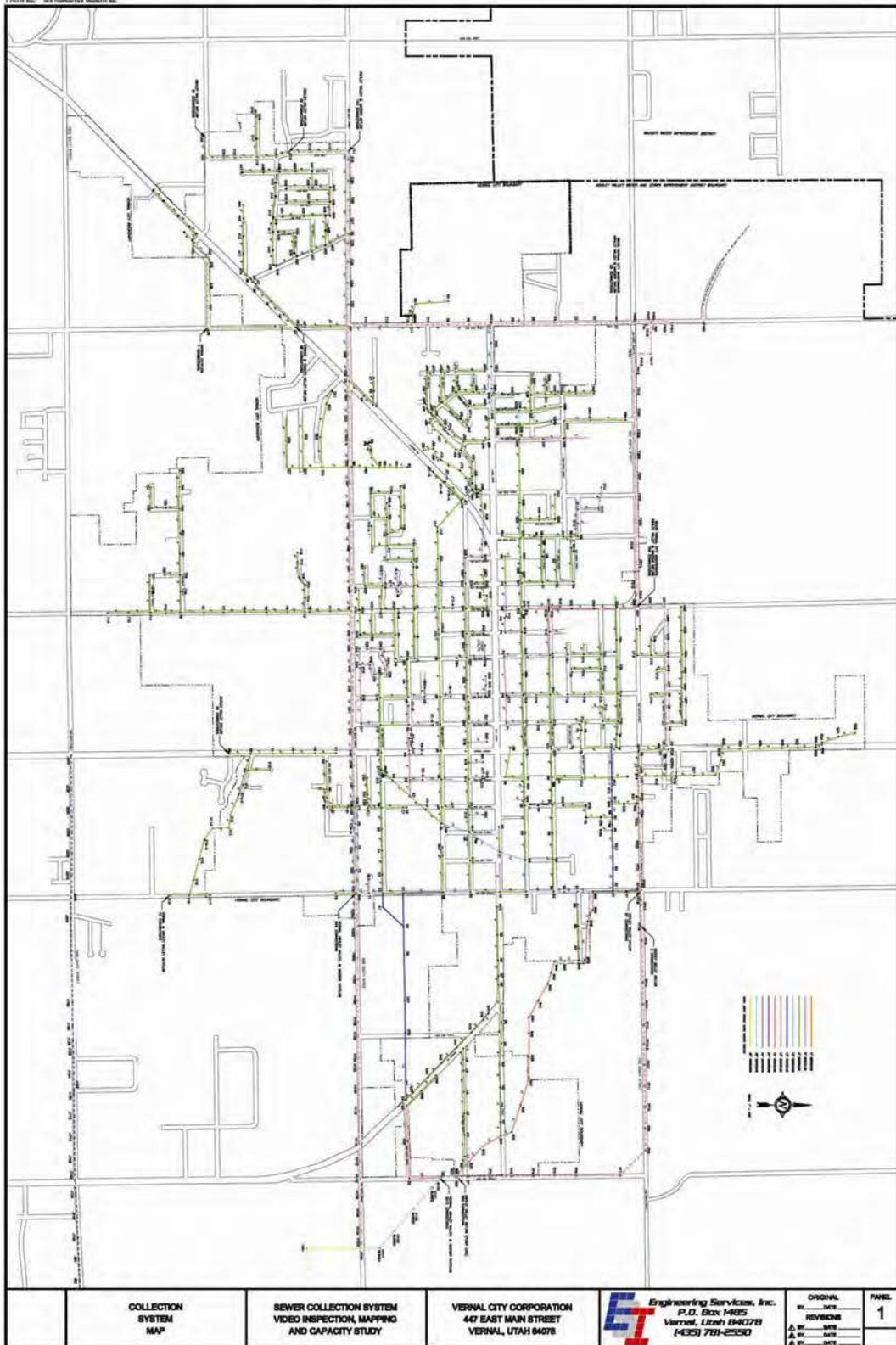


Table 6-1 shows expected future land supply within Vernal City limits by 2028. A substantial number of parcels remain vacant with the City limits. As of 2008 a total of 324 acres that fall within the currently proposed future residential zones was considered vacant. In projecting land consumption over the 20 year horizon, the proportion between single-family and multiple-family residential was assumed to remain constant from the 2000 census and equally distributed across proposed future multifamily residential zones. The outcome of this analysis shows that there is a negligible shortfall of vacant land within the existing incorporated boundaries. It is assumed that the shortfall in low density land will be accommodated in the areas of excess land for higher density zones. Perhaps more likely is that future households will demand more multifamily options in the future due to needed affordable workforce housing, options for senior living and a greater share of single headed households (following national trends) and thus the demand for low density residential units will be less than it has in the past. Furthermore, this analysis does not consider land that may redevelop into residential or higher density residential use. Nor does it consider the possibility of greenbelt properties being brought back into the housing market. It is clear that enough land exists within the City to accommodate baseline growth and beyond. Annexation policies should only be considered if growth accelerates considerably above the project baseline rate.

**Table 6-1  
Expected Future Land Supply within Vernal City Limits by 2028**

<b>Future Land Use</b>	<b>Existing Land within Incorporated Boundary</b>	<b>Estimated Vacant Land</b>	<b>Average Unit Density</b>	<b>Expected Additional Households in 2028 (Baseline Projection)</b>	<b>Expected Land Consumption By 2028</b>	<b>Excess/Short-fall of Vacant Land</b>
Low Density Residential	959	144	3.0	856	285	(142)
Medium Density Residential	609	91	4.0	117	29	62
Moderate Density Residential	-	-	6.5	117	18	(18)
High Density Residential	290	89	12.0	117	10	79
Other	1,139		1.0			
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,997</b>	<b>324</b>				<b>(18)</b>

In light of the current capacity of the City’s water, sewer, and transportation network (see Chapter 7 for more information on Transportation) and the baseline projections for growth, only sewer appears to be nearing capacity given current system limits (this limit is determined by the 1/3 ownership stake Vernal City has in the shared sewer trunk line, which has an estimated capacity of 14,440 Equivalent Residential Units (ERU)). The following calculations were based on data and methodological assumptions made in the

Vernal City Water and Wastewater Impact Fee Analysis Update provided to the City in 2004 by Public Sector Economics. The estimated ERU's for sewer and number of connections for water capacity are estimated for 2008 by applying the actual rate of population growth between 2000 and 2008 for Vernal City to the 2004 ERU's and water connections for a four year period ending in 2008. For the twenty year planning horizon of 2028, a population growth rate of 1.4 percent was used to project the total number of ERU's and connections. As can be seen in Table 6-2, plenty of excess capacity exists in the water system for future population growth.

**Table 6-2  
Current and Future Water and Sewer Capacity Available to Vernal City**

<b>Sewer Capacity</b>	
Total additional households in 2028 from baseline 2008	1,205
Number of ERU's in 2004	4,488
Estimated number of ERU's in 2008 (applying 2000-2008 AAGR of 3.35 percent)	5,120
Projected number of ERU's in 2028 (applying baseline 2008-2028 AAGR of 1.4 percent)	6,762
System limit as of 2004 (1/3 ownership of trunk line with capacity of 14,440 ERU's)	4,813
<b>Water Capacity</b>	
Total additional population 2028 from baseline 2008	3,338
Number of connections 2004	2,631
Estimated number of connections in 2008 (applying 2000-2008 AAGR of 3.35 percent)	3,002
Projected number of connections in 2028 (baseline AAGR 1.4 percent 2008-2028)	3,964
System limit (number of connections limited by storage capacity of system)	7,300

The impact of future population growth on transportation was estimated in terms of per capita lane miles. In 2008, the per capita lane miles of the existing street network was 0.011. Assuming the same level of service is provided in 2028, the baseline scenario of projected growth suggests that another 38 miles of lane capacity will be needed at that time. This will be an addition of thirty-three percent more capacity to the existing street network of 114 miles. See Chapter 7 for a more detailed discussion on Transportation.

**Table 6-3  
Assumed Increase in Per Capita Lane Miles for Vernal City Streets in 2028**

Total additional population 2028 from baseline 2008	3,338
Current vehicle lane miles in Vernal City in 2008	114
Population in 2008	10,040
Per capita lane miles 2008	0.011
Projected lane miles to accommodate growth by 2028	38

## **Funding Options**

### **Local Sources**

#### ***Special Service Districts***

Uintah County established the Transportation Special Service District to make federal mineral lease revenues available for community development. It was the original

special service district organized for using mineral lease funds. In order to put the funds to their fullest possible use, other special service districts were created. They are the Animal Services SSD, the Fire Suppression SSD, the Recreation SSD and the Impact Mitigation SSD (the Impact Mitigation SSD focuses on generating commerce in the area). The funding for these SSDs still comes through the Transportation SSD. From the Transportation SSD, it is allocated to these other SSDs for their special purposes.

The Transportation SSD uses its money for transportation improvements throughout Uintah County. Local municipalities and the County all prepare lists of transportation improvements that they feel they need. The County Commission reviews the lists and chooses which projects it will approve. It then provides a list of the approved projects to the board of directors of the Transportation SSD. The board of directors then approves the projects to be funded.

Interestingly, the Transportation SSD carries out projects on City streets, even though the County Resolution that established the SSD does not list Vernal City as a recipient of the SSD's services. Vernal City has asked the County to amend the resolution to include Vernal City, but the County has not done so and is apparently hesitant to do so. It would be beneficial for Vernal City to continue to explore such an amendment.

### ***Impact Fees***

Impact fees may be instated to help mitigate the impact of new development on public facilities. Water and wastewater impact fees are already in effect. Other public facilities relevant to Vernal City for which impact fees are allowed under State enabling legislation include the following:

- roadway facilities;
- parks, recreation facilities, open space, and trails; and
- public safety facilities.

### ***Tax Increment Financing***

Another avenue to secure local infrastructure financing is through the formation of a Community Development and Renewal Agency that would provide Vernal City with the ability to utilize tax increment financing. The City Council is typically designated as the Board of Directors for the organization. Funds designated for development and renewal purposes could also be used to develop amenities and infrastructure to further housing objectives.

### ***State Options***

#### ***Community Impact Funds***

Oil and natural gas extraction has provided Vernal City with some good paying jobs; however, there are some negative impacts as well. The most obvious impacts are

cyclical job cycles, increased housing costs caused by oil and natural gas related immigration, and a high amount of truck traffic on roads.

There are several funds designated to help communities that are impacted by natural resource extraction. The Permanent Community Impact Fund is a fund that is available to Vernal City that provides loans and/or grants to State agencies and subdivisions of the State (e.g. counties, cities, special districts, housing and building authorities) that are impacted by mineral resource development of federal lands. Impacts may be social or economic and may be direct or indirect. The source of funding is based on mineral lease royalties, which the Federal Government gives to the State. The Permanent Community Impact Fund can be used for planning, construction and maintenance of public facilities, and provision of public services<sup>1</sup>.

The board that administers the fund is called the Permanent Community Impact Fund Board (CIB). They will only participate in any given project up to \$5 million, including loans. Furthermore, any planning, study, or design requests from applicants must be covered 50% in cash by the applicant. And, for the most part, the applicant's 50% contribution cannot include in-kind funds unless there is demonstrable value such as with real property.

A regional planner coordinates the CIB for recipients in Uintah County. Potential recipients in Uintah County nominate projects to be placed on the Consolidated Local Capital Improvement List, which covers all of Uintah County (including the cities). This list is more of a list of priorities of what projects they would like to see completed. Projects are prioritized as higher priority projects, to be completed within a one-year period, and lower priority projects to be completed within a two- to five-year horizon. The City chooses from those projects which one it wants to apply for and fills out an application that goes to the regional planner. The planner reviews it to make sure the project would be eligible according to the CIB standards. Then the planner sends the application on to the CIB board for approval and funding. The CIB reviews applications and authorizes funds on a trimester schedule that is based on the State's fiscal year. Application deadlines are June 1, October 1 and February 1.

***Utah Department of Water Quality***

The State Revolving Fund (SRF), administered through the Utah Water Quality Board, provides loan and grant assistance to municipalities in the areas of wastewater treatment, collection systems, and water quality improvements. Funds originate from the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and other federal sources.

---

<sup>1</sup> Public facilities and public services are defined as public infrastructure traditionally provided by governmental entities.

## Federal Options

### ***Economic Development Administration, U.S. Department of Commerce***

As the Uintah Basin Council of Governments already participates in the Community Economic Development Strategies program, existing regional EDA relationships should be leveraged to pursue grant programs offered. Likely possibilities include the Public Works and Economic Development Program, Economic Adjustment Assistance Program, and Local Technical Assistance programs. These programs are described by the EDA as follows:

- Public Works and Economic Development investments help support the construction or rehabilitation of essential public infrastructure and facilities necessary to generate or retain private sector jobs and investments, attract private sector capital, and promote regional competitiveness, including investments that expand and upgrade infrastructure to attract new industry, support technology-led development, redevelop brownfield sites and provide eco-industrial development.
- The Economic Adjustment Assistance Program provides a wide range of technical, planning and infrastructure assistance in regions experiencing adverse economic changes that may occur suddenly or over time. This program is designed to respond flexibly to pressing economic recovery issues and is well suited to help address challenges faced by U.S. regions and communities.
- The Local Technical Assistance Program helps fill the knowledge and information gaps that may prevent leaders in the public and nonprofit sectors in economically distressed regions from making optimal decisions on local economic development issues.

### ***Housing and Urban Development (HUD)***

The Department of Housing and Urban Development hosts a number of programs that offer financial support for developing infrastructure that furthers community and economic development objectives. Programs most likely to be of interest to Vernal City include:

#### Section 108

Section 108 is the loan guarantee provision of the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program. Section 108 provides communities with a source of financing for economic development, housing rehabilitation, public facilities, and large-scale physical development projects. This makes it one of the most potent and important public investment tools that HUD offers to local governments. It allows them to transform a small portion of their CDBG funds into federally guaranteed loans large enough to pursue physical and economic revitalization projects that can renew entire neighborhoods. Such public investment is often needed to inspire private economic activity, providing the initial resources or simply the confidence that private firms and individuals may need to invest in distressed areas. Section 108 loans are not risk-free,

however; local governments borrowing funds guaranteed by Section 108 must pledge their current and future CDBG allocations to cover the loan amount as security for the loan.

Brownfields Economic Development Initiative (BEDI)

The program’s purpose is to enhance the security of loans guaranteed by HUD under Section 108 of the Housing and Community Development Act of 1974, as amended, for the same brownfields economic development project, or to improve the viability of a brownfields economic development project financed with the Section 108-guaranteed loan, in order to stimulate economic development by local governments and private sector parties at brownfields sites and to return those sites to productive, economic use.

Rural Housing and Economic Development Program (RHED)

The purpose of the Rural Housing and Economic Development program is to provide support for innovative housing and economic development activities in rural areas. There has been a growing national recognition of the need to provide support for local rural nonprofit organizations, community development corporations, federally recognized Indian tribes, state housing finance agencies (HFAs), and state economic development and community development agencies to expand the supply of affordable housing and to engage in economic development activities in rural areas. The Rural Housing and Economic Development program was developed to supplement these resources and to focus specifically on promoting innovative approaches to housing and economic development in rural areas.

**Goals and Policies**

**Goal:** To accommodate future growth over the 20 year planning horizon within Vernal City Limits.

**Policy:** Enhance the regulatory environment and provide financial incentives through the provision of amenities that encourage a diverse array of residential, commercial, and public development within City limits that meet the current and future needs of the community.

*Implementation Measure:* Investigate funding sources and public-private partnerships that encourage infill development and redevelopment of existing property with Vernal City.

*Implementation Measure:* Update the zoning ordinance to reflect future land use goals adopted in this plan.

*Implementation Plan:* Continue regular review and update of the General Plan to respond to changing community demographics and economic needs.



# 7 Transportation

## Summary of Transportation Issues

During public outreach early in the General Plan Update process, residents had the opportunity to identify those issues that were of most concern to them. Issues relating to transportation, parking, circulation, and alternative modes centered on five basic areas summarized below. Concerns relating to pedestrian and bicycle circulation are most extensively addressed in Chapter 4, Parks, Recreation, and Trails.

- ***Limited Downtown Parking***

Residents see the lack of off-street parking in Downtown Vernal as a core reason for the economic struggles experienced by many Main Street businesses. When queried, feel that on-street parking on Main Street is not safe due to the volume of traffic that passes by.

- ***Traffic Congestion***

Specific areas with traffic congestion issues include Main Street, 500 West, 500 North, 500 South, and 100 North. In addition, residents voiced their concern about streets not being of sufficient width to accommodate growing traffic and that the Utah Department of Transportation is not willing to vary their standards to accommodate unique local needs and character.

- ***Truck Traffic***

Truck traffic in Vernal City is a great concern to many residents, especially truck volume on US-40. Trucks are believed to be a safety concern due to their large numbers. In addition, the turning radii at the US-40/Vernal Avenue intersection are too small for large trucks to maneuver easily. Many residents would like to eliminate heavy truck traffic from Main Street while maintaining car traffic.

- ***Alternative Modes***

Vernal City is perceived as being bicycle or pedestrian unfriendly. Most roads are not wide enough to accommodate bicycle traffic safely. There are concerns about children getting to and from school safely. Many residents also voiced concern about the lack of transit within Vernal City and connecting Vernal City to other areas.

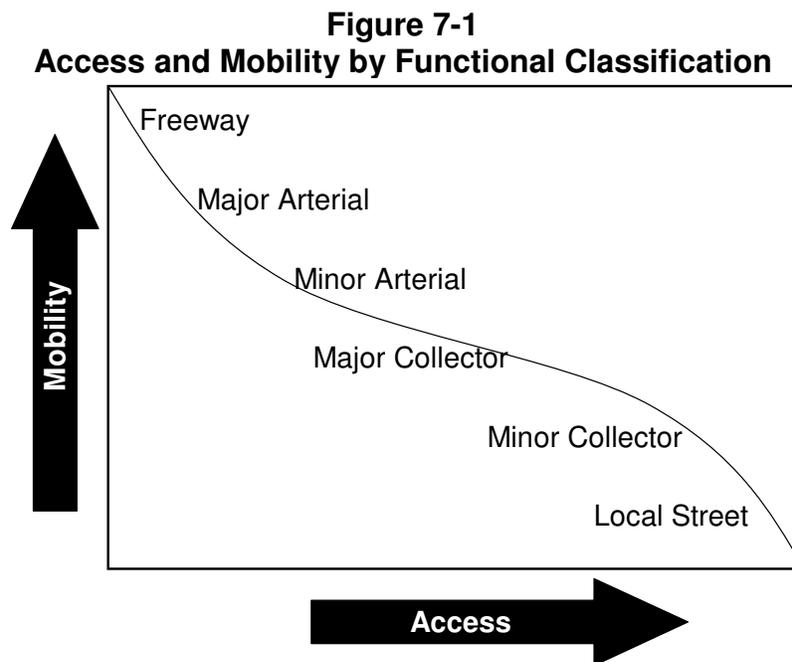
- ***Roads in Newly Developing Areas***

Several residents raised concerns about future roads in newly developing areas. They believe that access needs to be improved, and that additional through-roads and smaller blocks to provide better access and limit the burden of too few roads. In addition, the hierarchy of roads was a concern, and new developments need to have higher-functioning roads to handle higher traffic volumes.

## Existing Transportation Conditions

### Roads

Vernal City's existing road network is based on the standard road functional classification system used by most transportation agencies. The functional class network is the foundation of the transportation system, moving people and goods into, out of, and throughout the region. It includes freeways, expressways, arterials, and collector roads under the jurisdiction of the State, County, and local entities. Generally, a road's functional classification is determined by whether its purpose is to provide access or mobility. Those roads at the smaller end of the functional class system move traffic more slowly but provide greater access, such as to local roads or to residential or small commercial properties. On the other end of the scale, expressways provide greater mobility by moving more traffic at greater speeds, but with fewer driveways and intersections to provide access opportunities. This concept is illustrated below.

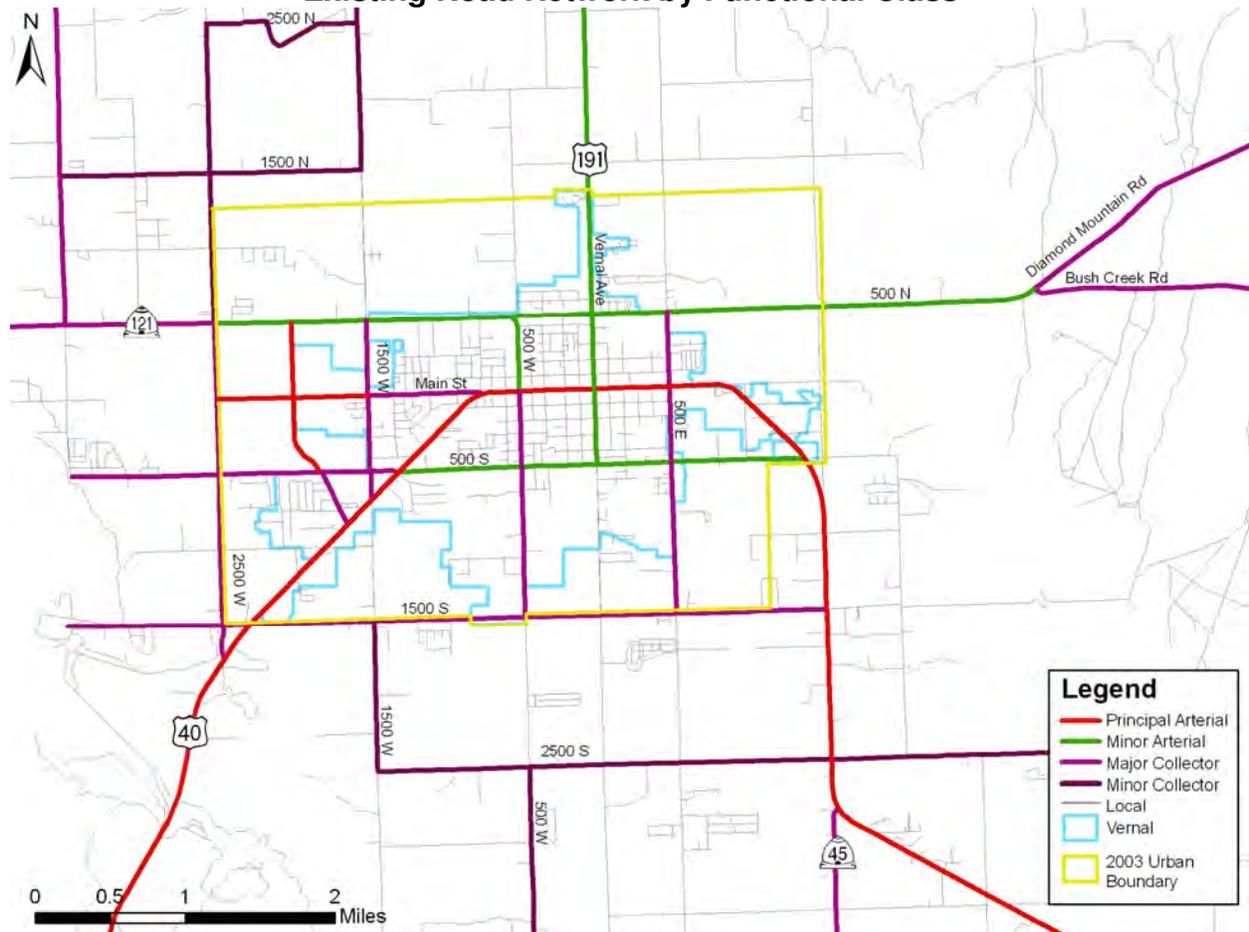


Vernal City's existing road network by functional classification is illustrated in Figure 7-2.

### Transit

No public transit service is currently available in Vernal or the Ashley Valley. West Uintah County residents over age 60 are eligible to use a dial-a-ride service provided by the Golden Age Center in Vernal City.

**Figure 7-2  
Existing Road Network by Functional Class**



**Traffic Volumes**

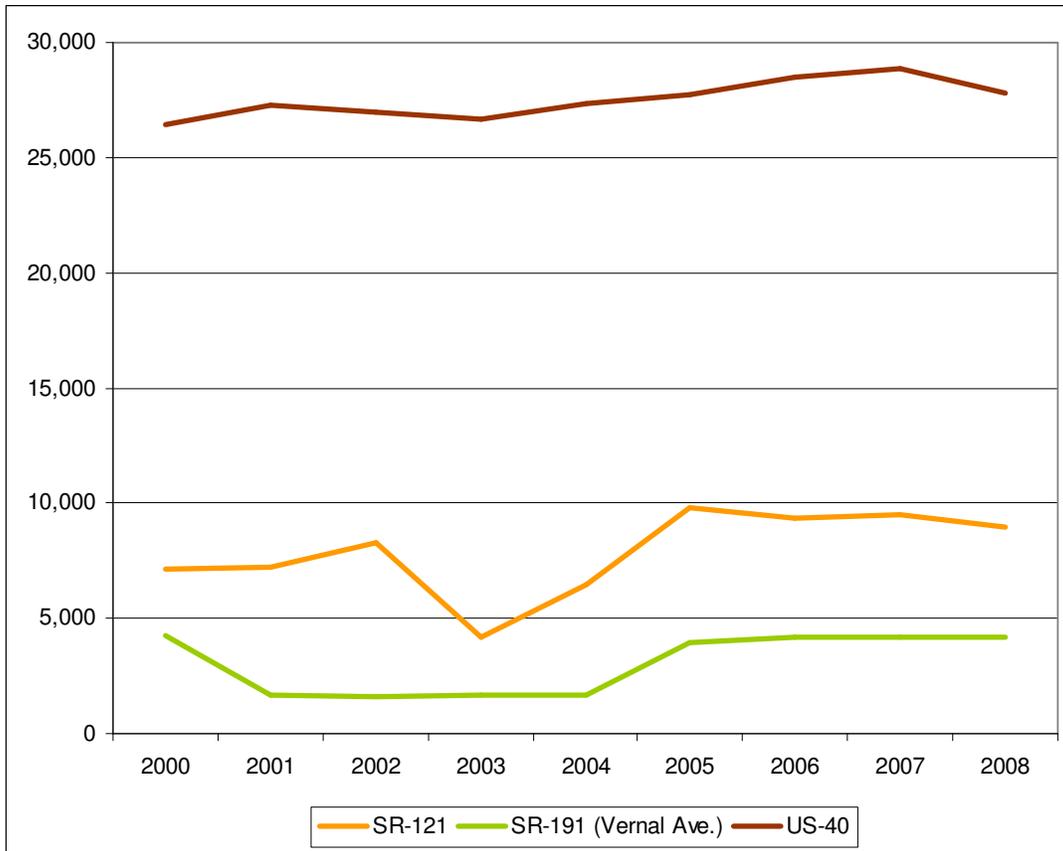
Traffic volumes on Vernal City roads and highways have fluctuated in recent years with the rises and falls of oil and natural gas drilling and exploration activity in the region. Figure 7-3 shows traffic volumes on the three state routes in Vernal City between 2000 and 2008. The flux in volumes on all three roads during this time is indicative of the great impact that short-term economic activity has on the area.

**Level of Service/Congestion Issues**

Traffic congestion concerns are largely anecdotal in evidence and are likely very location and time specific. Truck traffic within Vernal City causes other drivers to seek alternative routes that unfortunately are often nearby residential streets. However, if truck traffic decreases with economic conditions, these congestion issues might lessen or disappear.

Currently, the City does not have traffic data from which to do a quantitative analysis of level of service or congestion concerns. The three state highways in the City are currently operating below their capacities, although the perception of congestion on these roads can be greatly influenced by slow-moving trucks, difficult traffic movements, and ineffective access management policies and standards.

**Figure 7-3  
Traffic Volumes on State Highways**



### Truck Traffic

Truck traffic on Vernal City streets is a concern to residents and increased mining activities brings increased truck volumes, especially on US-40. While actual truck volumes have historically been similar to those on Moab's Main Street, 2008 saw a significant increase in both truck percent and volume in Vernal City. Although Moab and Vernal City are not comparable in size, with Vernal City being significantly larger, the issue of dealing with large vehicles in their downtowns and on Main Streets is similar.

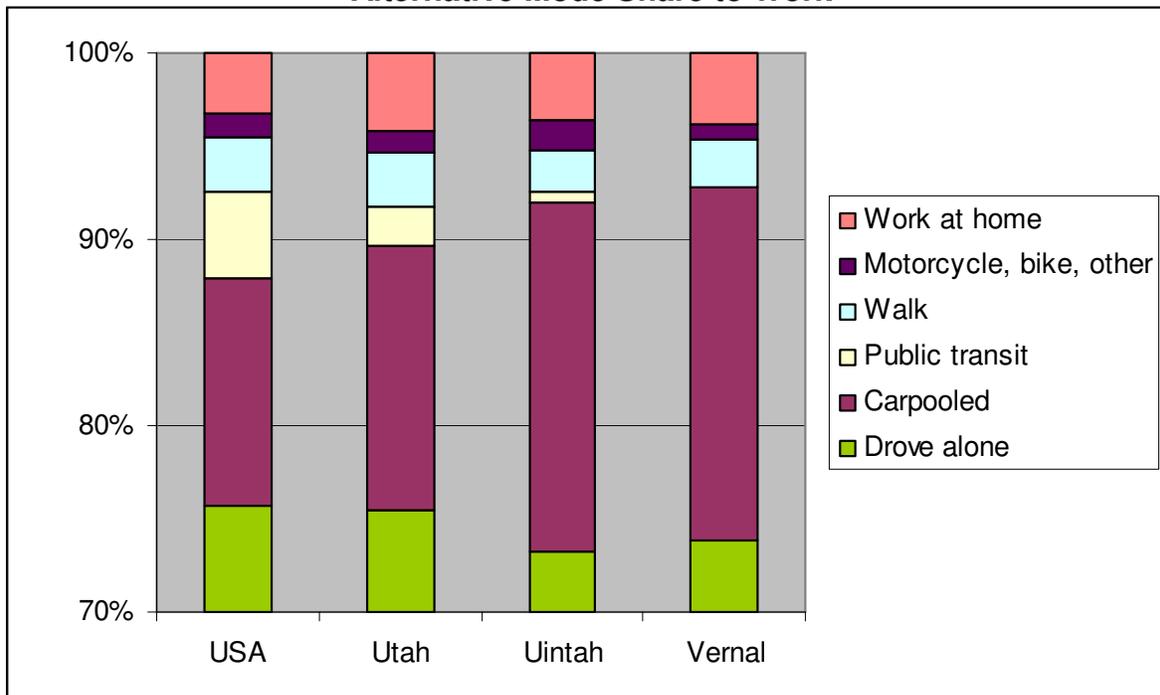
**Table 7-1  
Large Truck Traffic in Vernal City and Moab**

	US-40 in Vernal		SR-191 in Moab	
	%	#	%	#
<b>2003</b>	9	2400	17	2800
<b>2004</b>	12	3300	24	4000
<b>2005</b>	7	2000	23	2200
<b>2006</b>	7	2000	18	1700
<b>2007</b>	7	2000	19	2000
<b>2008</b>	18	5000	21	2000

**Mode Share**

Figure 7-4 shows how people in Vernal City get to and from work compared to Uintah County, Utah and the United States. As a percent of total commuters, Vernal City residents carpool to work significantly more than the State and the nation. This is likely due to the predominance of mining jobs in the area, which are located some distance away from Vernal City. This makes carpooling a convenient and cost-effective option that may possibly be sponsored by employers.

**Figure 7-4  
Alternative Mode Share to Work**



## Future Transportation Conditions

### Roads

Vernal City recognizes the importance of City streets and state highways in providing efficient vehicle circulation to move people and goods within and through the City. Planned road improvements are illustrated in Figure 7-5. The planned improvement priorities shown include those of Vernal City and the Uintah Transportation Special Service District.

The Uintah Transportation Special Service District (UTSSD) has funded improvements on 1500 West, 1500 South, and 2500 West, which included widening the roadways to 40 feet. The additional width will accommodate walk/bike lanes, but maintenance of the shoulders will likely be an issue, especially in the winter.

In addition, Vernal City has identified many intersections of concern where additional study would be helpful to determine what type of intersection improvement might be warranted. Those intersections are:

- SR-191 and 500 North
- 500 South and 500 West
- US-40 and Main Street (west)
- US-40 and Main Street (east)
- Vernal Avenue and 200 South
- US-40 and 600 West
- 500 West and 1500 South
- Vernal Avenue and 1500 South
- 500 East and 1500 South
- 2500 West and 500 South
- 1500 West and 500 North
- US-40 and 100 South (west)

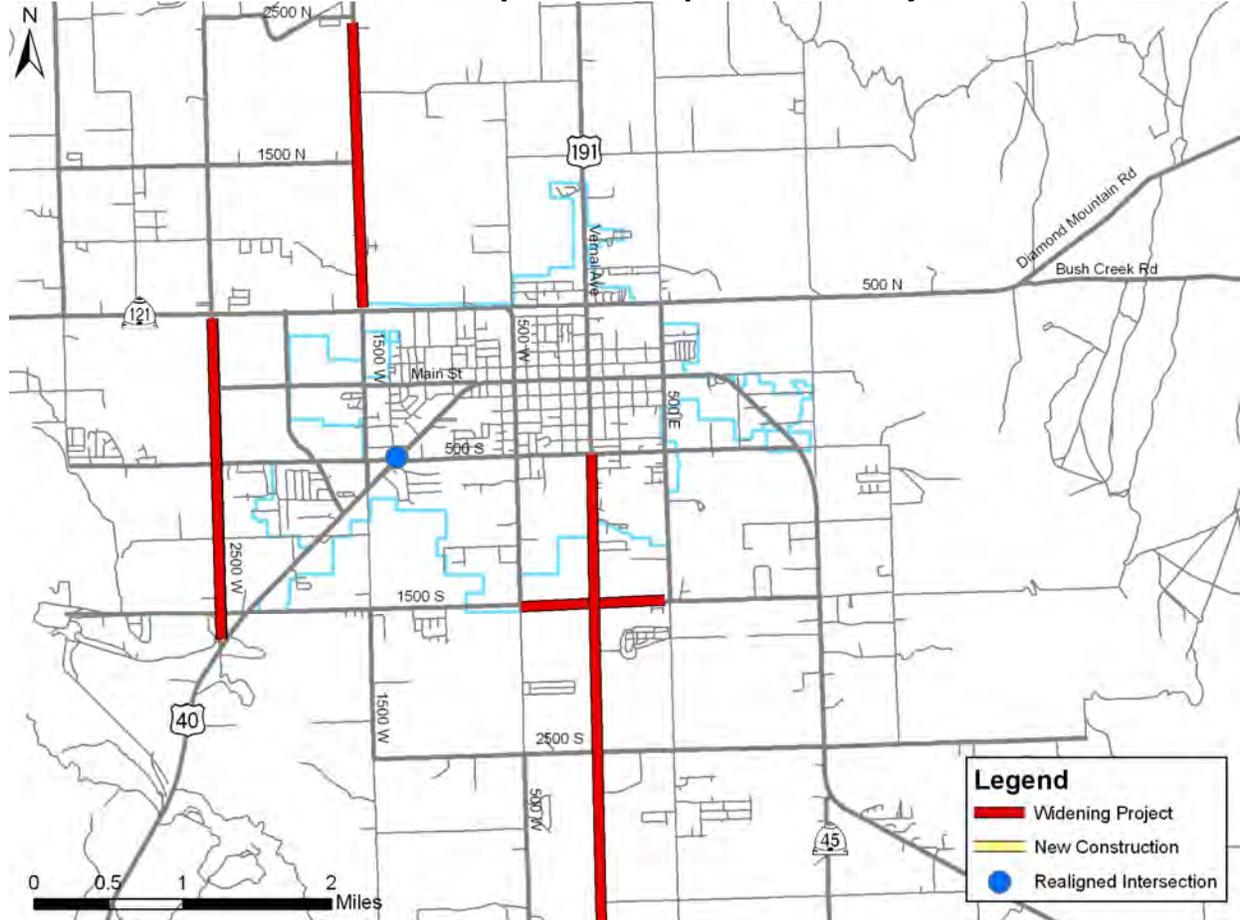
Other transportation projects, which have been identified as priorities for Uintah County, are illustrated in Table 7-2.

### Transit

An essential part of a comprehensive transportation system is a public transit element that provides mobility and access for local residents. Residents of Vernal City and the surrounding Uintah Basin need options for long distance travel to urban areas for medical care, to access regional airports and to obtain services and items not available locally. Other needs include traveling short distances to access employment, essential services and retail centers among other needs. Special attention needs to be given to the influx of temporary workers during economic boom cycles that often require worker transport to remote worksites.

The *May 2008 Uintah Basin Public Transit Business Plan* prepared for the Uintah Basin Association of Governments and the Utah Department of Transportation (UDOT) provides a solid base to draw upon to increase mobility and access for local residents. The plan identifies issues and opportunities as well as pinpoints funding and action items to implement a successful public transportation service in the Uintah Basin. Utah's Transit Resource Guide ([www.utahtransitinfo.com](http://www.utahtransitinfo.com)) provides a listing of local

**Figure 7-5  
Planned Transportation Improvement Projects**



**Table 7-2  
Utah Transportation Special Service District Priority Projects**

Year	Project
<b>Pending</b>	500 South – 500 East to US-40
	2500 South – US-40 to 2200 East
<b>2008 (Carryover projects)</b>	Duck Rock/Evacuation Creek Bridge
	500 North 1550 E. Bridge (additional funding)
	Seep Ridge Road
	Native Tar Sands Test Project
	Alternate Truck Route Study
<b>2009</b>	Vernal Avenue 500 South to 5000 South
	3500 East (Westside)
	Seep Ridge
<b>2011</b>	Watson Area Bridge & Roadway
	2500 West (funding reimbursement)

transit providers that can be accessed by residents to meet personal transportation needs. There are several federally funded programs provided by the Federal Transit Administration and administered through the Utah State Department of Transportation Public Transit Team ([www.udot.utah.gov](http://www.udot.utah.gov), Public Transit information under Quick Links).

**Future Traffic Volumes**

There is little available information related to future traffic volumes in Vernal City. Using annual growth rates based on population projections for the City, along with historic and existing traffic volume data on the three State routes, traffic volume projections were developed for US-40, SR-191, and SR-121.

The population growth that is used in this plan assumes an average annual rate of increase of 1.4 percent to the year 2028 for a future population of roughly 13,500 people. In order to approximate future traffic volumes on the state routes, current traffic volumes from UDOT were increased similarly. However, nationwide trends indicate that total vehicle miles traveled tend to increase at a greater rate than population. To accommodate for this and to be conservative (high) on traffic projections, traffic volumes were increased by three percent. The projected traffic volumes are illustrated in Table 7-3.

**Level of Service Concerns - Analysis of Future Capacity Requirements**

The traffic volumes shown above were compared to Level of Service standards defined by UDOT for arterial roads. This comparison is shown in Table 7-4.

As these results show, capacity concerns are not expected on most of the roads within the planning horizon, although US-40 does slightly exceed its capacity in 2028. However, many variables will affect both traffic volume and capacity. Elements that will affect capacity include access management and signal timing. These elements can be optimized in order to maintain efficient flow of traffic or to maximize or minimize driveways and intersections. Factors that will affect traffic volume are more straightforward in nature, including the economy, general development patterns, and specific development patterns. In particular, specific large-scale developments need to be thoroughly considered for their impacts on the transportation network.

**Table 7-3  
Projected Traffic Volumes on State Highways in Vernal**

	<b>US-40<sup>1</sup></b>	<b>SR-191<sup>2</sup></b>	<b>SR-121<sup>3</sup></b>
2000	26,468	4,281	7,160
2008	27,795	4,205	8,995
2013	28,629	4,331	9,265
2018	29,488	4,461	9,543
2023	30,372	4,595	9,829
2028	31,284	4,733	10,124

1: Downtown, east of Vernal Ave  
 2: North Vernal boundary  
 3: At US-40

**Table 7-4  
Future Traffic Volumes and Road Capacities**

	2028 Traffic Volume	Capacity Range of Current Cross-section
US-40	31,300	13,000 - 31,000
SR-191	4,700	6,000 - 15,000
SR-121	10,100	6,000 - 15,000

**Other Area Transportation Planning Studies**

Other agencies in the region and in the State are actively engaged in transportation planning. Below is a summary of the particular plans and projects that may potentially affect Vernal City.

***Alternative Truck Route Study***

The Uintah Transportation Special Service District (UTSSD), the transportation agency for Uintah County outside of the Vernal City limits, recently completed a study of truck traffic volumes on US-40, Vernal City’s Main Street, and what the impacts of an alternative truck route might be. While the study found that the amount of traffic diverted from Main Street to an alternative route would not significantly improve the level of service in downtown Vernal City, it did recommend that in anticipation of future concerns, an alternate route alignment should be determined and preserved in order to accommodate possible future need. The UTSSD is actively engaged in identifying and preserving a corridor for this purpose.

***US-40 Corridor Study***

In 2007, the Utah Department of Transportation (UDOT) studied a 136-mile segment of US-40 including that portion of the highway that passes through Vernal City. The purpose of the study was to identify necessary improvements to the road that would accommodate future traffic conditions through 2035. It also identified a long-term list of improvement projects that address capacity, safety, and natural resources concerns along the corridor. Those projects identified in the Vernal City vicinity are illustrated in the table below.

**Table 7-5  
Projects Identified in the US-40 Corridor Study**

Type of Project	Milepost/Location
Passing lane	Milepost 134 to MP 141, just southwest of Vernal City
Intersection improvements	Intersection of US-40 and US-191 in Vernal
Traffic signal	Intersection of US-40 and SR-45 in Naples
Signal warrant studies	Intersections of US-40 & 1000 South, US-40 & 500 South (east side), US-40 & Main Street (east and west sides), US-40 & 600 West.
Concrete intersections	Multiple locations in Vernal City and Naples, as needed

More details on each of these projects can be found in the *US-40 Corridor Study Report* from the Utah Department of Transportation (UDOT).

### **Statewide Long Range Plan**

Every four years, UDOT develops a plan for transportation projects that is intended to accommodate projected need for the next several decades. The current plan, *The Statewide Long Range Plan*, identifies statewide project priorities between 2007 and 2030. Two projects in Uintah County, both in Vernal City, appear in the prioritized project list in the current *Statewide Long Range Plan* (SLRP).

- SR-121, between the Frontier Drive intersection and US-191, is planned to be widened in Phase 1 (2007-2015).
- US-40, from Vernal City to SR-149, will be widened although this project is unfunded and a phase has not been identified.

### **Statewide Transportation Improvement Program**

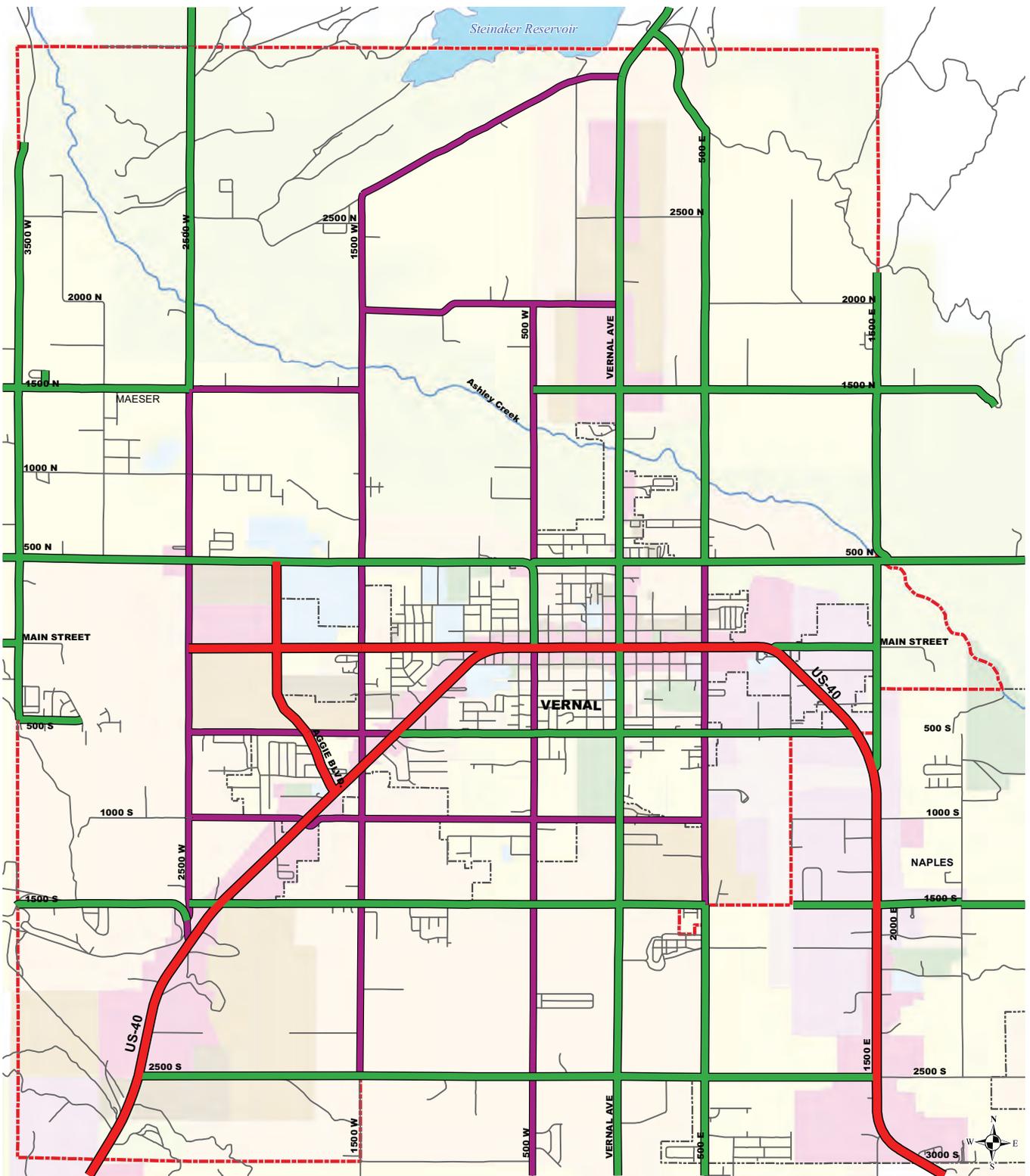
In addition to the *Statewide Long Range Plan*, each year UDOT develops a Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) that identifies projects that will be completed over a four-year period along with specific funding sources. The current STIP includes:

- 2500 West from US-40 to Vernal Avenue, Road reconstruction, widening, and resurfacing
- 500 North from 500 West to Vernal Avenue, asphalt pavement reconstruction
- Six Bridges over Steinaker Canal, Bridge replacements

## **Transportation Plan**

A planned transportation network was developed based on the land use plan in Chapter 2, and the priorities identified by Vernal City and its residents. The future transportation network is based on providing sufficient capacity to developments that are expected to generate more vehicle trips, such as the Utah State University campus on the northwest side of the city. Other larger transportation facilities are planned in areas where large commercial land uses might be anticipated. That plan is illustrated in Map 7-1. It is important to remember that this map represents a build-out scenario, and that future roads and the cross-sections represented here will be constructed concurrent with development and demonstrated need.

Standard cross-sections for the various road types are shown in Figures 7-6 through 7-13.

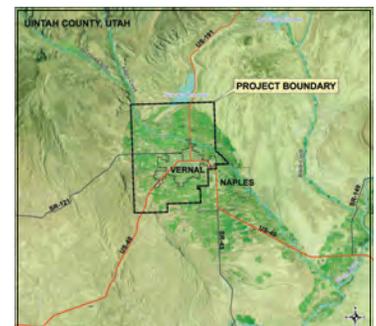


Adopted: May 19, 2010



# Vernal General Plan Update

- Impact Area Boundary
- Vernal Boundary
- Naples City Limit
- Principal Arterial
- Minor Arterial
- Collector
- Local

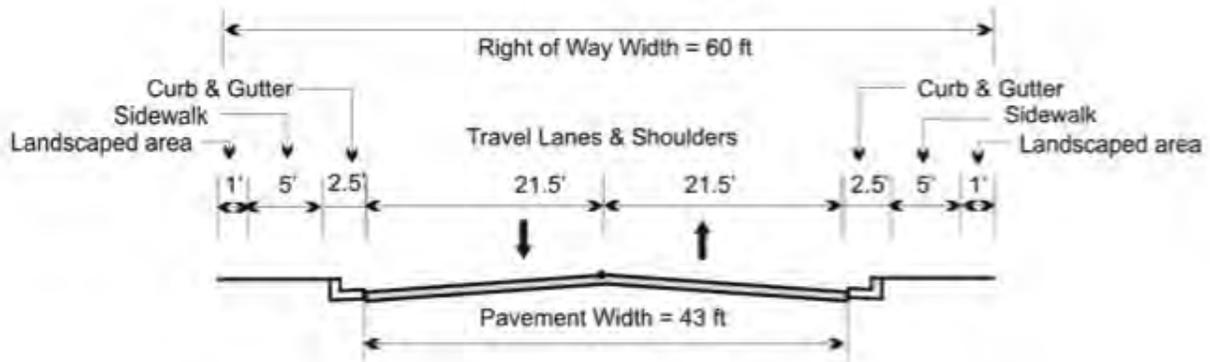


VICINITY MAP

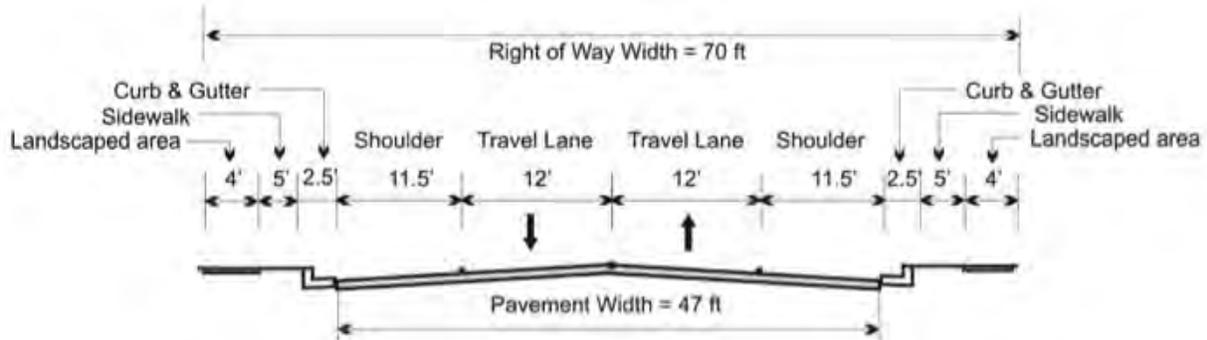


## Map 7-1: Transportation Plan

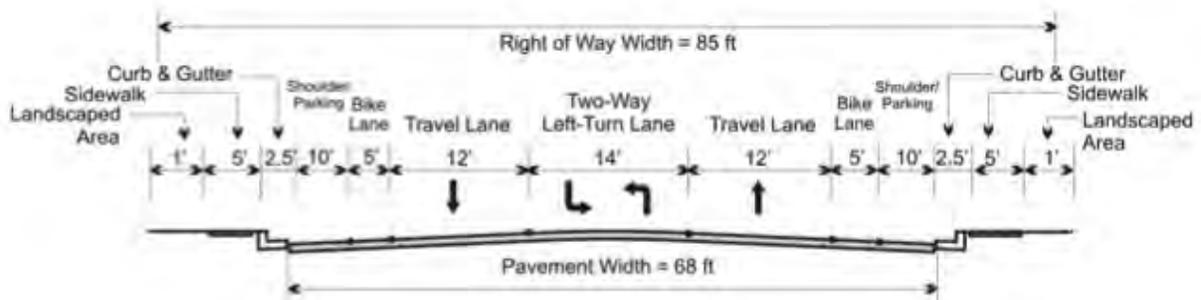
**Figure 7-6  
Local Street Standard Cross-Section**



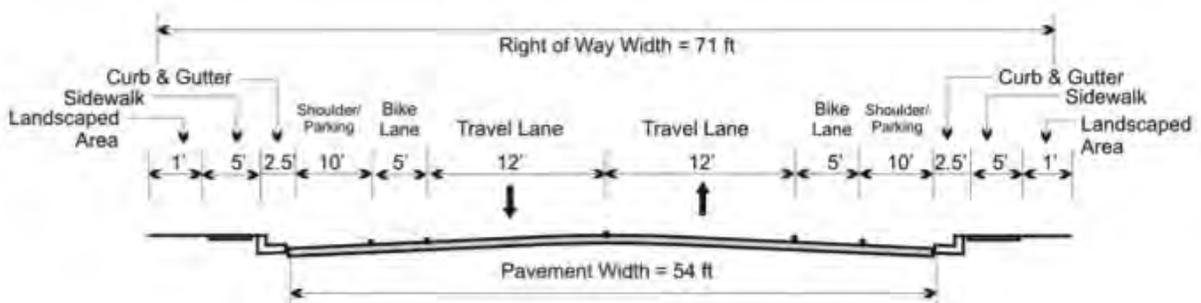
**Figure 7-7  
Collector Street Standard Cross-Section**



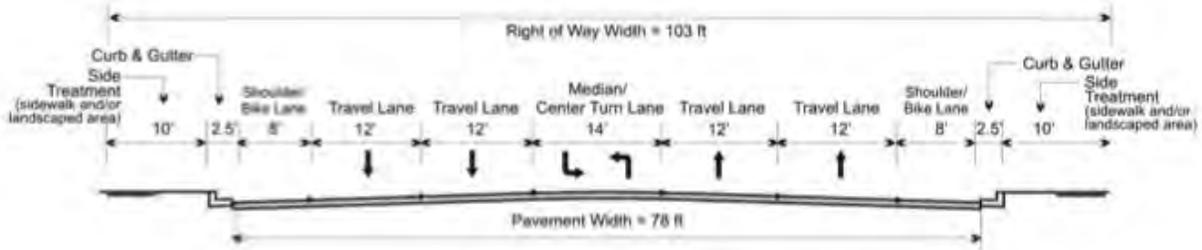
**Figure 7-8  
Minor Arterial Cross-Section (Alternative One)**



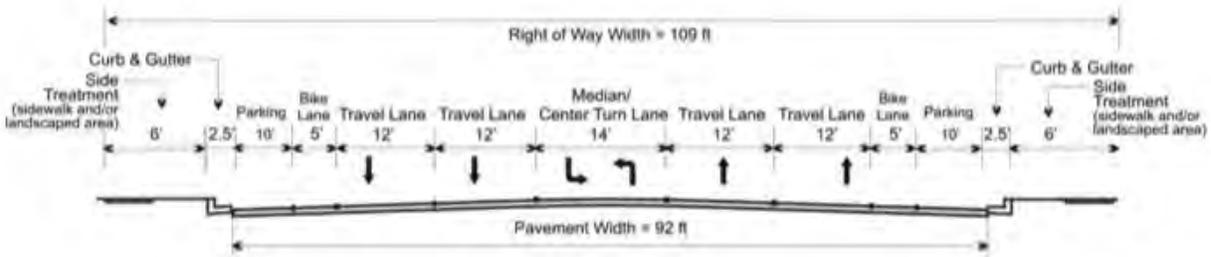
**Figure 7-9  
Minor Arterial Cross-Section (Alternative Two)**



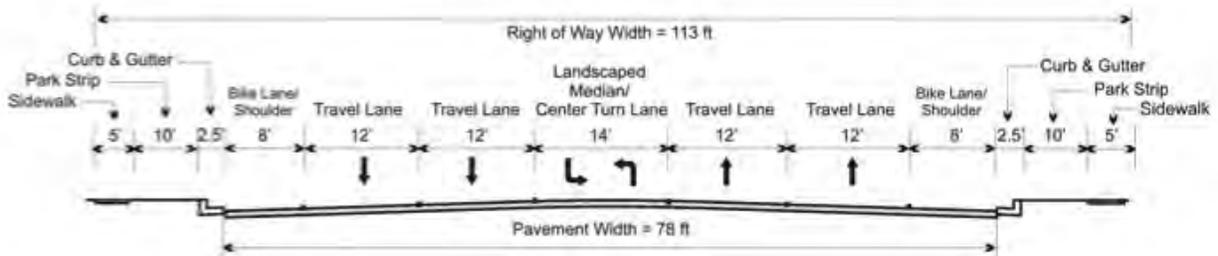
**Figure 7-10  
Principal Arterial Cross-Section (Alternative One)**



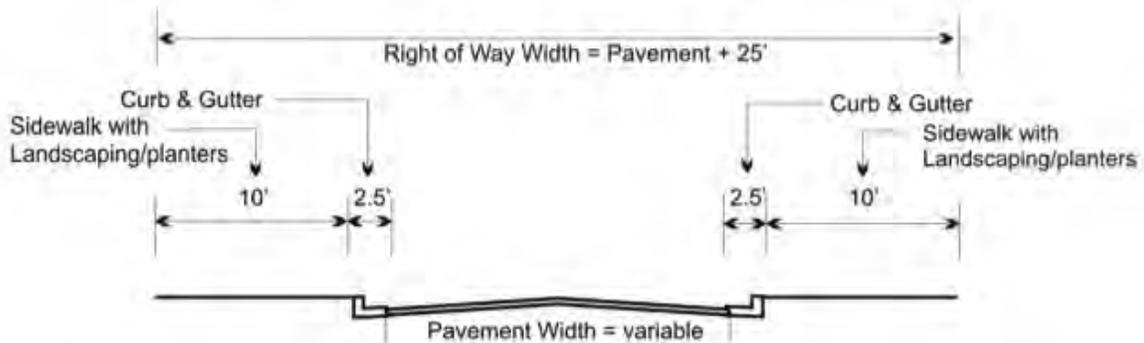
**Figure 7-11  
Principal Arterial Cross-Section (Alternative Two)**



**Figure 7-12  
Limited Access Parkway Standard Cross-Section**



**Figure 7-13  
Downtown Area Side Treatment Standard Cross-Section**



## **Transportation Needs**

Vernal City's land use plan and priorities focus on preserving open space corridors, less dense development at the peripheries of the City, clustered development in specific locations, strengthening existing neighborhoods, and maximizing efficient land use through the promotion of infill development. The prioritization of projects below reflects these elements and help the City provide infrastructure that complements its overall land use priorities.

### **Short-term**

Short-term priorities should focus on improvements within existing developed areas, areas of existing congestion, and serving areas of imminent development. These improvements include:

- 500 South Roadway Improvements
- Main Street Continuation
- 2000 West Continuation
- Realigning the US-40 & 500 South intersection
- US-40 & Main Street (west) intersection and signal warrant study
- US-40 & 1000 South signal warrant study
- US-191 & 500 North signal warrant study
- Study downtown parking opportunities and strategies
- Work with UDOT to develop a corridor preservation agreement for US-40 and other state routes where necessary

### **Long-term**

Long-term transportation priorities should support potential development opportunities although they need to be carefully timed in order to accommodate need but not build prematurely. Long-term transportation improvement priorities include:

- Corridor preservation and construction of 1500 South
- Corridor preservation for alternative access to the North Gateway area
- Corridor preservation for southbound access to planned alternative truck route

It is important for Vernal City to regularly assess changing conditions and revise its transportation priorities in light of new conditions. Pending development proposals may shift priorities, especially short-term, and provide opportunity for City leaders to be proactive and address potential transportation-related impacts and concerns.

### **Access Management**

Access management provides the spacing standards for intersections, driveways, and other road access points in order to maintain optimum roadway efficiency for traffic and safety. UDOT has identified access management standards based on roadway type.

These are available in Rule 930-6, also known as *Accommodation of Utilities and the Control and Protection of State Highway Rights of Way* (See [www.udot.utah.gov](http://www.udot.utah.gov)).

In order to preserve important corridors in Vernal City, local leaders should identify non-state roads that need to maintain a high level of traffic and safety efficiency using access management standards. An example is 500 South, which is becoming an increasingly important route as an east-west corridor on the south side of the City.

### **Corridor Preservation**

Corridor preservation agreements are needed when upgrading existing roadways or planning for new roads. These agreements identify key community and government interests and outline a strategy by which those interests and priorities will be addressed and maintained. Typically, corridor preservation agreements include language specifying how many access points will be provided in a specific stretch of road, where future signals may be located and at what point they will be put in place, and other details which help to address concerns of UDOT and the cities involved.

In the US-40 Corridor Study, corridor preservation agreements were highlighted as a proven method of maintaining the interests of each jurisdiction. The final report offers sample corridor preservation agreements in its Appendix that offer Vernal City a good way to maintain transportation priorities on City streets.

### **Goals and Policies**

The goals, policies, and implementation measures presented here come directly from the transportation information and recommendations presented in this chapter. As growth in Vernal City continues, it is important for City officials to reassess the goals and policies identified here to ensure that they continue to reflect the transportation and traffic-related priorities of the City.

**Goal:**           **To provide an arterial and major collector road system that is safe, functional and efficient, and which accommodates peak-hour traffic volumes.**

**Policy:**           Work to preserve the character and function of arterials and major collector roads by maintaining standards for elements such as sight distance and access management and collecting current traffic volume data.

*Implementation Measure:* Work to assure adequate sight distances at intersections, particularly on arterial roads. Take care to control vegetative growth to maximize sight distance.

*Implementation Measure:* Periodically conduct traffic counts on arterial and major collector roads to determine if capacity issues should be expected in the near future.

*Implementation Measure:* Develop and maintain access management standards on arterials and major collectors in order to maintain the vehicle-movement function of these roads.

**Goal: To acknowledge, understand, and plan for the traffic impacts of new residential and commercial development within the City.**

Policy: Require that all commercial developments and all residential developments of greater than 10 units provide Traffic Impact Studies of the development.

*Implementation Measure:* Prior to development approval, require a Traffic Impact Study from the developer that identifies all traffic generated by the proposed development and proposes mitigation strategies where required.

*Implementation Measure:* Prior to development approval, analyze anticipated traffic impacts on existing and planned road cross-sections to ensure that roads are able to safely and effectively accommodate vehicle, bicycle, and pedestrian traffic.

**Goal: To provide transit as a viable travel mode alternative for the residents of Vernal City.**

Policy: Consider the future viability of transit service and pursue implementations options and strategies with the Utah Department of Transportation.

*Implementation Measure:* Refer to the Uintah Basin Public Transit Business Plan and work with UDOT Rural Transit to determine the next best steps to implement transit service.

**Goal: To provide a local street system that is safe and easy to navigate by pedestrians and cyclists.**

Policy: Plan for and construct Vernal City streets so that they accommodate all users including vehicles, pedestrians, and bicyclists and provide maximum safety for all.

*Implementation Measure:* Require sidewalks on all residential streets and on streets that provide pedestrian access to schools, churches, and shopping areas unless otherwise approved by the City Council.

**Goal:** To better realize the untapped potential of US-40 as the primary east/west arterial through the community.

**Policy:** Plan for a facility which considers all types of users, including bicyclists, pedestrians, and vehicles.

*Implementation Measure:* Consider entering into a Corridor Preservation Agreement with the Utah Department of Transportation concerning US-40 that recognizes Vernal City's needs related to commercial access, streetscape enhancements and cross-sections, and accommodating alternative forms of transportation.

**Goal:** To maintain a road network that moves vehicle traffic efficiently while meeting the needs of commercial and residential development.

**Policy:** Establish access management standards for roads in the functional class system that consider the nature of the road and the land use and provides access accordingly.

*Implementation Measure:* Development and implement access management standards for local roads that carefully consider the function of the road and the needs of adjacent existing and future commercial and residential developments.



# Vernal City General Plan Update

---

## 2009 to 2029

### **Appendices**

Adopted May 19, 2010



## **APPENDIX A:**

### **Newspaper Articles Written by Members of the Planning Team / Published in the Vernal Express**

#### **Vernal 2030 – What does future hold?**

**by Mark Vlastic, AICP, ASLA, LLA**

The following is the first of three articles about the Vernal City General Plan. Landmark Design is the lead firm assisting Vernal City with its general plan. Located in Salt Lake City, Landmark Design specializes in community planning, landscape architecture, multidisciplinary team planning, project management and public involvement and facilitation. Other members of the Landmark Design Planning Team include InterPlan Co (traffic and transportation specialists) Wikstrom Economic & Planning Associates (economic and market specialists) and Ward Engineering (civil engineering and infrastructure assessment specialists).

Vernal City is at a crossroads.

Unprecedented growth and development is changing the look and function of the city. Vernal is located in an area of unmatched beauty, with natural resources that not only drive the local economy but provide abundant opportunities for outdoor recreation. Yet careless development can block access to these lands, harm wildlife, and threaten the supply of water and other critical resources.

In 1948 Vernal had its first oil boom. Since then the area has been a boom-and-bust town. The consequences of local demographic changes can be seen directly in the local economic situation and housing market. Finding an affordable home is difficult for many.

We all breathe the same air and rely on the same water. In a few years, we'll be sharing both with significantly more residents. Houses will be built farther from the existing "core" and the total miles driven will continue to increase. Increasing traffic movement through the community threatens safety, air quality and noise levels, and can reduce the quality of life.

Utah is the second driest state in the nation. Water is a precious resource and developing new supplies is expensive. Yet much of our limited municipal water supplies are used on landscaping. With growth, sustaining current water consumption levels will be increasingly difficult.

Communities that neglect their land use, transportation infrastructure and natural and cultural amenities face a difficult future. Careless development robs the local economy of its vitality over the long term by requiring more expensive infrastructure and higher taxes.

In order to keep pace with the rapid changes that are taking place, Vernal City is updating its General Plan.

Updating the plan starts by taking a critical look at the future of the city, addressing growth patterns, possible new annexation areas to accommodate growth, existing and future land-use patterns, community design, infrastructure needs, parks and recreation and other elements of a rapidly growing city. The general plan is the primary document used to help evaluate development proposals and direct growth toward a desired vision. The general plan typically looks at the entire community and future expansion areas, identifying future land uses (residential, commercial, manufacturing, parks, open space, etc.) and other elements that make up the community. The intent is to establish the vision that will guide future growth and development for the next 10 years and beyond.

Updating the Vernal City General Plan presents a unique opportunity for the community to come together, reflect on the past, and dream about the future.

In order to begin this process, a Public Scoping Meeting is scheduled from 6:30-8 p.m., Jan. 13, at Discovery Elementary School.

This meeting will be organized to provide local residents hands-on opportunities to define existing and future needs, issues, concerns, and preferences for Vernal. This is the beginning of a nine-month planning process. Additional public meetings and workshops are scheduled for February and March. The information received will be used by Landmark Design Planning Team as it develops potential planning directions and ideas. Visit [www.lidi-ut.com/projects/vernal.htm](http://www.lidi-ut.com/projects/vernal.htm) for more information.

### **Traffic a key consideration of the Vernal General Plan Update by Andrea Olson, AICP**

Traffic in Vernal City has grown in recent years due to many factors, including the expansion of energy-industry activities in the Uintah Basin. According to Utah Department of Transportation statistics, the average daily traffic volume on US 40 in downtown Vernal has increased more than 14 percent in the past decade.

Traffic congestion is often associated with significant increases in an area's population and increased economic activity, both of which the Vernal area has been experiencing in recent years and will continue to in coming years. With increasing industrial activity, commercial development as well as the solid tourism base of the region, Vernal streets will continue to struggle to accommodate traffic. In addition to traffic congestion, other impacts include noise, air pollution, and "spillover" traffic onto neighboring streets, all a source of concern for many Vernal residents and city leaders.

Vernal is beginning the process of a city general plan update that will address many aspects of life in Vernal, including transportation. The general plan will establish a vision

for Vernal that will guide future decision making as well as provide a blueprint for land-use patterns, transportation projects and other civic improvements.

The Landmark Design Team, a consortium of planners, transportation experts, economists and engineers will be spearheading the planning process. The planning team will be addressing transit, trails, truck traffic and other items of concern to residents. Through this process, city leaders will be exploring potential solutions, both short term and long term, to traffic issues in Vernal. These remedies are likely to range from better driveway spacing, to restriping roads, to planning for the widening of major streets. Also included will be a discussion of what impact possible bypass routes may have on downtown traffic and economic development.

Visit [www.lidi-ut.com/projects/vernal.htm](http://www.lidi-ut.com/projects/vernal.htm) for more information.

InterPlan Co. is part of the Landmark Design Team that is updating the Vernal City General Plan. The Midvale firm provides transportation planning and traffic engineering services to public and private clients in Utah and the Rocky Mountain area.

## **Uintah County's Economy: The Data and the Drama** **by Geoff Butler**

Somewhere in Uintah County 157 million years ago today an Allosaurus had just benefited from the upside of its daily struggle with the cycle of feast and famine. Having just feasted on a large Apatosaurus, he wondered when his next meal would be, but he wasn't too worried. He knew his highly adapted and efficient metabolism could sustain him for long periods of time between meals. Still, he couldn't help but wonder if there was some way to improve his situation. He didn't want to migrate; he was very happy where he was. If there was just some adaptation he could make to ensure a more consistent food supply he'd do it. He had confidence that he could adapt. The question was, how?

Not quite 157 million years later, in the same place, a new species called humans arrived to take their place at the top of the food chain. Humans relied on decomposed contemporaries of the Allosaurus for their economic well-being. Unfortunately, an economy based on oil and gas can be just as unreliable and unpredictable as finding Apatosaurus was for the Allosaurus.

### ***The Data***

Uintah County's oil and gas jobs have followed a feast-and-famine pattern. The first viable oil well appeared in Uintah County in the 1920s, with oil becoming a major part of Vernal's economy in the 1940s. Vernal feasted on oil through the 1950s and early 1960s before leaner times set in. Oil-and-gas production began to increase again in the early 1970s, but it wasn't until 1976 that the real boom occurred. In 1977 the number of

mining (mostly oil and gas) employees surpassed the previous record set in 1962. Mining employment peaked in 1981 at over 2,100—nearly double that of the previous peak. Oil production peaked shortly after in 1984 and gradually declined until 2000 when it began to climb again. It wasn't until just recently—in 2007—that oil production reached levels seen in the 1980s.

The current boom is based in natural-gas production, which has skyrocketed to levels never seen before in Uintah County. The County produced roughly the same amount of oil in 2007 as was produced in the last boom. Natural gas production in 2007 was six-and-a-half times the amount produced during the last oil boom and three times the amount produced in the last natural gas production peak, which occurred in 1993.

When oil and gas prices increase, so does the production of both commodities in Uintah County. This also means more workers are needed, which then means increases in population. Vernal saw a noticeable increase in population during the 1950s oil boom and another, much more massive increase from 1970 to 1980. Interestingly, even though the County's oil production has declined drastically from time to time, neither Vernal, nor the County has ever shown a decline in population on census records from 1900 to date. There wasn't even a decrease between 1990 and 2000, when oil production declined consistently. This could be due to many factors. Certainly one important point is that from 1990 to 2000 natural gas production was increasing while oil production was falling. This increase in gas production probably allowed many people to stay in the area who otherwise might have been forced to leave.

Unemployment statistics seem to confirm the common assumption that many people who lose their jobs choose to stay in a community during lean times and hope for better times ahead. Historical unemployment rates show an inverse relationship to oil production. In other words, when oil production is down, unemployment rates are up. Uintah County's unemployment rate was much higher than the State's during the 1990's as oil production was falling and natural gas production was still relatively low. Uintah County's unemployment rate finally converged with Utah's rate in 2000 and has remained very close to Utah's rate ever since. As of November 2008 Uintah County's unemployment rate was 2.2 percent compared to the State of Utah's 3.7 percent.

Unemployment data is available for both Utah and Uintah County from 1980 to the present. The data shows that, over the past three decades the unemployment rate for Uintah County has averaged 1.6 percentage points higher than the State of Utah's rate. Put another way, in 22 of the past 29 years Uintah County had higher unemployment rates than the State. Those 22 years happened to fall between oil-boom cycles. It seems that long periods of above-average unemployment could be the price Uintah County residents pay for living in an area with an economy that is non-diverse and heavily dependent on natural resources.

***More Drama***

While oil prices will always be volatile, it is generally agreed that prices will continue to trend upward over the long term as resources become more and more scarce. This makes it likely that oil and gas will continue to be critical components of Vernal's economy. The challenge is not the absolute depletion of resources—at least in the foreseeable future, but how to deal with the volatility that comes with a natural resource-based economy.

***Conclusion***

Vernal is not like other communities in Utah. It is isolated and its economy is centered around one industry. This is unlikely to change. While Vernal can take steps to diversify its economy, it is likely that it will always be heavily based on natural resource extraction.

Dinosaurs survived for millions of years by adapting to their environment. How can Vernal and its citizens adapt to thrive in this area as the dinosaurs did? Continual adaptation is needed because global trends are toward more volatility in natural-resource prices, not less. Volatility means unpredictability. Very few people, if any, could have predicted the extent to which the mortgage crisis has impacted the global economy. It is equally difficult to see exactly what will happen to Vernal's economy, even in the short term.

Vernal's general plan update process, which is just getting underway, is an opportunity for Vernal's residents to express their ideas on how to adapt local policies to ensure that Vernal can become a resilient and healthy community despite inevitable economic volatility. Vernal's general plan is a statement of community identity and the basis for policy decisions. The general plan can and should describe community attitudes towards the economy and outline goals and strategies that will ensure Vernal's health in years to come.



## APPENDIX B:

### Public Planning Workshop Results and Analysis

A series of Public Workshops were held in February 2009 to help identify planning ideas and alternatives. The workshops were conducted as hands-on community visioning exercises, providing local residents and community stakeholders the opportunity to help create a future vision for Vernal City.

Nine individual groups helped develop Planning Alternative Maps as part of four group sessions held during a two-day period. More than 200 members of the public participated, with individual work groups ranging from eight to 26 participants. Workshop sessions were conducted with the General Plan Update Management Committee, students from a Uintah High School civics class, elderly members of the community and the public at large.

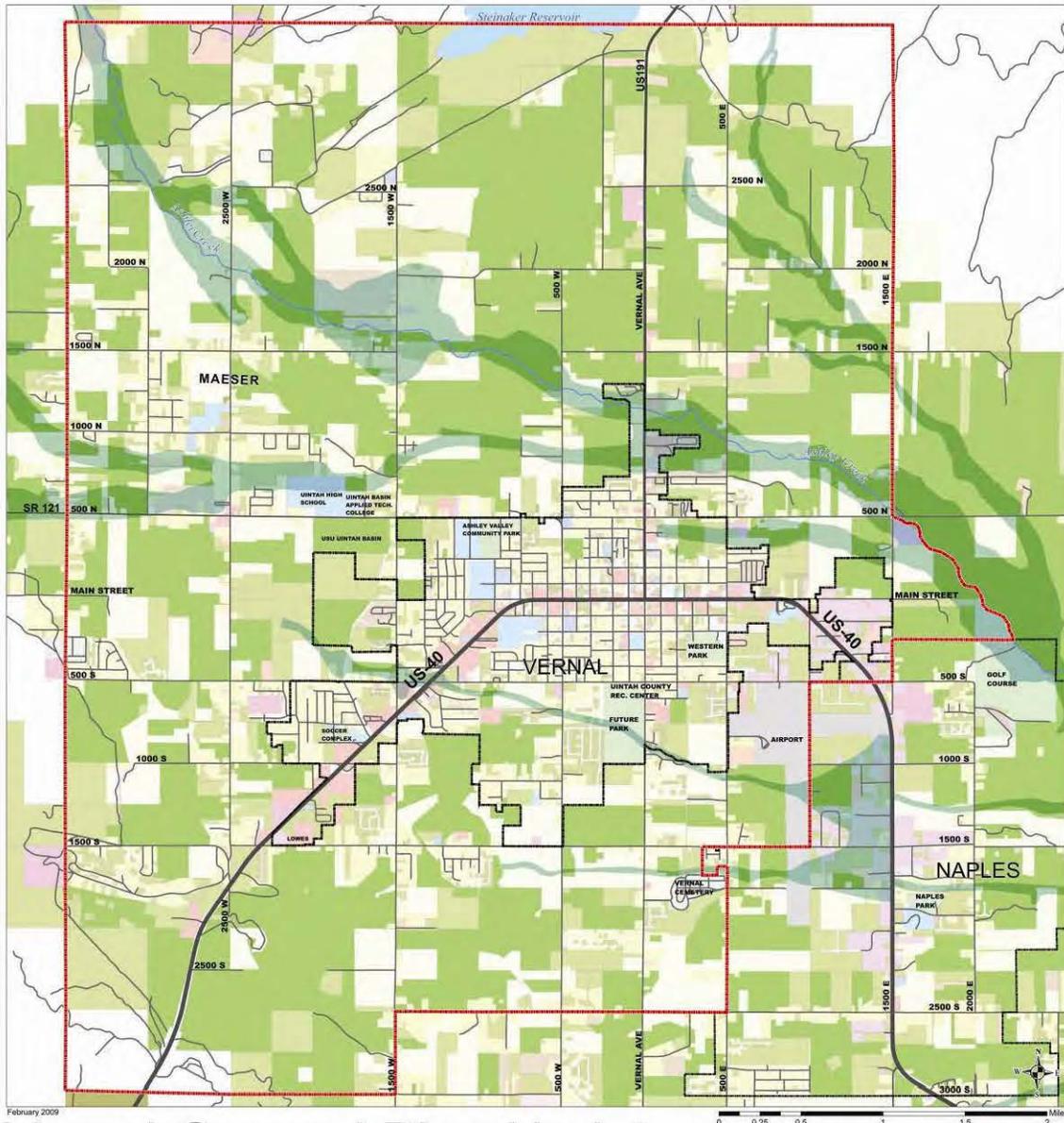
The Workshops began with a presentation of the planning process and also included a Visual Preference Survey (see Appendix C).

As illustrated on the following pages, “planning futures” were developed by groups of citizen participants. Each group was provided a base map illustrating existing land use conditions, sets of land use “chips” representing the amount and type of land necessary to meet projected growth scenarios, image boards illustrating examples of possible uses, and tools such as markers, tape and scissors.

Groups were assisted by a member of the planning team. The assistants provided assistance as necessary, but maintained a neutral role in the development of ideas. Once the group maps were completed, a spokesperson for each team presented the ideas and highlights to the assembled participants, and notes were taken by members of the planning team.



Workshop Base Map Example



Vernal General Plan Update

Legend

- |                     |              |                              |                  |            |
|---------------------|--------------|------------------------------|------------------|------------|
| Annexation Boundary | Agricultural | Res. Large Lot Single Family | Commercial       | Cemeteries |
| Vernal City Limit   | Vacant Land  | Res. Single Family           | Office           | Airport    |
| Naples City Limit   |              | Res. Duplex                  | Industrial       | Utilities  |
| 100 Year Floodplain |              | Res. 3-4 Unit                | Light Industrial | Mining     |
| US Hwy. 40          |              | Res. Apartments              | Schools          |            |
| US Hwy. 191         |              | Res. Mobile Homes            | Churches         |            |
| State Roads         |              | Cabins                       | Public           |            |
| Streets             |              | Mixed Use                    | Parks            |            |



VICINITY MAP



Master Plan Workshop Map

Workshop Land Use Chip Example

SCENARIO 2: BASELINE

1.4% ANNUAL GROWTH RATE, 3348 ADDITIONAL RESIDENTS BY 2028

ASSUMED AVERAGE HOUSEHOLD SIZE= 2.87

(1 of 3)

SINGLE FAMILY RESIDENTIAL - RURAL  
1167 UNITS @ 1.2 ACRES EACH

25 UNITS							
25 UNITS	17						
25 UNITS							
25 UNITS							
25 UNITS							
25 UNITS							

SINGLE FAMILY RESIDENTIAL - TOWN  
1167 UNITS @ 2.5 UNITS PER ACRE

40 UNITS							
40 UNITS							
40 UNITS							
40 UNITS							
40 UNITS							

CLUSTER RESIDENTIAL  
1167 UNITS @ 1.25 UNITS AND 1/2 ACRE OPEN SPACE PER ACRE

25 UNITS							
25 UNITS	10						
25 UNITS							
25 UNITS							
25 UNITS							
25 UNITS							

MEDIUM DENSITY RESIDENTIAL  
1167 UNITS @ 5 UNITS PER ACRE

80 UNITS	80 UNITS	80 UNITS	80 UNITS
80 UNITS	80 UNITS	80 UNITS	80 UNITS
80 UNITS	80 UNITS	80 UNITS	80 UNITS
80 UNITS	80 UNITS	80 UNITS	80 UNITS

HIGH-DENSITY RESIDENTIAL  
1167 UNITS @ 10 UNITS PER ACRE

180 UNITS	180 UNITS	180 UNITS
180 UNITS	180 UNITS	180 UNITS
180 UNITS	180 UNITS	180 UNITS

MIXED USE

15 UNITS - 1/2 BLOCK WIDTH, 1 BLOCK LENGTH

15 UNITS				
15 UNITS				
15 UNITS				

COMMERCIAL/RETAIL

20 UNITS - 1/2 BLOCK WIDTH, 1 BLOCK LENGTH

20 UNITS				
20 UNITS				
20 UNITS				

BIG BOX COMMERCIAL

20 UNITS @ 1 SQUARE BLOCK EACH

20 UNITS				
20 UNITS				
20 UNITS				
20 UNITS				

COMMERCIAL NEIGHBORHOOD CENTER

3 @ 10 ACRES DIAMETER EACH



OFFICE AND PROFESSIONAL

20 UNITS @ 1/2 BLOCK WIDTH, 1 BLOCK LENGTH

20 UNITS				
20 UNITS				
20 UNITS				

CULTURAL/CIVIC CENTER

10 ACRE AND 20 ACRE



DOWNTOWN

20 ACRES



INDUSTRIAL

20 UNITS @ 2 SQUARE BLOCKS EACH

20 UNITS	20 UNITS	20 UNITS	20 UNITS
20 UNITS	20 UNITS	20 UNITS	20 UNITS
20 UNITS	20 UNITS	20 UNITS	20 UNITS
20 UNITS	20 UNITS	20 UNITS	20 UNITS

PARKS AND RECREATION

1 ACRE - LOCAL PARK,  
5 ACRE - NEIGHBORHOOD PARK,  
20 ACRE - REGIONAL PARK



## Vernal General Plan Update

**A**

### Workshop Land Use Reference Images

#### Residential Uses

##### 1 - Single Family Residential - Rural



##### 2 - Single Family Residential - Town



##### 3 - Cluster Residential



##### 4 - Medium-Density Residential



##### 5 - High-Density Residential



## Vernal General Plan Update

# B

### Workshop Land Use Reference Images

#### Mixed Use and Commercial Uses

##### 6 - Mixed Use



##### 7 - Commercial -Retail



##### 8 - Big Box Commercial



##### 9 - Neighborhood Commercial Center



##### 10 - Office and Professional



# Vernal General Plan Update

C

## Workshop Land Use Reference Images

Civic/ Industrial/ Open Space/ Parks/ Ag./ Road & Trail Reference Images

### 11 – Schools/ Cultural/ Civic Center



### 12 - Industrial



### 13 – Open Space



### 14 – Parks and Recreation



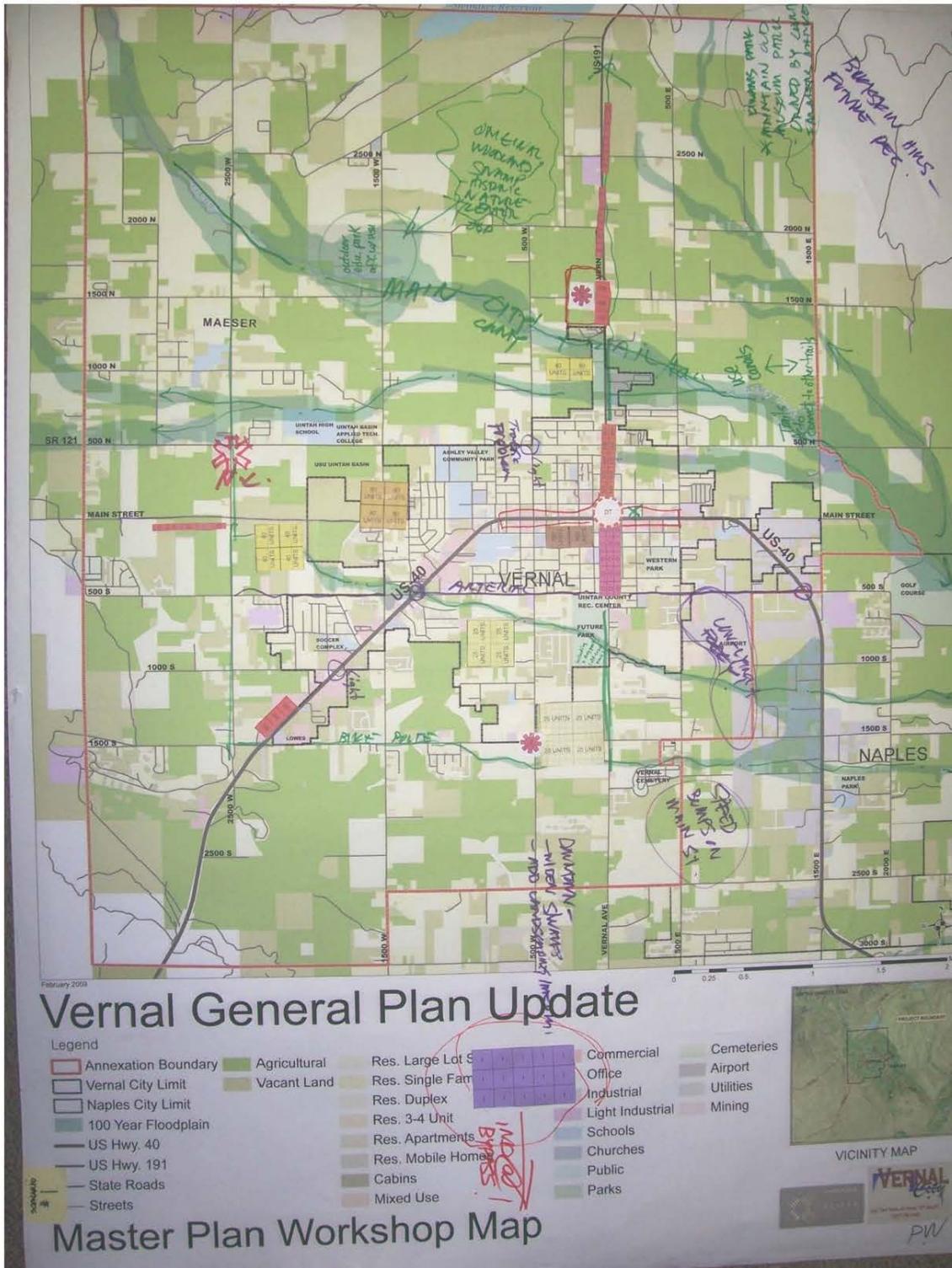
### 15 - Agricultural



### 16 – Trails and Streets

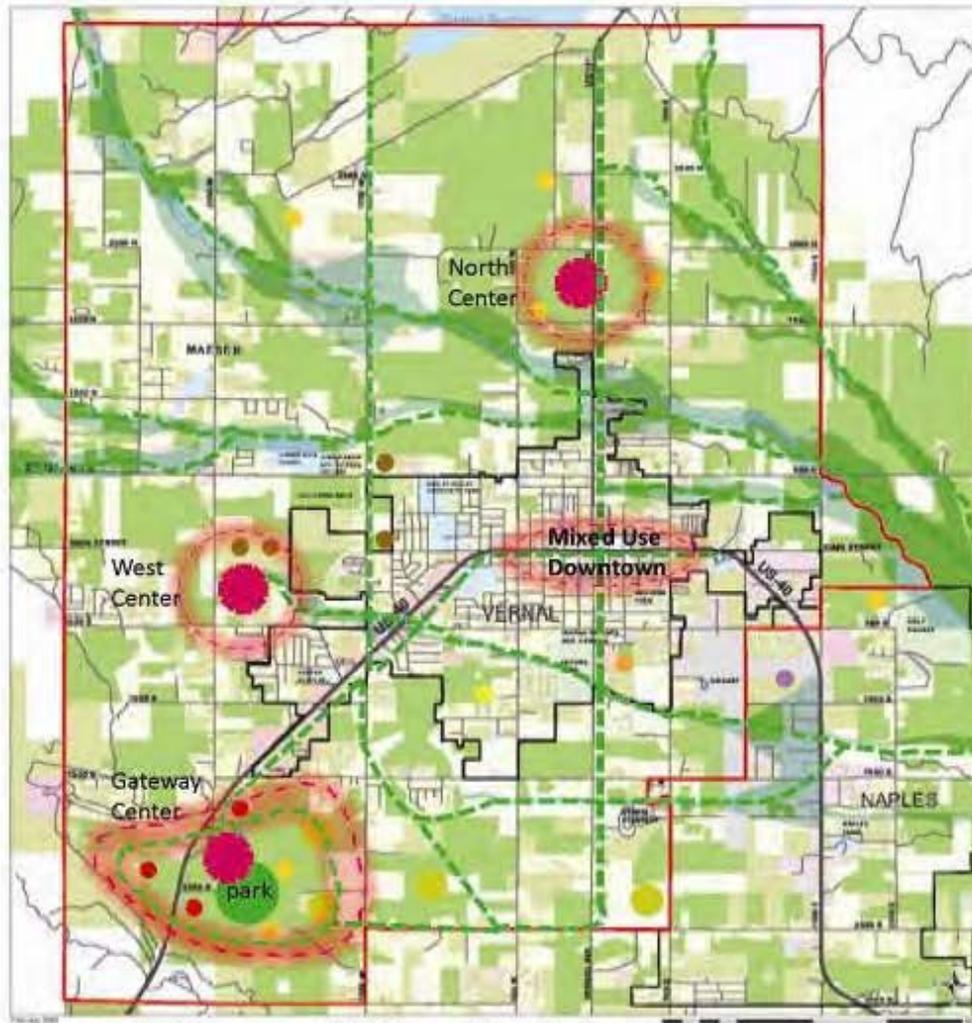


Example of Finished Workshop Map



Once the workshops were completed, the resulting maps were reviewed, analyzed, re-drawn for purposes of comparison, and summarized. The re-drawn maps are illustrated below:

## Management Committee – Scenario 1



Legend:

- |                     |              |                              |                  |            |
|---------------------|--------------|------------------------------|------------------|------------|
| Annexation Boundary | Agricultural | Res. Large Lot Single Family | Commercial       | Cemeteries |
| Vernal City Limit   | Vacant Land  | Res. Single Family           | Office           | Airport    |
| Naples City Limit   |              | Res. Duplex                  | Industrial       | Utilities  |
| 100 Year Floodplain |              | Res. 3-4 Unit                | Light Industrial | Mining     |
| US Hwy. 40          |              | Res. Apartments              | Schools          |            |
| US Hwy. 191         |              | Res. Mobile Homes            | Churches         |            |
| State Roads         |              | Cabins                       | Public           |            |
| Streets             |              | Mixed Use                    | Parks            |            |



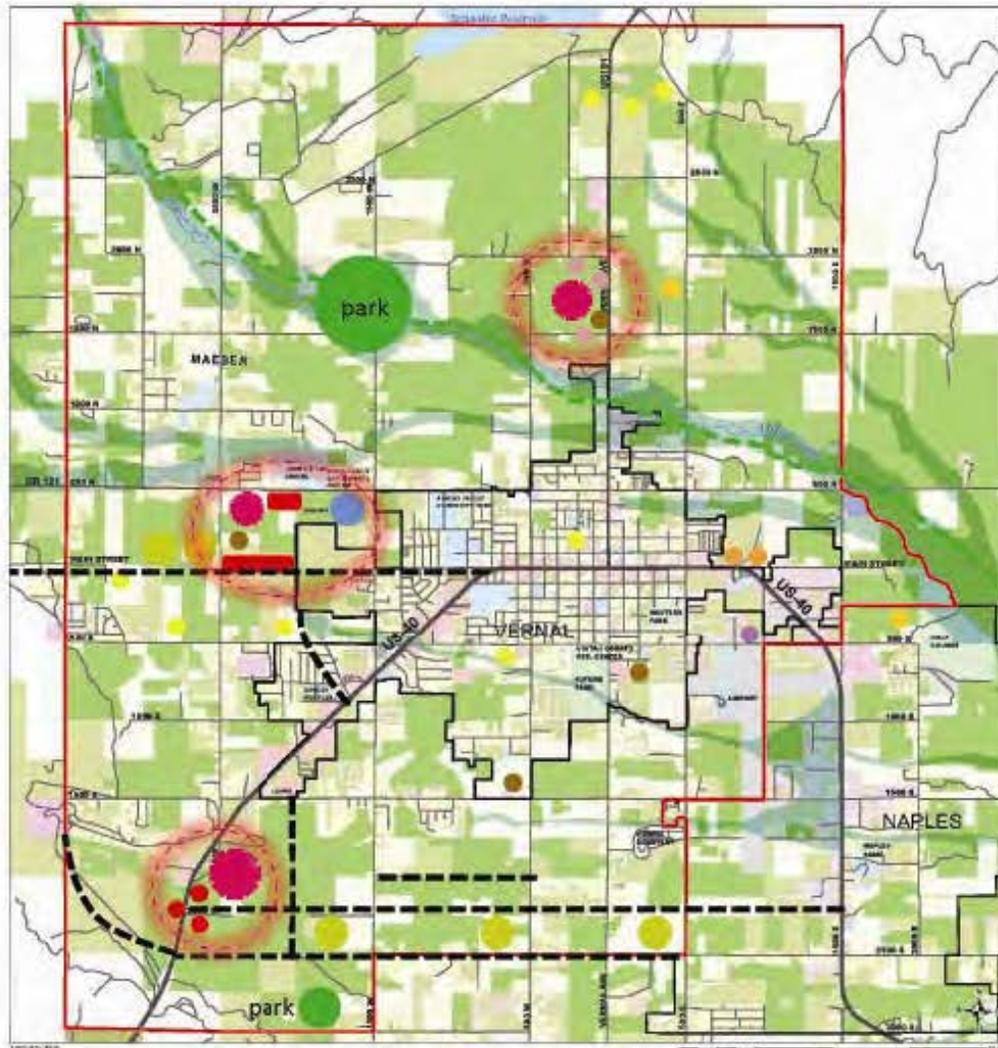
VICINITY MAP



### Master Plan Workshop Map

- |                         |                            |                          |
|-------------------------|----------------------------|--------------------------|
| Rural Residential       | Cluster Residential        | High-density Residential |
| Low-density Residential | Medium-density Residential | Civic/Cultural           |
|                         |                            | Mixed Use                |

## Management Committee – Scenario 2



### Vernal General Plan Update

Legend

Annexation Boundary	Agricultural	Res. Large Lot Single Family	Commercial	Cemeteries
Vernal City Limit	Vacant Land	Res. Single Family	Office	Airport
Naples City Limit		Res. Duplex	Industrial	Utilities
100 Year Floodplain		Res. 3-4 Unit	Light Industrial	Mining
US Hwy. 40		Res. Apartments	Schools	
US Hwy. 191		Res. Mobile Homes	Churches	
State Roads		Cabins	Public	
Streets		Mixed Use	Parks	

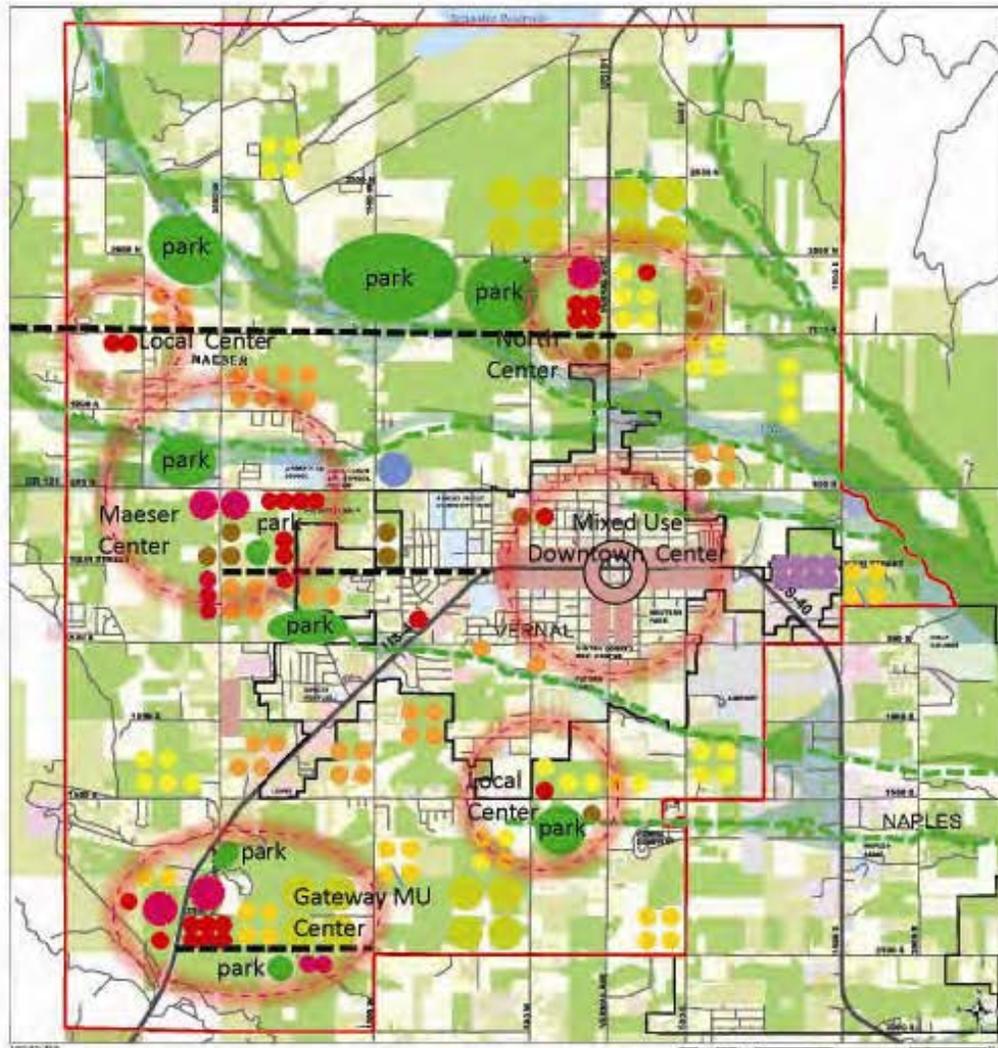


VICINITY MAP

### Master Plan Workshop Map

Rural Residential	Cluster Residential	High-density Residential
Low-density Residential	Medium-density Residential	Civic/Cultural

# Management Committee – Scenario 3



## Vernal General Plan Update

Legend

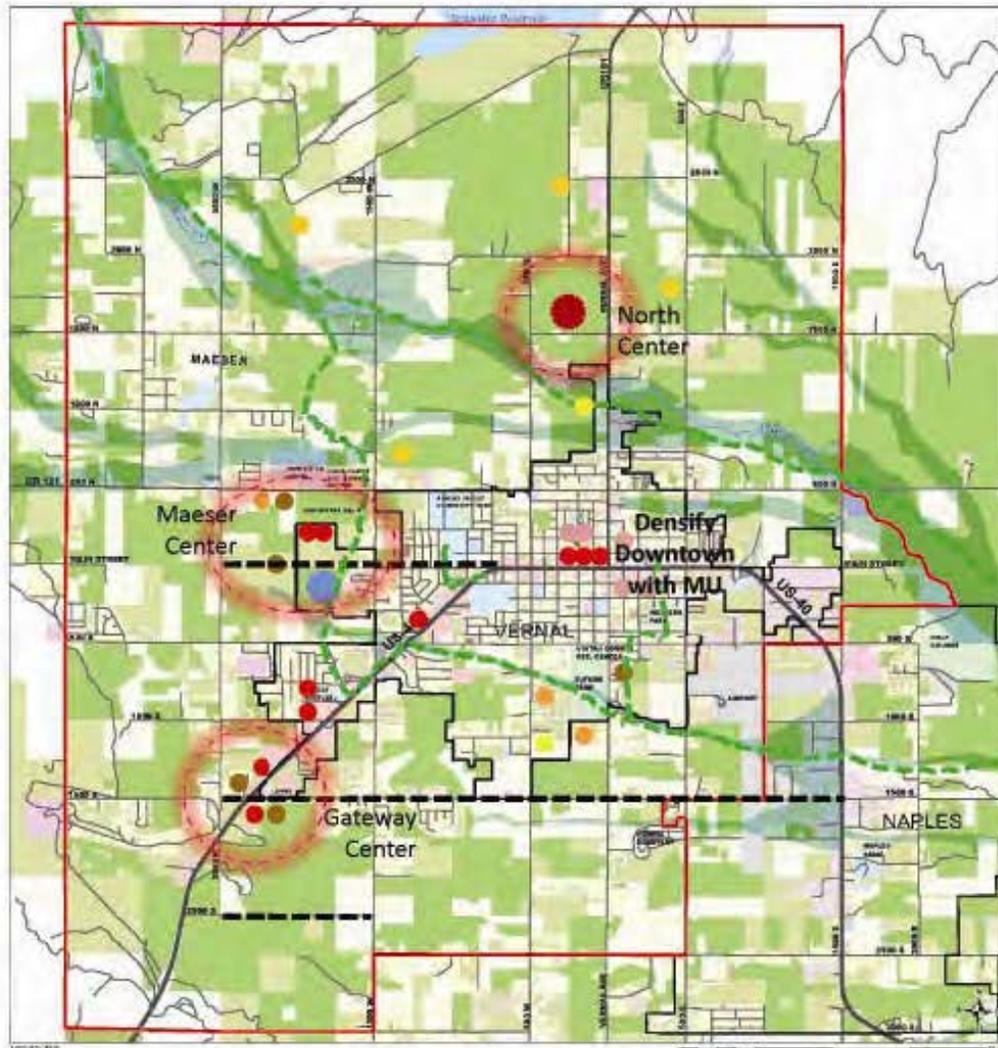
- |                     |              |                              |                  |            |
|---------------------|--------------|------------------------------|------------------|------------|
| Annexation Boundary | Agricultural | Res. Large Lot Single Family | Commercial       | Cemeteries |
| Vernal City Limit   | Vacant Land  | Res. Single Family           | Office           | Airport    |
| Naples City Limit   |              | Res. Duplex                  | Industrial       | Utilities  |
| 100 Year Floodplain |              | Res. 3-4 Unit                | Light Industrial | Mining     |
| US Hwy. 40          |              | Res. Apartments              | Schools          |            |
| US Hwy. 191         |              | Res. Mobile Homes            | Churches         |            |
| State Roads         |              | Cabins                       | Public           |            |
| Streets             |              | Mixed Use                    | Parks            |            |



## Master Plan Workshop Map

- |                         |                            |                          |
|-------------------------|----------------------------|--------------------------|
| Rural Residential       | Cluster Residential        | High-density Residential |
| Low-density Residential | Medium-density Residential | Civic/Cultural           |

# Public Session– Scenario 1, Group 1



## Vernal General Plan Update

### Legend

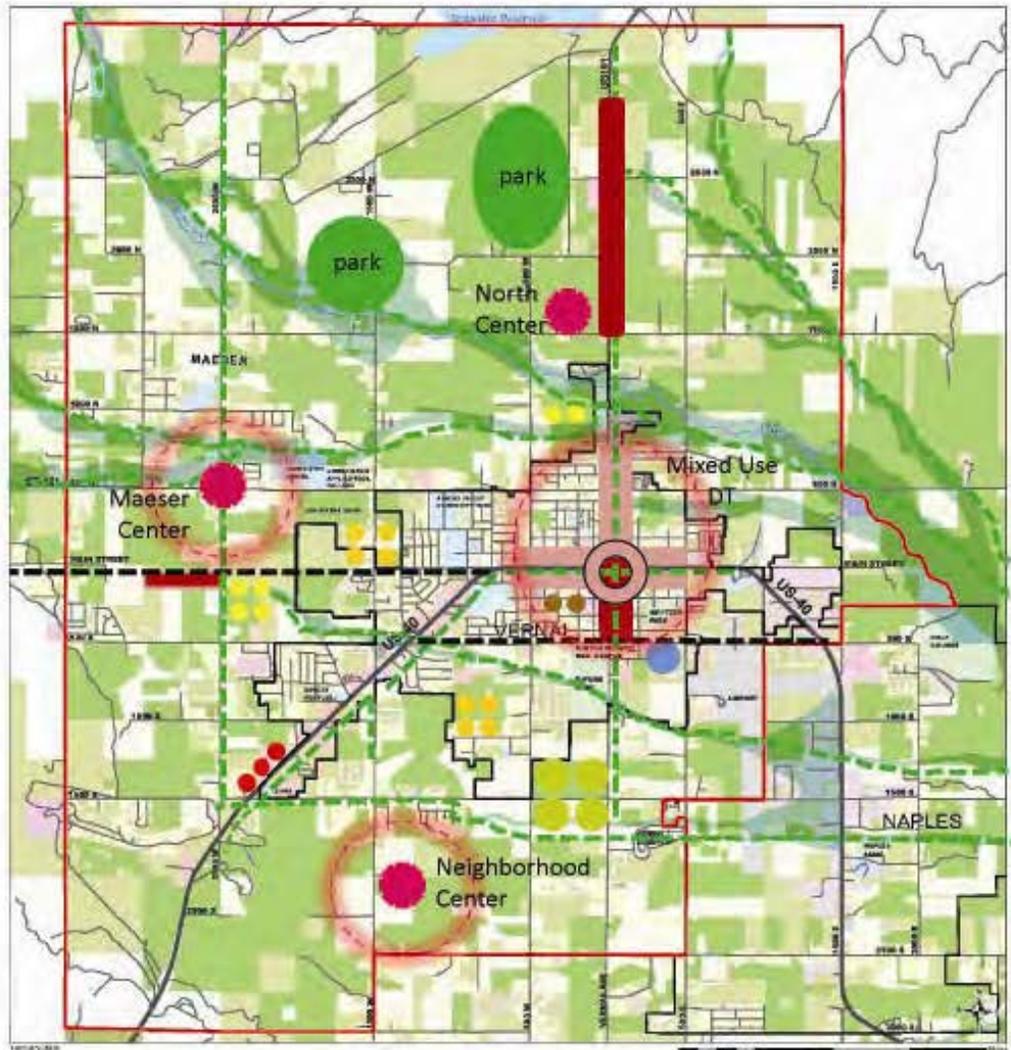
Annexation Boundary	Agricultural	Res. Large Lot Single Family	Commercial	Cemeteries
Vernal City Limit	Vacant Land	Res. Single Family	Office	Airport
Naples City Limit		Res. Duplex	Industrial	Utilities
100 Year Floodplain		Res. 3-4 Unit	Light Industrial	Mining
US Hwy. 40		Res. Apartments	Schools	
US Hwy. 191		Res. Mobile Homes	Churches	
State Roads		Cabins	Public	
Streets		Mixed Use	Parks	



## Master Plan Workshop Map

Rural Residential	Cluster Residential	High-density Residential
Low-density Residential	Medium-density Residential	Civic/Cultural

## Public Session– Scenario 1, Group 2



### Vernal General Plan Update

Legend

Annexation Boundary	Agricultural	Res. Large Lot Single Family	Commercial	Cemeteries
Vernal City Limit	Vacant Land	Res. Single Family	Office	Airport
Naples City Limit		Res. Duplex	Industrial	Utilities
100 Year Floodplain		Res. 3-4 Unit	Light Industrial	Mining
US Hwy. 40		Res. Apartments	Schools	
US Hwy. 191		Res. Mobile Homes	Churches	
State Roads		Cabins	Public	
Streets		Mixed Use	Parks	

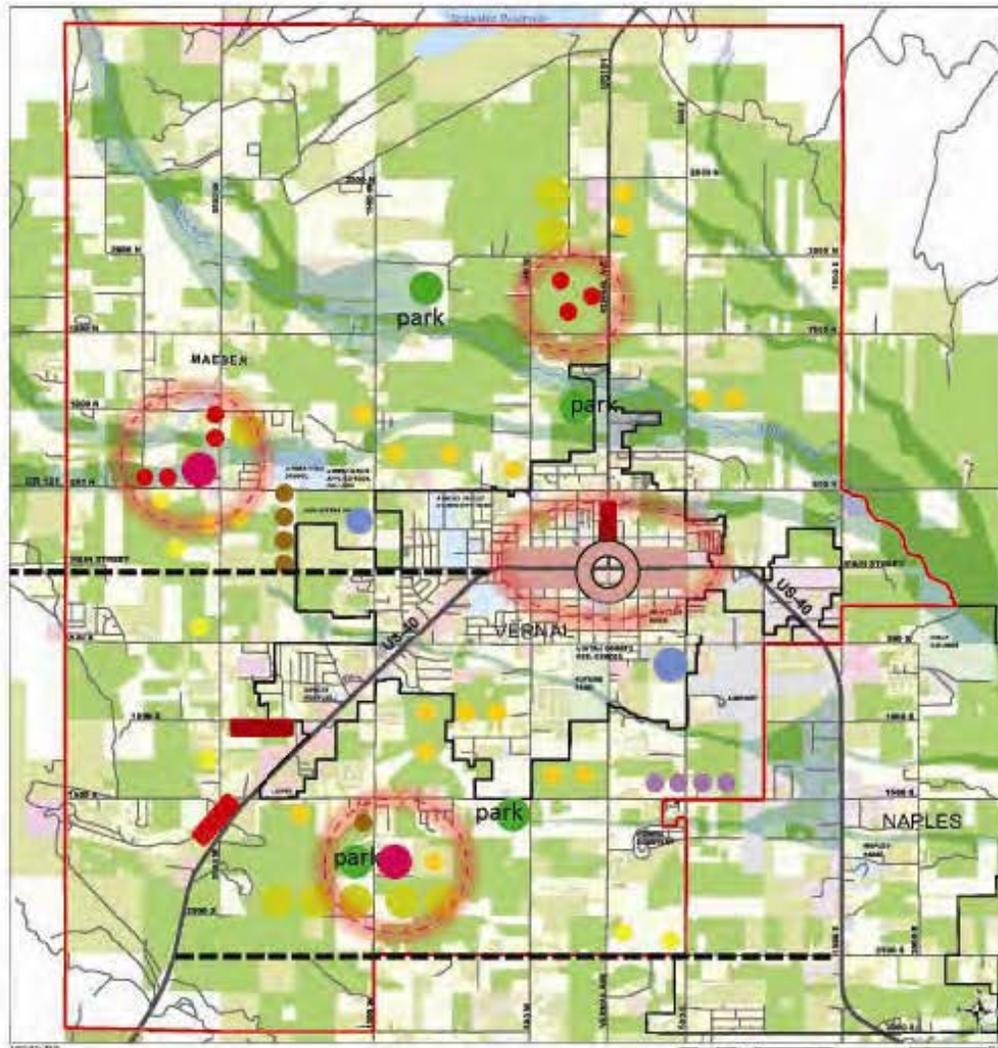


VICINITY MAP

### Master Plan Workshop Map

Rural Residential	Cluster Residential	High-density Residential
Low-density Residential	Medium-density Residential	Civic/Cultural

## Public Session– Scenario 2



### Vernal General Plan Update

Legend

- |                     |              |                              |                  |            |
|---------------------|--------------|------------------------------|------------------|------------|
| Annexation Boundary | Agricultural | Res. Large Lot Single Family | Commercial       | Cemeteries |
| Vernal City Limit   | Vacant Land  | Res. Single Family           | Office           | Airport    |
| Naples City Limit   |              | Res. Duplex                  | Industrial       | Utilities  |
| 100 Year Floodplain |              | Res. 3-4 Unit                | Light Industrial | Mining     |
| US Hwy. 40          |              | Res. Apartments              | Schools          |            |
| US Hwy. 191         |              | Res. Mobile Homes            | Churches         |            |
| State Roads         |              | Cabins                       | Public           |            |
| Streets             |              | Mixed Use                    | Parks            |            |



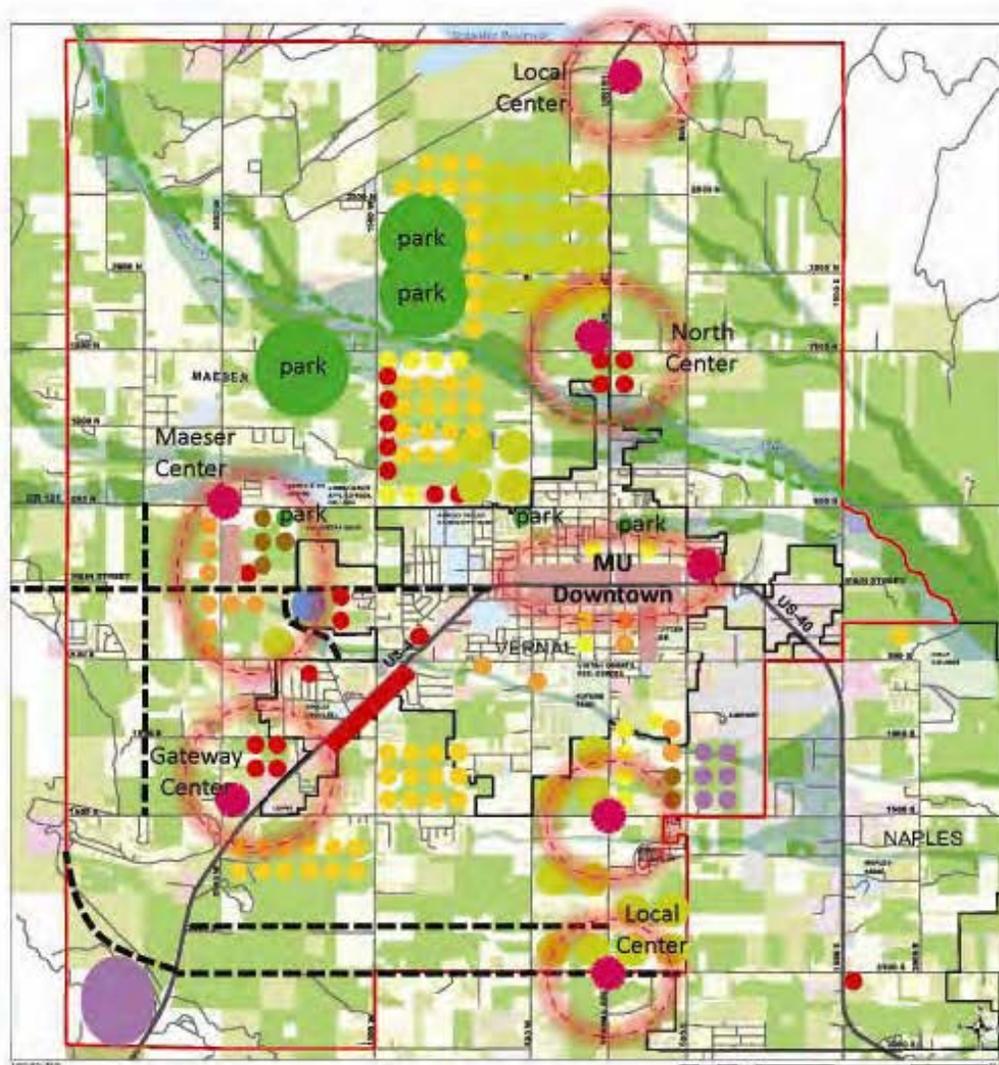
VICINITY MAP



### Master Plan Workshop Map

- |                         |                            |                          |
|-------------------------|----------------------------|--------------------------|
| Rural Residential       | Cluster Residential        | High-density Residential |
| Low-density Residential | Medium-density Residential | Civic/Cultural           |
|                         |                            |                          |

# Public Session– Scenario 3



## Vernal General Plan Update

Legend

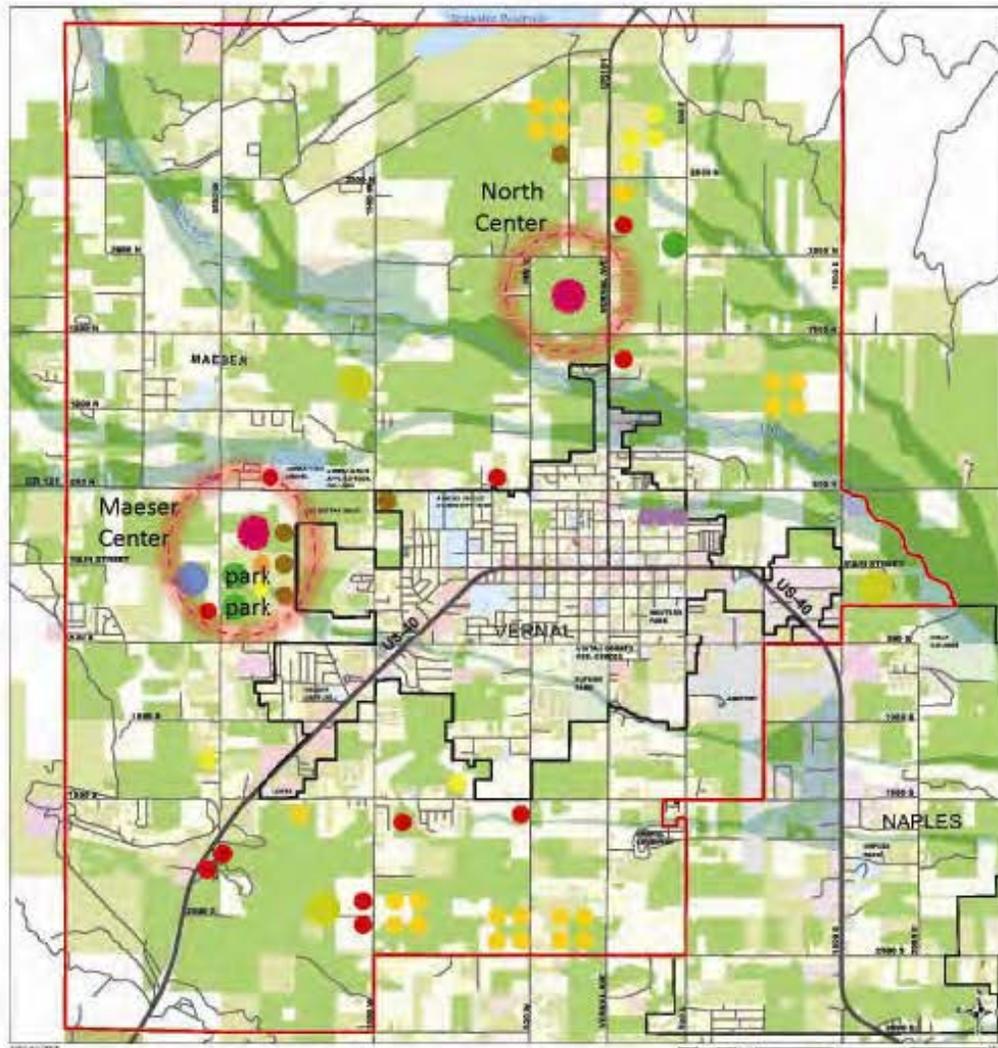
- |                     |              |                              |                  |            |
|---------------------|--------------|------------------------------|------------------|------------|
| Annexation Boundary | Agricultural | Res. Large Lot Single Family | Commercial       | Cemeteries |
| Vernal City Limit   | Vacant Land  | Res. Single Family           | Office           | Airport    |
| Naples City Limit   |              | Res. Duplex                  | Industrial       | Utilities  |
| 100 Year Floodplain |              | Res. 3-4 Unit                | Light Industrial | Mining     |
| US Hwy. 40          |              | Res. Apartments              | Schools          |            |
| US Hwy. 191         |              | Res. Mobile Homes            | Churches         |            |
| State Roads         |              | Cabins                       | Public           |            |
| Streets             |              | Mixed Use                    | Parks            |            |



## Master Plan Workshop Map

- |                         |                            |                          |
|-------------------------|----------------------------|--------------------------|
| Rural Residential       | Cluster Residential        | High-density Residential |
| Low-density Residential | Medium-density Residential | Civic/Cultural           |
|                         |                            |                          |

# Uintah HS Session– Scenario 2, Group 1



## Vernal General Plan Update

### Legend

Annexation Boundary	Agricultural	Res. Large Lot Single Family	Commercial	Cemeteries
Vernal City Limit	Vacant Land	Res. Single Family	Office	Airport
Naples City Limit		Res. Duplex	Industrial	Utilities
100 Year Floodplain		Res. 3-4 Unit	Light Industrial	Mining
US Hwy. 40		Res. Apartments	Schools	
US Hwy. 191		Res. Mobile Homes	Churches	
State Roads		Cabins	Public	
Streets		Mixed Use	Parks	



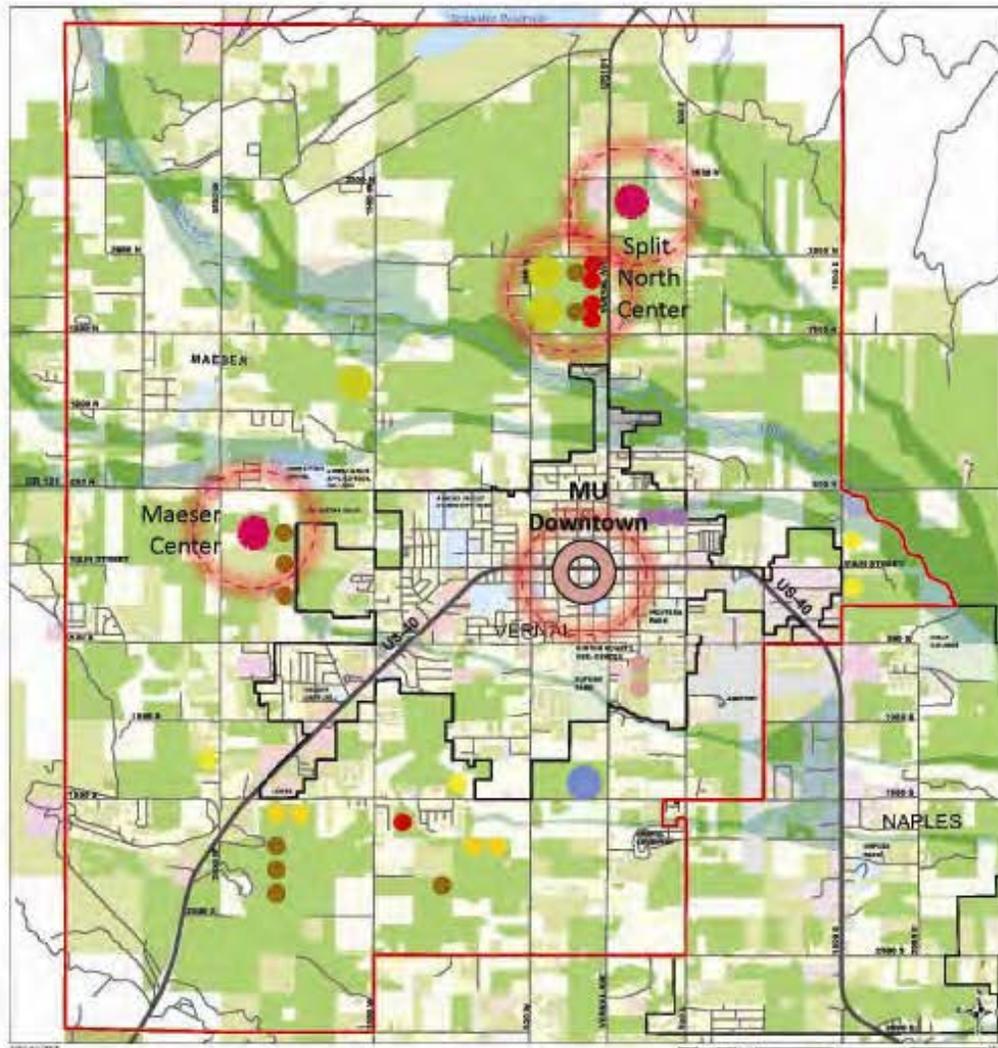
VICINITY MAP



## Master Plan Workshop Map

Rural Residential	Cluster Residential	High-density Residential
Low-density Residential	Medium-density Residential	Civic/Cultural

# Uintah HS Session– Scenario 2, Group 2



## Vernal General Plan Update

### Legend

- |                     |              |                              |                  |            |
|---------------------|--------------|------------------------------|------------------|------------|
| Annexation Boundary | Agricultural | Res. Large Lot Single Family | Commercial       | Cemeteries |
| Vernal City Limit   | Vacant Land  | Res. Single Family           | Office           | Airport    |
| Naples City Limit   |              | Res. Duplex                  | Industrial       | Utilities  |
| 100 Year Floodplain |              | Res. 3-4 Unit                | Light Industrial | Mining     |
| US Hwy. 40          |              | Res. Apartments              | Schools          |            |
| US Hwy. 191         |              | Res. Mobile Homes            | Churches         |            |
| State Roads         |              | Cabins                       | Public           |            |
| Streets             |              | Mixed Use                    | Parks            |            |



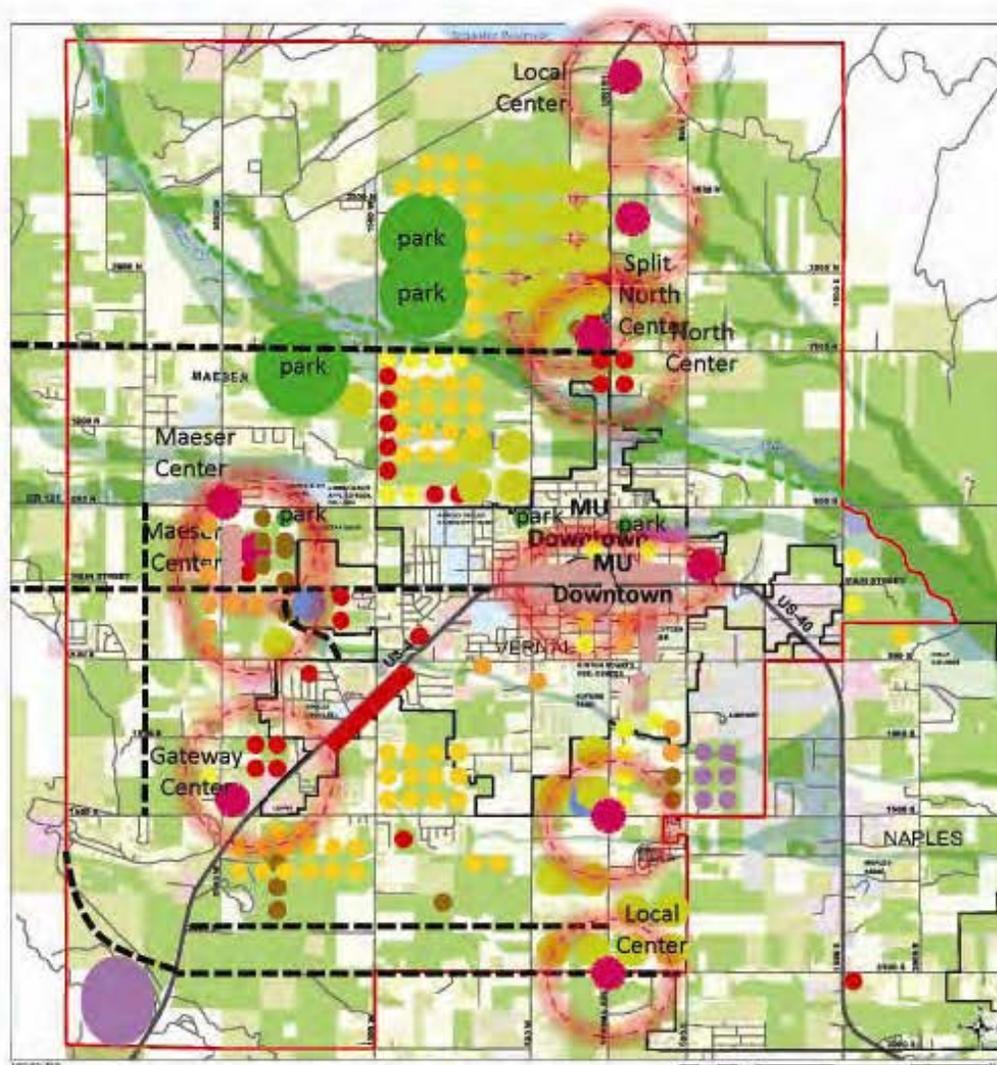
VICINITY MAP



## Master Plan Workshop Map

- |                         |                            |                          |
|-------------------------|----------------------------|--------------------------|
| Rural Residential       | Cluster Residential        | High-density Residential |
| Low-density Residential | Medium-density Residential | Civic/Cultural           |
|                         |                            |                          |

# Composite Analysis – Scenario 3



## Vernal General Plan Update

### Legend

Annexation Boundary	Agricultural	Res. Large Lot Single Family	Commercial	Cemeteries
Vernal City Limit	Vacant Land	Res. Single Family	Office	Airport
Naples City Limit		Res. Duplex	Industrial	Utilities
100 Year Floodplain		Res. 3-4 Unit	Light Industrial	Mining
US Hwy. 40		Res. Apartments	Schools	
US Hwy. 191		Res. Mobile Homes	Churches	
State Roads		Cabins	Public	
Streets		Mixed Use	Parks	

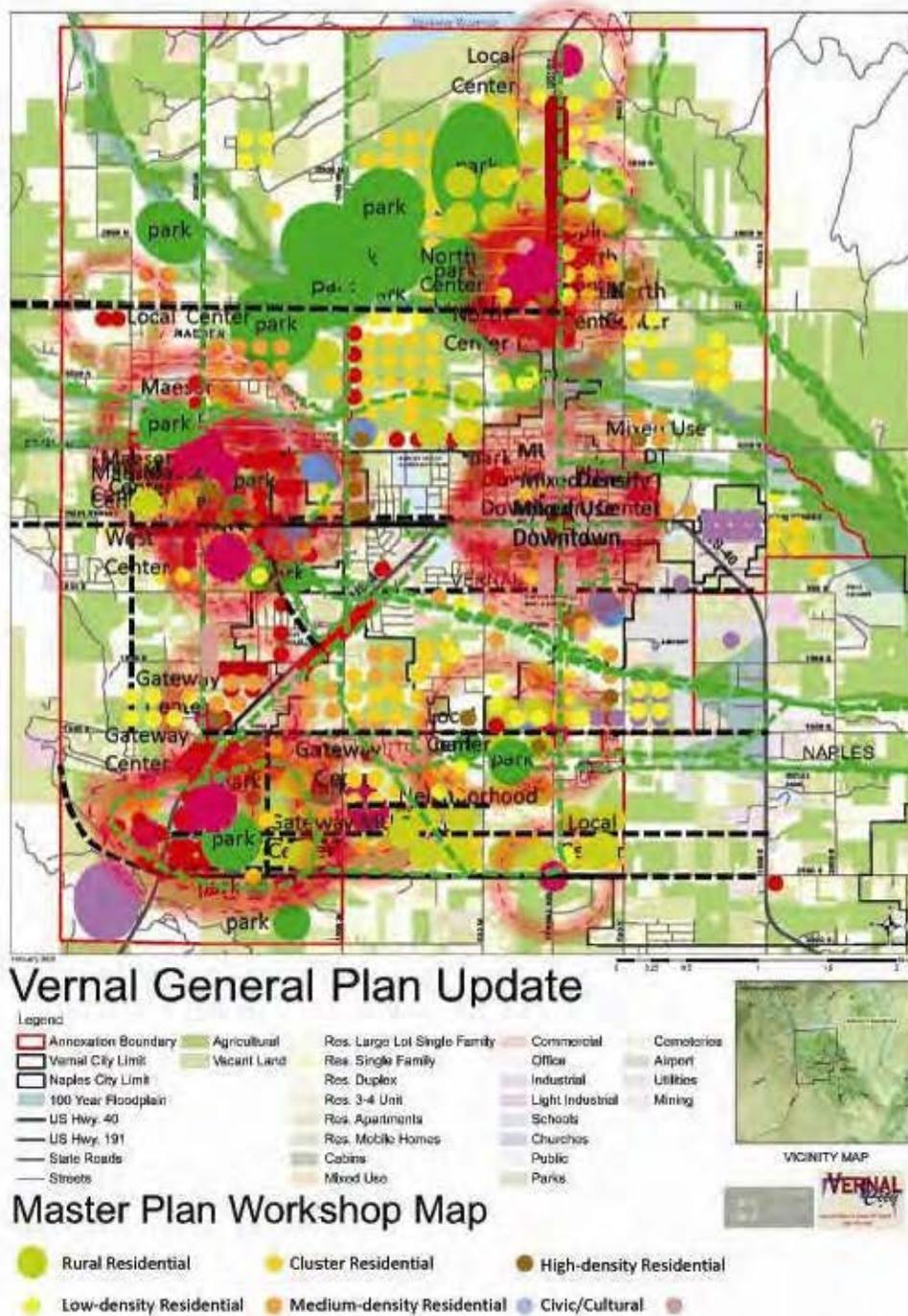


## Master Plan Workshop Map

Rural Residential	Cluster Residential	High-density Residential
Low-density Residential	Medium-density Residential	Civic/Cultural

As illustrated below, once the maps were re-drawn and individually analyzed, they were combined into the Composite Analysis Map as follows:

## Composite Analysis – All Maps



After reviewing the Composite Summary Map, a number of recurring themes were identified, as listed below. These were eventually used as part of developing alternative planning concepts.

### Themes from the Workshop Mapping Exercise:

- **Desire for a wide range of residential uses in Vernal and the Area of Impact**
- **New Mixed Use Neighborhood Centers located in three or four locations within the Impact Area**
- **A mixed-use downtown centered at Main Street and Vernal Avenue**
- **Preservation of Ashley Creek, other waterways and canals, and large swaths of open space surrounding these features.**
- **A comprehensive park and trail system, incorporating Ashley Creek and similar natural features.**
- **New roads to increase connection and improve circulation in Vernal and growth areas in the impact area**



## APPENDIX C:

# VISUAL PREFERENCE SURVEY RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

A *Visual Preference Survey* (VPS) was conducted as part of the Public Workshops held in Vernal on February 10-11, 2009. The survey was also administered to the Management Committee during a meeting prior to the Public Workshop. The purpose of the survey was to identify specific visual elements and qualities the participants like about their city and surroundings, and to identify future visual characteristics and features they would like to see or avoid seeing in the future. The survey encompassed a variety of land uses and elements identified as key issues early on in the project, including the following:



**Public Workshop VPS Survey Participants**

- Residential and Commercial Uses
- Downtown and Main Street Treatments/Uses
- Civic Uses and Public Services
- Open Space and Agricultural Land Uses
- Parks, Recreation, and Trails
- Street Treatments and Transportation Issues

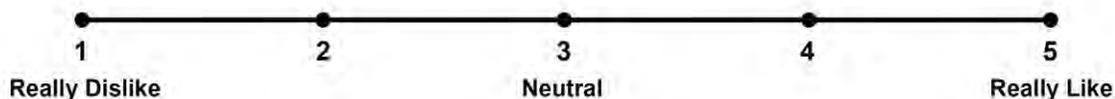
The images used in the survey included known local places and features as well as examples from other communities and sites.

### Survey Process

Sixty-five images were projected on a screen for approximately six seconds each. Each image was numbered and displayed along with the graphic value scale (see below). The survey was projected and data collected using *Turning Point* software. Participants used hand-held, remote voting



**Sample Slide**

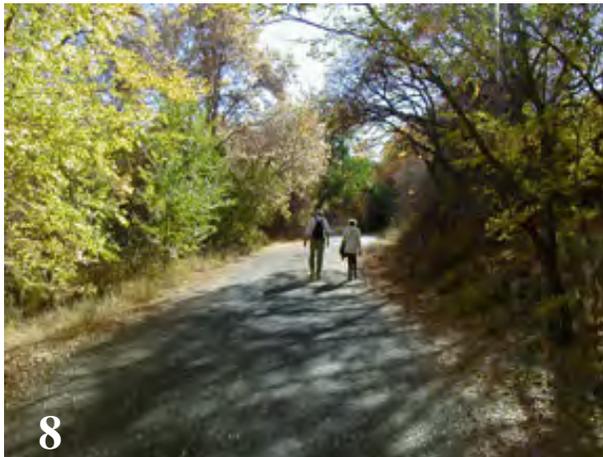


devices to assign a value between 1 and 5 to each slide as it was displayed. A total of forty-three Public Workshop participants took part in the survey as part of three separate groups. In addition, twenty-two members of the Management Committee also took part in a separate session.

***Most Liked Images***

When the results were combined, the participants from both the Public Workshop groups and the Management Committee liked the following ten images the most:





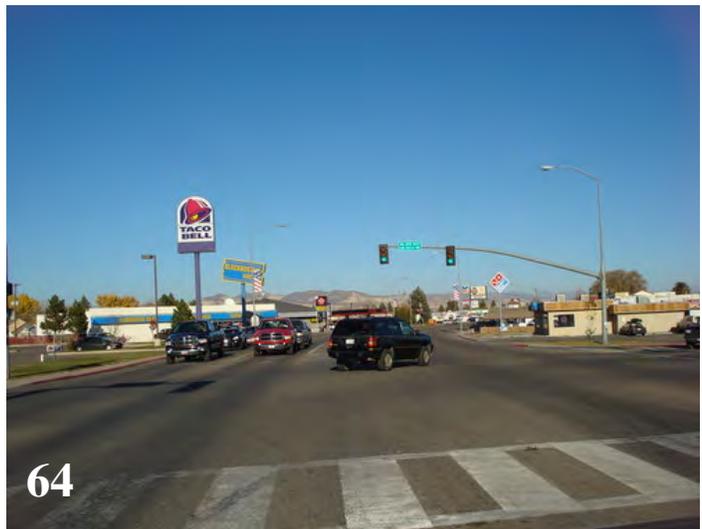
***Most Liked Images Analysis***

Clearly, images representing the non-urban environments and activities were most popular among participants. Images of nature, nearby agricultural and natural landscapes, trails, hiking and regional recreation sites and outdoor activities such as fishing, rafting and horseback riding were the most popular images. Only one building appeared in the top ten images – the iconic Vernal LDS Temple.

**Least Liked Images**

The following images were the ten least liked images from the combined group of participants of the Visual Preference Survey:





***Least Liked Image Analysis***

The least liked images have common themes of traffic congestion, wide streets and intersections, multiple dwelling unit-type structures and commercial strip malls - both older and newer styles. In addition, the Vernal Theater—an iconic structure built in 1946 that is located on Main Street in Vernal - was also included in ten least liked images.

These results confirm the comments provided by the public, which indicate a general dislike of larger-scale, multiple dwelling units (e.g. apartment complex) and new strip malls.

**Results by Land Use and General Plan Subjects**

***Commercial***

Results of the *Visual Preference Survey* showed an overall dislike for commercial structures regardless of scale and type, and whether they are well designed or not. Images representing big box commercial development and more informal, non-permanent commercial venues such as farmer's markets and roadside fruit stands were more unanimously disliked. Likewise, an image of a local hotel was not liked.

***Residential***

Images featuring residential structures were less favored. With the exception of a residence shown in a rural/pastoral area, images of residential uses were not generally liked.

***Downtown/Main Street***

Vernal City's historic structures—such as the Vernal LDS Temple and the Zion's Bank Building were generally favored. Similarly, Main Street-type streetscapes and sidewalk treatments, including colorful banners on light poles, attractive landscaping, street trees, mid-block pedestrian crossings and special paving all appeared in the top half of the rated images.

Several images of Vernal City's current Main Street conditions were included in the survey, receiving mixed results. An image of Main Street that featured a variety of commercial uses and signs and which included hanging perennial baskets and special streetlights with banners ranked substantially higher than another section of Main Street that showed contiguous buildings and did not prominently feature the same streetscape elements. Interestingly, the hanging perennial flower baskets, when shown separately, were very highly rated. As already noted, an image of the Vernal Theater was not liked.

***Open Space & Agriculture***

Images representing non-urban environments were in the most popular among participants from both survey groups. Natural features such as rock outcroppings, local mountains, streams and reservoirs dominate the ten most popular images. Open

spaces that would facilitate community-type events were also favorably rated, as were more neighborhood-scale open spaces.

Open space images featuring rural and agricultural uses were also rated fairly positively. The image of agricultural fields was ranked ninth of the sixty-five images. Rural images that contained farmstead-type features (homes and barns surrounded by open lands or horse pastures) fell within the top 25 images.

***Parks, Recreation, and Trails***

Images related to parks, recreation, and open space—both urban and non-urban—clearly dominated the top 25 images. Eleven of the top 25 images featured recreational activities and the majority of the remaining images featured places/locales where recreational activities would likely occur (e.g. rock outcroppings, Steinaker Reservoir, and the open lands surrounding Dinosaur National Park).

While non-urban type recreation (fishing, horseback riding, and rafting) dominated the top ten images, other recreation uses including multi-purpose paved trails in park-like and natural settings also appeared in the top ten. All images included in the survey that showed urban recreation—picnic benches, exercise/park-perimeter trails, open play fields, baseball diamonds, soccer fields, and play structures—fell within the top twenty-five images.

***Civic Uses/Public Services***

Images representing community/family events and uses placed in the middle range of the 65 ranked images. On the other hand, an image of a farmer's market was not well-liked.

Public service images were ranked fairly positively, with the image featuring a fire truck ranking sixteen out of sixty-five. An image of a Utah Highway Patrol vehicle was rated thirty-six out of sixty-five.

***Streets***

Several images of streets within the City of Vernal were included in the survey. Two of these images appeared in the least liked (bottom ten). These least liked images featured streets that were wide—five lanes or more—and flanked with sundry retail venues, including fast food, big box retail and other local establishments.

Other street images, featuring street trees and central, planted medians were much more agreeable to participants. A Vernal image featuring a less "urban" roadway (i.e. no curb and gutter and without homes/structures lining both sides of the street) fell in the more neutral range of responses.

Not surprisingly, an image of traffic grid-lock was rated the least favorable out of all sixty-five images.

***Industrial***

An image of oil rigs typical to the area was shown. It fell in spot #33 in the combined results, ranking in the neutral range of responses.

## **APPENDIX D:**

---

### **Plan Alternatives**

Three General Plan concepts (Alternatives 1 – 3) were developed to explore future growth and development alternatives. A text summary of each Plan Alternative follows, with illustrations of each concept and detailed layouts concluding this section.

#### **Alternative 1: Maintain Current Direction**

This concept assumes that the city and surroundings will continue to grow according to established directions and patterns. The concept extends existing growth patterns and directions within the Vernal City boundary and in adjacent Uintah County lands during the 20+ year planning horizon. The Oil Shale Boom Population Growth Scenario was assumed, resulting in an additional 19,055 residents by 2038. An average household size of 2.87 is assumed, resulting in the 6,642 new homes by 2038. The alternative assumes that future water supply limitations are resolved in the short-term, allowing the pace and direction of new development to meet future demands.

#### **Alternative 2: Vernal City Expands and Grows Outward**

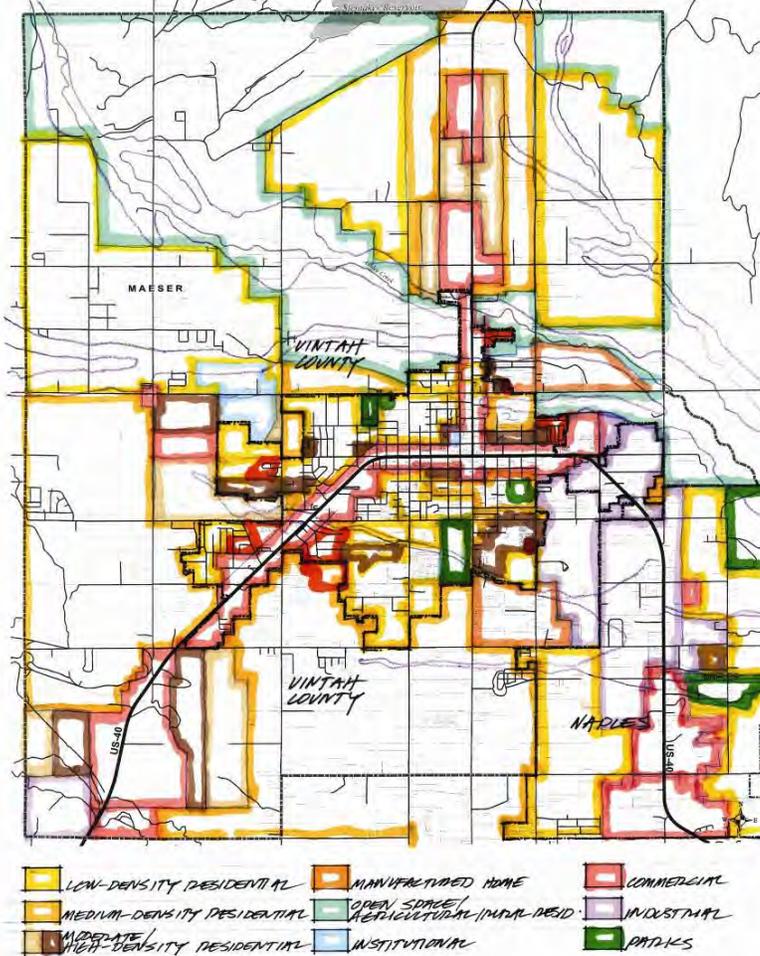
This alternative envisions the development of a more compact, concentrated and sustainable community. It assumes that Vernal City expands outward from its current boundaries, progressively incorporating land into the City.

#### **Alternative 3: Outlying Developments Grow and Merge with Vernal City**

This alternative envisions the development of a more compact, concentrated and sustainable community. This alternative assumes that three new mixed use activity centers –North Center, Maeser Center and South Center – are developed on the edges of the community. As these places grow over time, they will eventually merge with an expanding Vernal City proper, resulting in a complete community with unusually strong neighborhood distinction and personality. Population and household assumptions are the same as Alternatives 1 and 2.

**A variation of Alternative 1 was eventually selected as the Preferred Alternative Plan.**

## Vernal City General Plan Update Alternative 1 - Concept: Maintain Current Direction



### Concept Overview

This concept illustrates growth according to current planning directions in Vernal and adjacent surroundings. The concept maintains and extends existing growth patterns and directions within the Vernal City boundary and in adjacent Uintah County lands during the 20+ year planning horizon. The Oil Shale Boom Population Growth Scenario is assumed, resulting in an additional 19,055 residents by 2038. An average household size of 2.87 is assumed, resulting in the need to accommodate 6,642 new households by 2038. The concept assumes that future water supply limitations are resolved in the short-term, allowing the pace and direction of new development to meet future demands.

Vacant and agricultural land within the existing municipal boundaries is insufficient to meet the needs of future growth, additional land will be necessary beyond the community boundaries. This scenario assumes that new development adjacent to existing city boundaries is likely to be annexed into the city in a progressive basis, although no specific boundaries have been specifically considered. The total amount of land earmarked for future land uses in the available within the Area of Impact boundary far exceeds the amount required to accommodate envisioned needs. It is therefore assumed that the direction of growth will in large part be based on meeting market needs, which may or may not meet preferred growth directions.

Future residential development will reflect recent suburban development patterns, with densities generally decreasing from the community core. New growth centers/neighborhoods are envisioned in the vicinity of Maeser and north of Vernal along US-191. Commercial development will continue to be located along US-40 west of Vernal, becoming increasingly large scale and "big box" as one leaves the city center. A large commercial/industrial center punctuates the west entrance into Vernal along US-40, with smaller commercial and mixed-used developments highlighting the growth centers near Maeser and north of Vernal along US-191.

Downtown Vernal and the surrounding neighborhoods will be moderately enhanced, although truck traffic may preclude the creation of a thriving Main Street corridor. Minor streetscape improvements are envisioned, particularly near the intersection of Main Street and Center Street. Industrial uses will continue to be concentrated to the east and in Naples, with a new industrial area located west of Vernal along US-40.

Ashley Creek and the land surrounding it will be generally preserved as agricultural land and open space, although recreation and trail access will be difficult to establish on privately-owned parcels in this area. No other areas within the vicinity of Vernal are earmarked to remain agricultural. Smaller drainages and waterways will be preserved to the greatest degree possible, providing open space and trail connections between neighborhoods and destinations. Large Regional Parks will be established along Ashley Creek, and smaller parks provided within new neighborhoods.

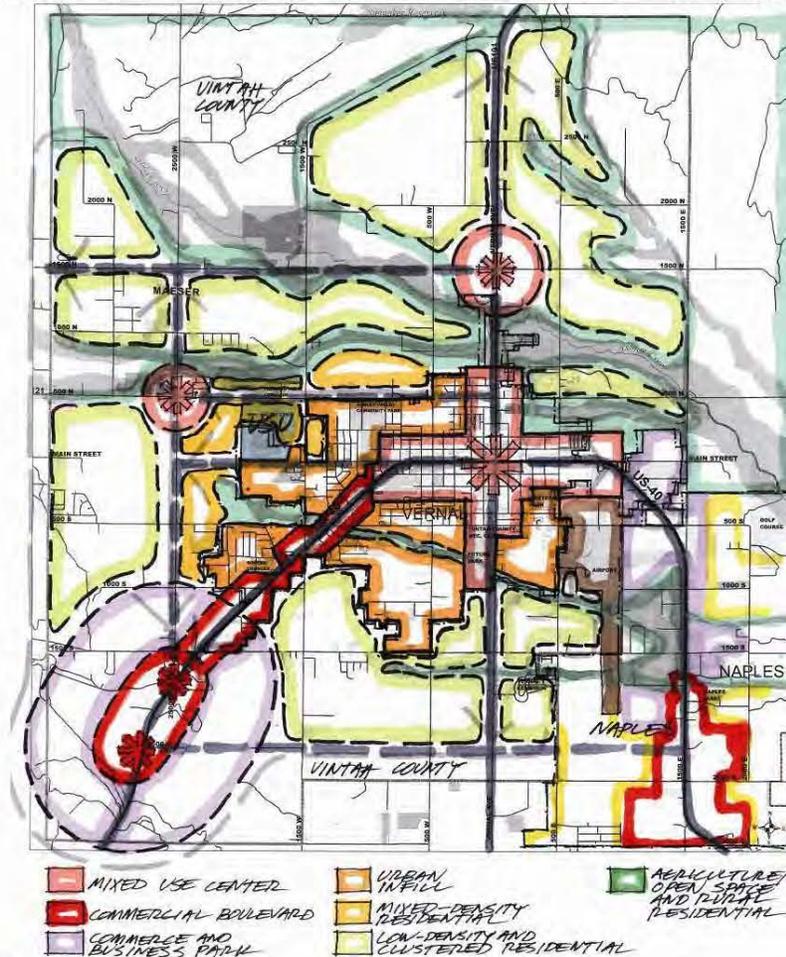
Major streets and roadway improvements will continue to focus on the needs of motorists. The needs of pedestrians and cyclists will continue to be provided on a more "ad hoc" basis, when roads are reconstructed and when need is demonstrated, with a focus on providing safe residential street environments. Providing roads to the potential residential development areas outside the current city boundaries will be costly and inefficient. Providing public transportation in a scenario like this is more difficult as residential development patterns are large and dispersed.

Airport service will be maintained in the current location until it is determined it no longer meets the needs of the community. At that point, a new airport should be located in relatively close proximity to the city, and the existing airport redeveloped with appropriate uses.



# Vernal City General Plan Update

## Alternative 2 - Concept: Vernal Expands and Grows Outward



### Concept Overview

This concept envisions the development of a more compact, concentrated and sustainable community. This concept assumes that Vernal expands outward from its current boundaries, progressively incorporating adjacent land into the city. The Oil Shale Boom Population Growth Scenario is assumed, resulting in an additional 19,055 residents by 2038. An average household size of 2.87 is assumed, resulting in the need to accommodate 6,642 new households by 2038. The concept assumes that water supply limitations are resolved in the short-term, allowing the pace and direction of new development to meet future demands.

Vacant and agricultural land within the existing city boundaries will be developed with residential and other uses according to patterns currently in place. Beyond the city boundaries, mixed-density residential uses will be encouraged where the expanding city boundaries approach Maeser. Lower-density and clustered residential uses will be encouraged further to the outskirts, helping to maintain a rural, open community feel. The result should be the formation of unique neighborhoods and special places.

Future residential development will be a combination of suburban-style development similar to existing patterns; "clustered development" on the edges of the community; and smaller "New Urbanist" and "Urban Infill" closer to the city center.

A large new commercial center is proposed at the south west entrance to the community, incorporating a more holistic "mixed use" approach, including light industries, residential, parks and open space. Two smaller "Neighborhood Centers" are envisioned on the outskirts of the community near Maeser and north of Ashley Creek along US-191, serving the day-to-day shopping and service needs of the surrounding neighborhoods and outlying areas.

Downtown Vernal and the surrounding neighborhoods will be cleaned up and improved to re-kindle downtown as a key cog of the future city. Significant areas of Main Street should be redeveloped to improve the appearance of the area and create a special "draw". Lofts, condominiums and other urban housing uses will be encouraged, helping create a livelier, "24/7" place. As part of these improvements, major street and streetscape improvements will be considered, focusing on distinguishing the area. In order for these improvements to take place, alternate routes for heavy trucks will be necessary.

Industrial uses will continue to be concentrated on the east end of Vernal and in Naples. Light industries will be accommodated in the new commercial/industrial center. New heavy industries should be kept away from downtown.

Ashley Creek and the land surrounding it will be generally preserved as agricultural land and open space. Recreation and trail access through this and other corridors will be established, serving as a pre-eminent urban walking and biking destination. No other areas within the vicinity of Vernal are earmarked to remain agricultural. Smaller drainages and waterways should be preserved to the greatest degree possible, providing open space and trail connections between neighborhoods and destinations. Large Regional Parks will be established along Ashley Creek, and smaller parks provided within new neighborhoods.

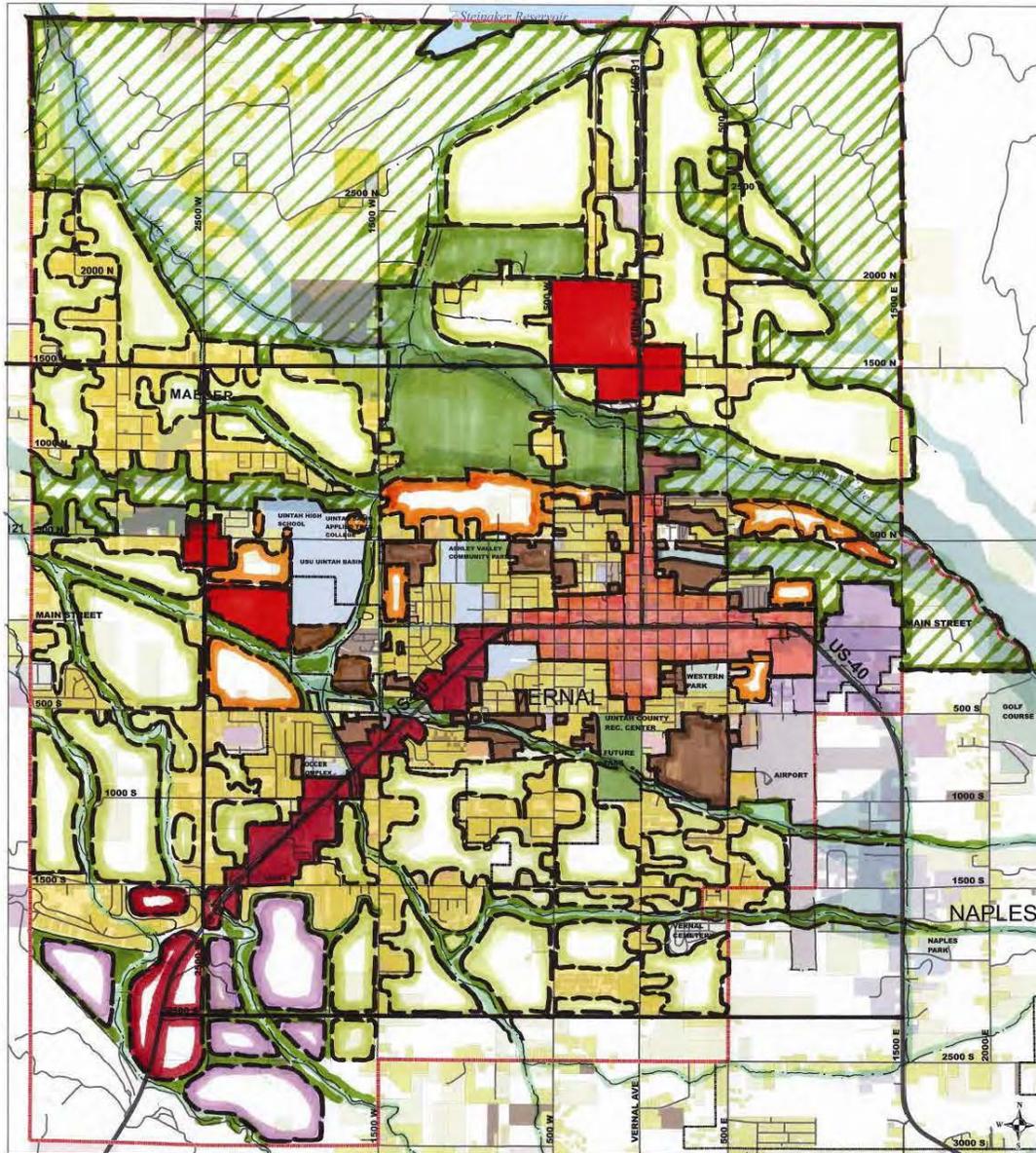
Major streets and roadways will serve the needs of both motorists and pedestrians. Focused areas of mixed use and commercial development offer logical destinations within the transportation network. A southern connection between US-40 west of Vernal and US-40 in Naples at approximately 2500 South offers an alternative southern route as well as access to proposed residential development. Other additional east/west routes include connecting 1500 North from Vernal Avenue to 2500 West and beyond, although the environmental implications of this are important. Transit service connecting these development centers, downtown, USU, and other residential areas could provide good city-wide access to public transportation.

Airport service will be maintained in the current location until it is determined if no longer meets the needs of the community. At that point, a new airport should be located in relatively close proximity to the city, and the existing airport redeveloped with appropriate uses.

Development within Uintah County beyond the impact of Vernal should generally be rural in nature, helping to develop Vernal into a first-class urban center for the county and region.



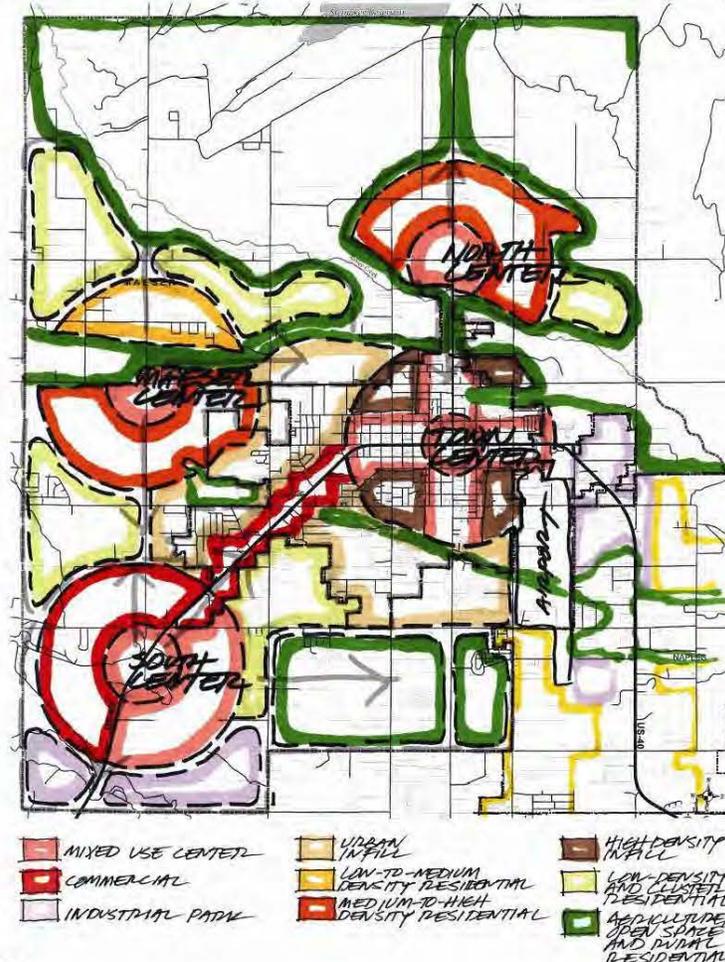
## Vernal City General Plan Update Alternative 2: Vernal Expands and Grows Outward



- |   |                                |
|---|--------------------------------|
| Existing Residential  | Mixed-Use - Downtown           |
| Agriculture/ Open Space and Rural Residential (1 Unit per Acre) | Commercial Boulevard           |
| Existing Schools/ Civic/ Institutional                          | Neighborhood Commercial Center |
| Low-Density/ Clustered Residential (3 Units per Acre)           | Business Park                  |
| Medium-Density Residential (5 to 8 Units per Acre)              | Parks and Recreation           |
| Urban Infill Residential (8 to 16 Units per Acre/ Mixed Use)    | Trails                         |

# Vernal City General Plan Update

## Alternative 3 - Concept: Outlying Developments Grow and Merge with Vernal



### Concept Overview

This concept envisions the development of a more compact, concentrated and sustainable community. This concept assumes that **three new mixed use activity centers—North Center, Maeser Center and South Center - are developed on the edges of the community.** As these places grow over time, they will eventually merge with an expanding Vernal City proper, resulting in a complete community with unusually strong neighborhood distinction and personality.

The Oil Shale Boom Population Growth Scenario is assumed, resulting in an additional 19,055 residents by 2038. An average household size of 2.87 is assumed, resulting in the need to accommodate 6,642 new households by 2038. The concept assumes that **water supply** limitations are resolved in the short-term, allowing the pace and direction of new development to meet future demands.

**Vacant and agricultural land** within the existing city boundaries will be developed with residential and other uses according to patterns currently in place. Beyond the city boundaries, mixed-density residential uses will be encouraged where the expanding city boundaries approach Maeser. Lower-density and clustered residential uses will be encouraged further to the outskirts, helping to maintain a rural, open community feel. The result should be the formation of unique neighborhoods and places.

Future residential development will focus on more urban examples, with suburban-style development becoming the exception rather than the norm. A combination of "clustered development" neighborhoods located near the edges of the three centers; "New Urbanist" and "Urban Village" neighborhoods with traditional densities and patterns near the core of each center, and relatively dense urban "infill" within the existing city boundaries.

**Commercial development** should incorporate a more holistic "mixed use" approach as part of unique profile of each center. The focus of each should be to serve the needs of the surrounding neighborhood first and foremost. **Downtown Vernal** and the surrounding neighborhoods will be cleaned up and improved to re-kindle downtown as a key cog of the future city. Significant areas of Main Street should be redeveloped to improve the appearance of the area and create a special "draw". Lofts, condominiums and other urban housing uses will be encouraged, helping create a livelier, "24/7" place. As part of these improvements, major street, parking and streetscape improvements will be considered, focusing on distinguishing the area. In order for these improvements to take place, alternate routes for heavy trucks will be necessary.

**Light-industrial uses** should be incorporated into the South Center development, with heavier industries located east of Vernal toward Naples. New heavy industries should be kept away from downtown.

**Ashley Creek** and the land surrounding it will be generally preserved as agricultural land and open space. Recreation and trail access through this and other corridors will be established, serving as a pre-eminent urban walking and biking destination. A small area on the southern edge of the community is encouraged to be retained as agricultural land and developed with rural residential uses, helping to merge new development with traditional patterns. Smaller drainages and waterways should be preserved to the greatest degree possible, providing **open space and trail connections** between neighborhoods and destinations. Large **Regional Parks** will be established along Ashley Creek, and **smaller parks** provided within new neighborhoods.

**Major streets and roadways** will serve the needs of both motorists and pedestrians. New roads will be developed with a higher-level system of landscape treatments and pedestrian facilities than is currently provided, and the establishment of a fully-interconnected system of sidewalks and roadside trails provided. Improved east-west connections will be established to link outlying developments with the city center, while avoiding the pitfalls of discouraging desirable business traffic through the city.

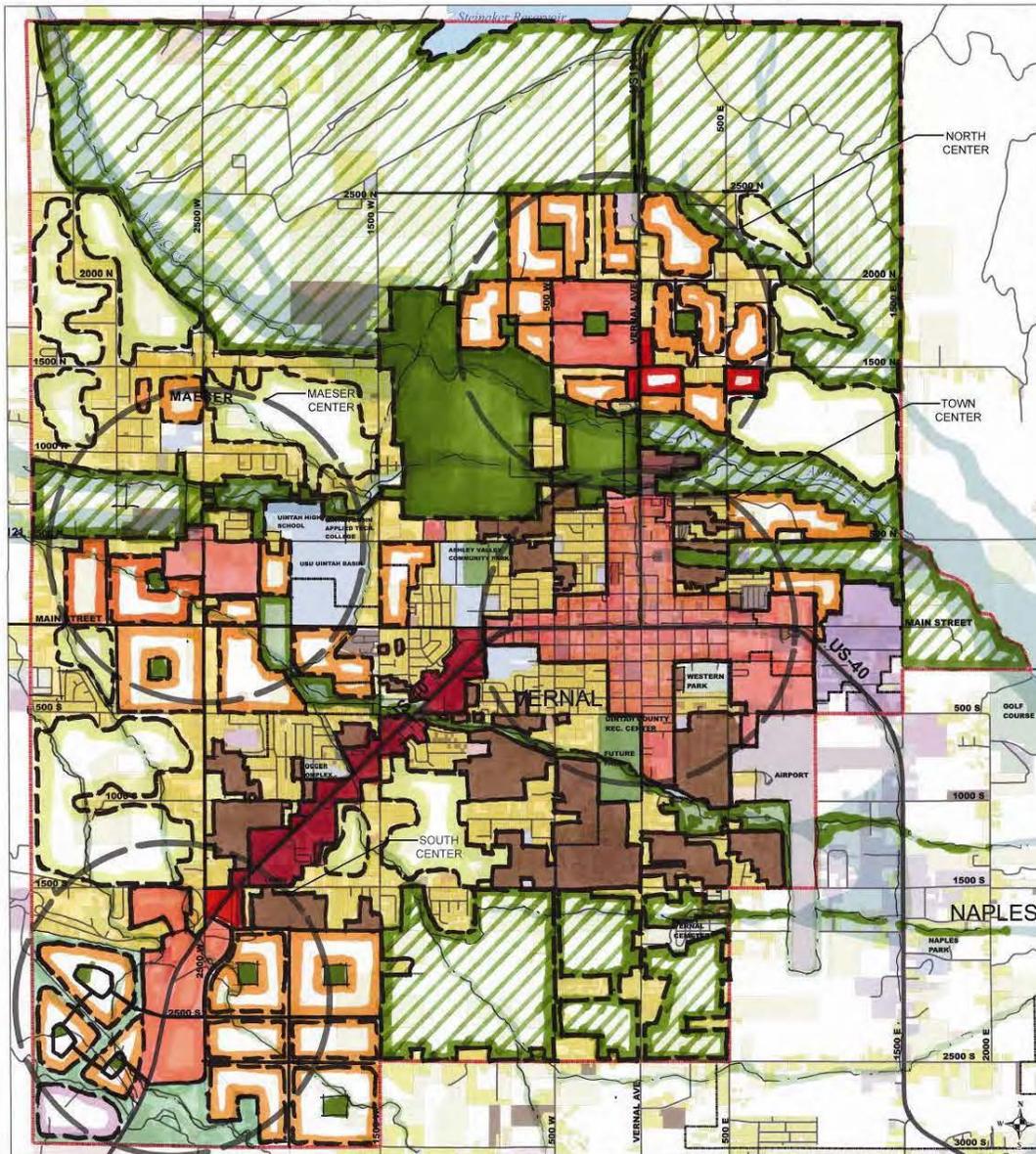
**Airport service** will be maintained in the current location until it is determined it no longer meets the needs of the community. At that point, a new airport should be located in relatively close proximity to the city, and the existing airport redeveloped with appropriate uses.

Residential and other development within **Uintah County** land should be primarily rural in nature and support the formation of Vernal into a first-class urban center for the county and region.



## Vernal City General Plan Update

### Alternative 3: Outlying Developments Grow and Merge with Vernal



- |   |                         |
|---|-------------------------|
| Existing Residential  | Mixed-Use Center        |
| Agriculture/ Open Space and Rural Residential (1 Unit per Acre) | Commercial Boulevard    |
| Existing Schools/ Civic/ Institutional                          | Neighborhood Commercial |
| Low-Density/ Clustered Residential (3 Units per Acre)           | Business Park           |
| Medium-Density Residential (5 to 8 Units per Acre)              | Parks and Recreation    |
| Urban Infill Residential/ Mixed Density                         | Trails                  |

## **APPENDIX E:**

---

### Housing Element

The Housing Element of the Vernal City General Plan was prepared by Tightline Community Resources, LLC as part of a separate contract. The plan was adopted by the Vernal City Council on May 6, 2009.



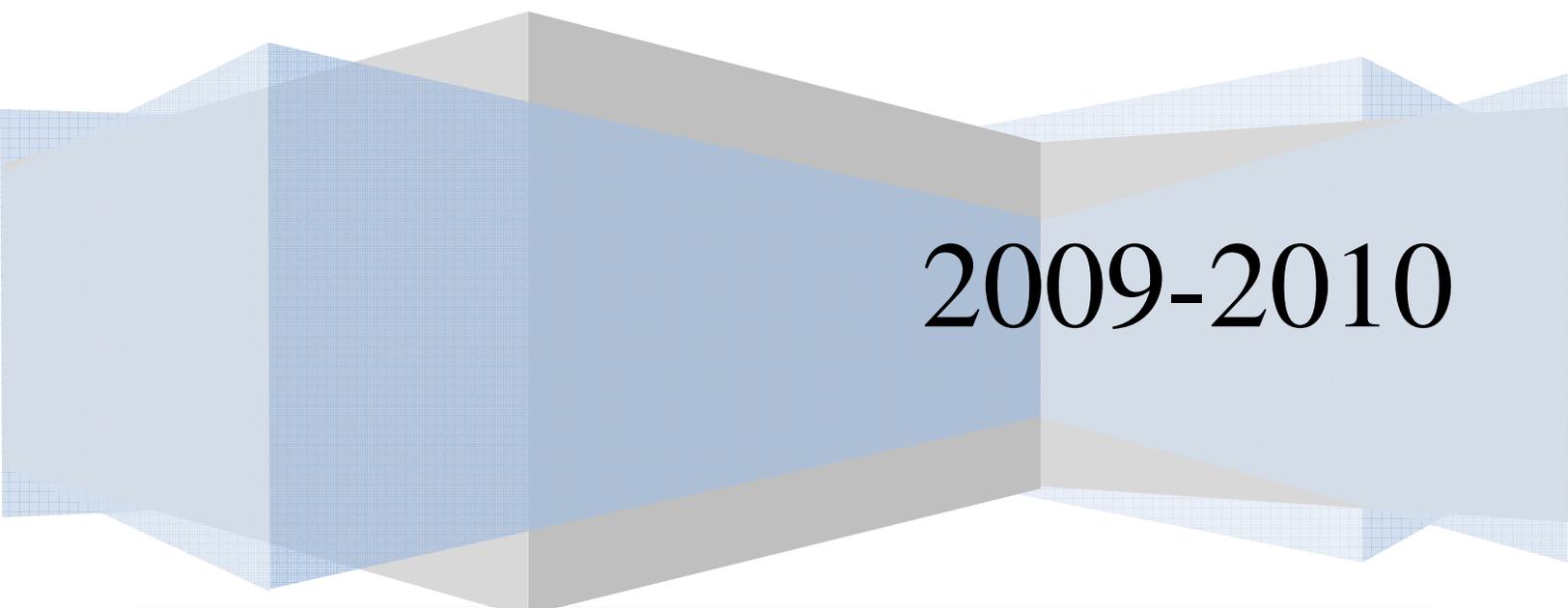
# Vernal City General Plan

Vernal City Housing Element  
Utah Workforce Housing Initiative

**Lotus Community Development Institute - Associates**

**Tightline Community Resources, LLC**

*Lotus Community Development, LLC  
RJS Community Development Resources*



2009-2010



## **Table of Contents**

<b>Section 1</b>	<b>Demographics</b>
<b>Section 2</b>	<b>Housing Affordability Status</b>
<b>Section 3</b>	<b>Housing Needs Statement</b>
<b>Section 4</b>	<b>Regulatory Review and Recommendations</b>
<b>Section 5</b>	<b>Implementation Strategy</b>
<b>Section 6</b>	<b>Financial Resources</b>
<b>Appendix 1</b>	<b>Implementation Resolution</b>
<b>Appendix 2</b>	<b>Vernal City Survey Summary</b>
<b>Appendix 3</b>	<b>Draft Inclusionary Zoning Ordinance</b>
<b>Appendix 4</b>	<b>Economic Baseline Study of Vernal and Ashley Valley Bureau of Economic and Business Research</b>
<b>Appendix 5</b>	<b>Housing Analysis Model</b>
<b>Appendix 6</b>	<b>Additional Resources and Partner Contacts for future reference</b>



## **SECTION 1**

### **Demographics**

#### **Trends, Highlights and Characteristics**

The population of Uintah County in 2007 is estimated at 29,042 (See *Table 1*). Eighty percent, or 23,500, of the county's population live in the Ashley Valley, which includes 8,400 residents of Vernal City. Since 2000, the population of the county has increased by 3,700 residents. Almost three quarters of this demographic growth has occurred in the Ashley Valley. Since 2000 the population of Ashley Valley has increased by 2,750 and the population of Vernal by 700.

The demographic growth for the area has been solid but not spectacular. Since 2000 the growth rate was 1.8 percent for Vernal City. Since 2005 the rate of growth has accelerated, with Vernal increasing 3.2 percent per year. The estimated number of households in the city is 3,100. The average age for residents of Uintah County in 2005 was 30 years compared to 28 years statewide.

#### **Demographic Analysis**

The population of Uintah County was at 25,297 in 2000 and the current population is about 29,042 and is expected to grow to 31,379 by 2010 and to 37,950 by 2020. This is an average increase of 3.2% per year. This accelerated growth rate is expected to continue for the next 10 to 12 years. A significant component of population growth is the internal birthrate with approximately 560 births per year. The Ashley Valley section of the county will grow to 25,992 by 2010 and 32,193 by 2020.

The population of Vernal City was approximately 8,403 in 2007 and based on current indicators may increase to 9,293 by 2010 and be at 11,163 by 2020, depending upon what happens economically in the area. Population conditions are constantly changing especially in the oil- and gas-based economy. Sudden changes in oil and gas prices can have dramatic effects on population fluctuations. Federal land leasing policies can also have significant effects on employers and population. For instance, if oil shale and tar sands development expands significantly due to the cost of oil, the growth rate would be significantly higher. The average family size in this area is slightly less than 3 persons. With an increase of 890 persons expected in the next two years, new housing options will need to be produced accordingly. Moderate income housing affordability is measured based on what is affordable for families with incomes less than 80% of the area median income. The current breakdown of lower income categories for all of Uintah County is included in tables #7 and #8. These numbers are adjusted and typically increase annually.

In terms of race and ethnicity, the most significant shift since 2000 has been the increase in the Hispanic population. The number of Hispanics in 2000 was estimated at 894. By 2006 the Hispanic population had grown to 1,130 (See *Table 6*). Hispanics' share of the county's population has increased from 3.5 percent to 4.1 percent. The Native American population remains the largest minority race with a population of 2,405, which represents 8.7 percent of the county's population. However, less than 200 Native Americans live in the Ashley Valley. Tables 4-6 provide race, ethnicity and age distribution for Vernal in 2000. The recent increase in population growth has been driven by higher rates of net in-migration. In 2005 migration rates in Uintah County shifted sharply from net out-migration to net in-migration. The level of net in-migration in the county is the highest since the 1979-1983 period. The recent population growth in the Ashley Valley is reflected in school enrollments. Since 2005, enrollment

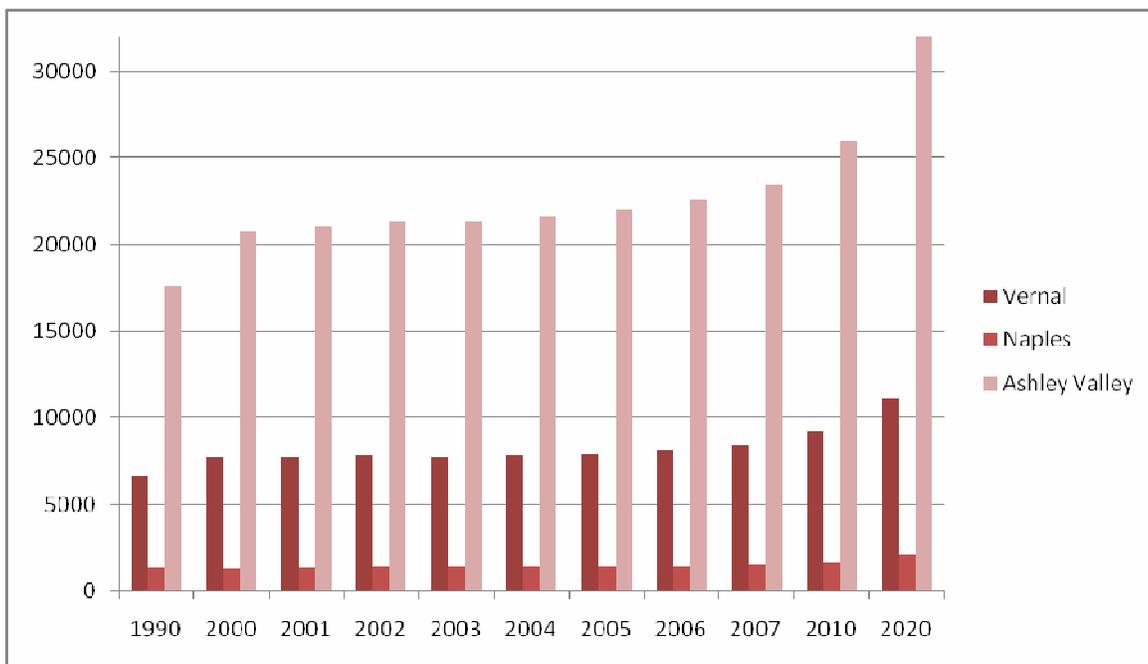
in the Uintah County School District has increased by 9.5 percent, which reversed historically stagnant or declining enrollment for the district.

The current enrollment in the Uintah School District is 6,064. Demographic estimates and projections can be tenuous in high growth areas, as they are impacted by rapid job growth, high rates of immigration, “doubling-up” or overcrowding of households and workers living in motels and hotels. All these characteristics tend toward an undercount of the actual population. It is likely that the official population estimates for Uintah County are 5 to 10 percent low due to the characteristics of the demographic and economic growth currently experienced by Uintah County and Ashley Valley.\*

\**Economic Baseline Study of Vernal and Ashley Valley*  
 BUREAU OF ECONOMIC AND BUSINESS RESEARCH 8

**Table 1**  
**Population Estimates**

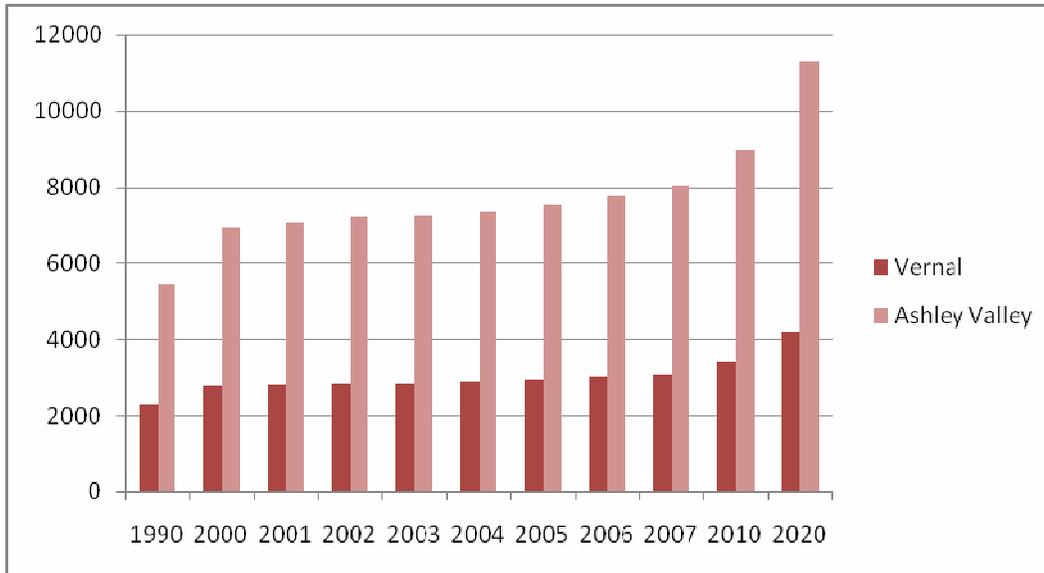
	Vernal	Naples	Ashley Valley
1990	6644	1334	17627
2000	7698	1306	20749
2001	7725	1341	21018
2002	7843	1383	21402
2003	7816	1409	21405
2004	7883	1436	21633
2005	7960	1461	21975
2006	8140	1499	22602
2007	8403	1562	23470
2010	9232	1698	25992
2020	11163	2055	32193



\*Ashley Valley includes Vernal, Naples, Jensen and surrounding unincorporated area.  
 Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Governor’s Office of Planning and Budget.

**Table 2**  
**Number of Households**

Year	Vernal	Ashley Valley
1990	2275	5440
2000	2779	6916
2001	2799	7053
2002	2852	7230
2003	2853	7256
2004	2888	7358
2005	2926	7526
2006	2993	7741
2007	3089	8038
2010	3419	8963
2020	4165	11296

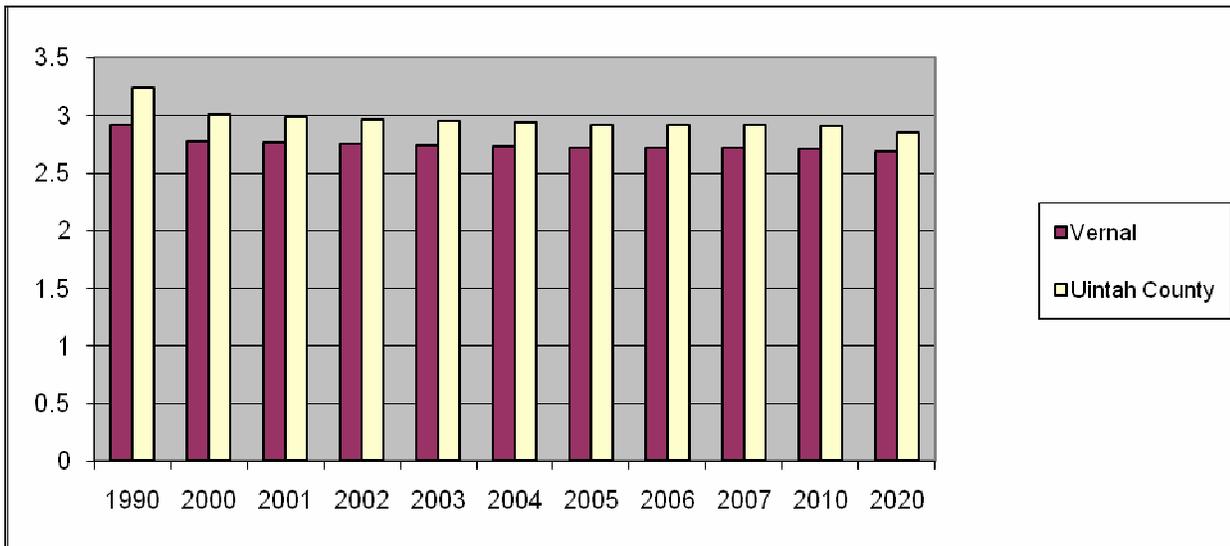


\*Ashley Valley includes Vernal, Naples, Jensen and surrounding unincorporated area.  
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Governor's Office of Planning and Budget, Bureau of Economic and Business Research, University of Utah

**Table 3**  
**Household Size**

Year	Vernal	Ashley Valley*
1990	2.92	3.24
2000	2.77	3.00
2001	2.76	2.98
2002	2.75	2.96
2003	2.74	2.95
2004	2.73	2.94
2005	2.72	2.92
2006	2.72	2.92
2007	2.72	2.92
2010	2.70	2.90

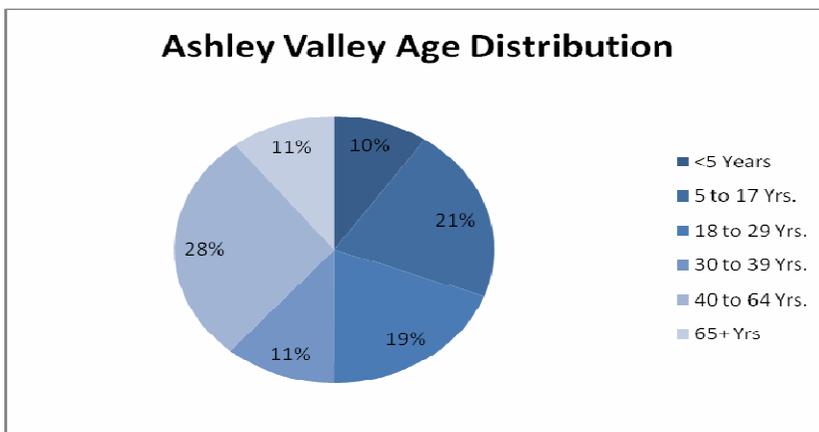
2020	2.68	2.85
------	------	------



\*Ashley Valley includes Vernal, Naples, Jensen and surrounding unincorporated area.  
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Governor's Office of Planning and Budget and Bureau of Economic and Business Research, University of Utah.

**Table 4**  
**Age Distribution 2007**  
**Vernal**  
**Ashley**  
**Valley County**

	Vernal	Ashley Valley
Less 5 yrs.	805	2250
5 to 17 yrs.	1771	4948
18 to 29 yrs.	1628	4549
30 to 39 yrs.	945	2641
40 to 64 yrs.	2358	6589
65+ yrs.	892	2493
Total	8400	23470



Source: Bureau of Economic and Business Research, University of Utah.

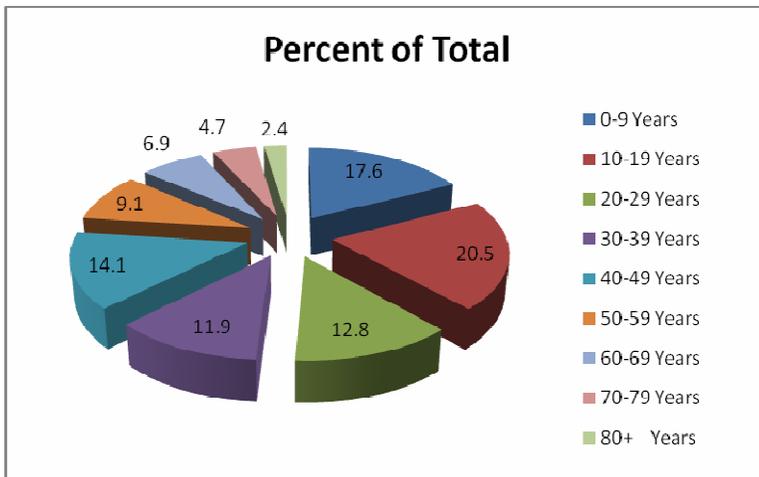
## Median Age

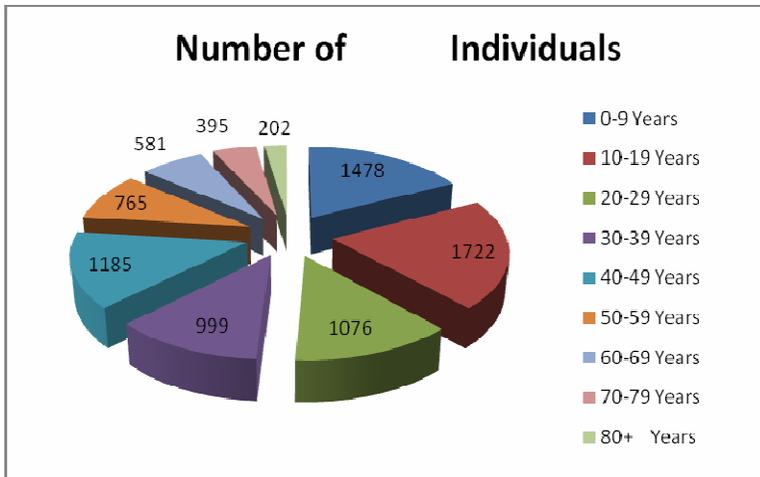
The median age in 2005 was 30 and will grow to 31 by 2010 and will be 34 by 2020 throughout Uintah County.

Source: Governor's Office of  
 Planning and Budget 2002  
 Baseline Economic Baseline Study of Vernal and Ashley Valley  
 BUREAU OF ECONOMIC AND BUSINESS RESEARCH

**Table 5**  
 Current Age Distribution for Vernal City\*

	Percent of Total	Number of Individuals
0-9 Years	17.6	1478
10-19 Years	20.5	1722
20-29 Years	12.8	1076
30-39 Years	11.9	999
40-49 Years	14.1	1185
50-59 Years	9.1	765
60-69 Years	6.9	581
70-79 Years	4.7	395
80+ Years	2.4	202
Total	100.00%	8,403





\*Source: Governor's Office of Planning and Budget 2008  
 Baseline Economic Baseline Study of Vernal and Ashley Valley  
 BUREAU OF ECONOMIC AND BUSINESS RESEARCH

### Review of Age Demographics

Since the census was conducted in 1999, a significant number of babies have been born and families coming to the area have arrived with a significant number of children and the elementary and secondary schools have seen increases: (1.) A full 38% of the population is under the age of 19, (2.) Another 39% is between the ages of 20 and 50, (3) the remaining 23% are over the age of 50. Housing development therefore needs to include larger homes/apartments for families with children, a portion of which must be affordable. Affordability in housing for single adults and for new couples as teenagers becoming adults and increasing options for seniors moving into retirement and assisted living are built into this plan. There is an extreme need to rehabilitate the housing that currently exists in the community to make it decent, safe and sanitary for families to live in as a potential source of affordable homeownership.

### Aging of the Vernal Population

Based on current demographic trends, the population of Vernal is aging (See Table 5). Almost one quarter of current residents are over 50 years of age. There will be an increasing need for retirement, accessible and assisted living housing in the future as the population continues to age. The recognition of this trend should lead to the creation of different housing options that specialize in housing elderly/disabled persons. The community's natural life cycle requires varied housing types and size options to be put in place.

With over 1,000 persons the age of 60 or older currently and another 750 passing the 60 mark in the next 10 years, additional specialized housing for seniors will need to increase immediately. With life expectancy extending well into the 70's, an expected additional 20 units (with lower rents) per year will need to be provided with increased levels of living assistance and accessibility provided for residents.

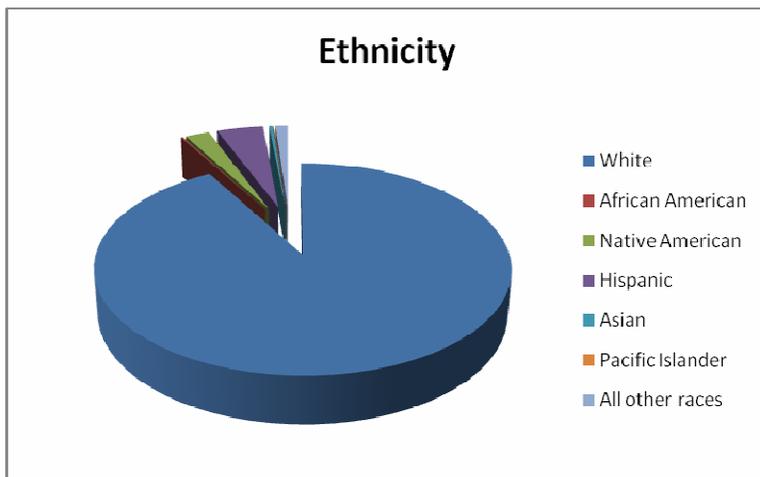
### Ethnic Status

The Vernal area has ethnic diversity with a fairly high number of persons with Hispanic lineage. Vernal has a growing population of Hispanic workers whom often support the economy in service and construction employment sectors; many of whom also have second wage earners in the

family/household. These lower income households often live in overcrowded housing circumstances. Due to the importance of these families to the economic well being of the area, increased housing options need to be provided that are sensitive to the needs of these households.

**Table 6**  
Ethnic Status (2000 Census)

	Population	Percent of Total
White	7291	91.7
African American	14	.1
Native American	178	2.2
Hispanic	343	4.3
Asian	26	.3
Pacific Islander	4	.1
All other races	91	1.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>7947</b>	<b>100%</b>



**Vernal Income Distribution**

Based on a recent local survey (+/-5% margin of error) performed in connection with the preparation of this plan (See Appendix 1) it was identified that: (1) 28% of all households have 1 employed person, (2) 29% of all households have 2 employed persons, and (3) the remainder actually have 3 or more employed wage earners including teenagers 18 and older. Other findings of the survey included:

- 20% of the current residents have household incomes of less than \$20,000 per year.
- 32% of the current residents have household incomes of less than \$40,000 per year but more than \$20,000.
- 35% of the current residents have household income less than \$80,000 but more than \$40,000 per year.
- 13% of the current residents have household income more than \$80,000 per year.

**SECTION 2**

**HOUSING AFFORDABILITY ANALYSIS**

**Introduction**

The economy of the Ashley Valley area should remain comparatively strong and should remain so for about the next 10 years if the following factors hold:

- Incomes increase
- Unemployment continues to rise only slightly; remaining below 4%
- Limited fluctuations in oil and gas prices
- Limited fluctuations in seasonal employment

(Source: *Economic Baseline Study of Vernal and Ashley Valley, BUREAU OF ECONOMIC AND BUSINESS RESEARCH*)

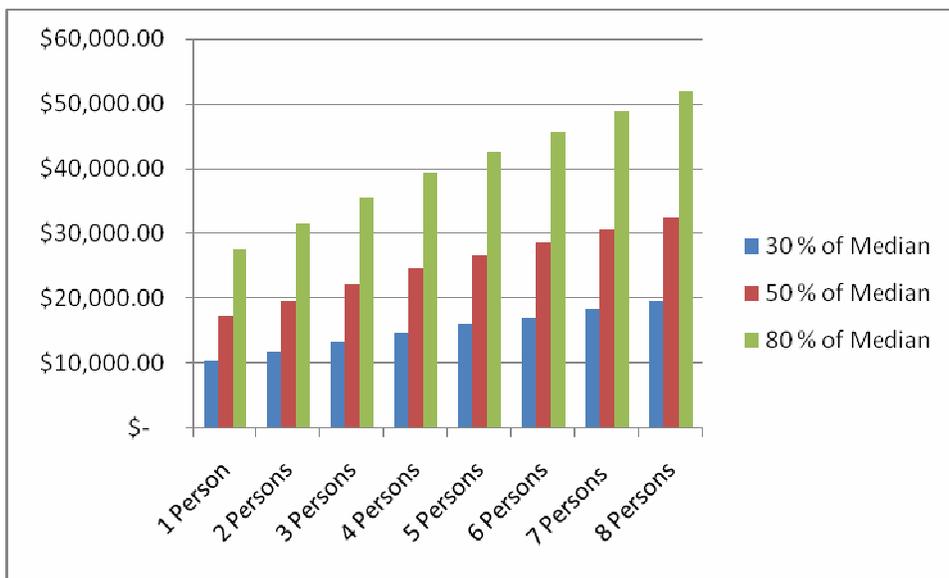
Clearly, the income of households in the area drives the affordability of housing. The Utah State Code defines moderate income as 80% of the area median income as reflected in table 7. Incomes of 50% and 30% of the area median are also listed and are referenced in this plan.

\*Based on 2000 US Census Bureau numbers

**Table 7**

Uintah County Income limits for 2008

	1 Person	2 Persons	3 Persons	4 Persons	5 Persons	6 Persons	7 Persons	8 Persons
30% of Median	10350	11850	13300	14800	16000	17150	18350	19550
50% of Median	17250	19700	22200	24650	26600	28600	30550	32550
80% of Median	27600	31550	35500	39450	42600	45750	48900	52050

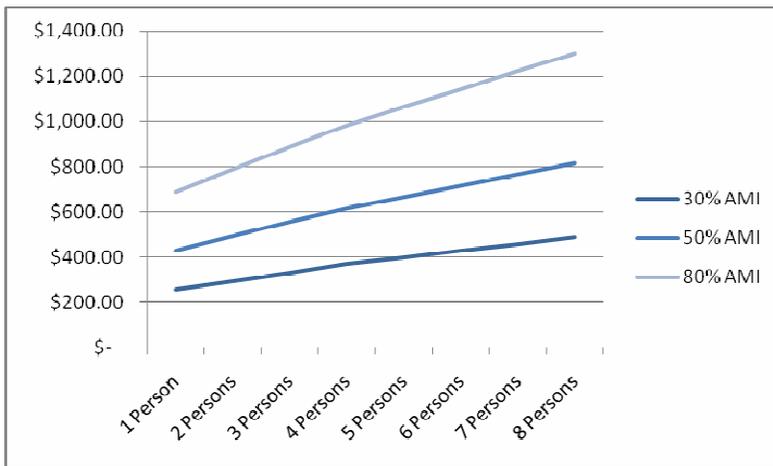


Affordability means that housing costs, either rent or mortgage payments (including principal, interest, taxes and insurance costs (PITI)), cannot exceed 30% of income on a graduated scale based on family size.

**Table 8**

Housing Affordability for Income Classifications based on Household Size

	1 Person	2 Persons	3 Persons	4 Persons	5 Persons	6 Persons	7 Persons	8 Persons
30% of Median	259/mo.	296/mo.	333/mo.	370/mo.	400/mo.	429/mo.	459/mo.	489/mo.
50% of Median	431/mo	493/mo.	555/mo.	616/mo.	665/mo.	715/mo.	764/mo.	814/mo.
80% of Median	690/mo.	789/mo.	888/mo.	986/mo.	1065/mo.	1144/mo.	1223/mo.	1301/mo.



**Housing Affordability at 100% of AMI**

Housing that is affordable to the vital workforce members (public employees, education, service and retail workers) will be critical in the Uintah County area. Using 100% of the area median income (no longer “affordable” under the current definition listed above) as a typical benchmark for a significant portion of the workforce, the income for a three-person household would be \$44,375. Again, using 30% of that income for housing purposes, that income could support monthly rent at \$1109/mo., or a mortgage payment including PITI of about \$1170 per month (on a mortgage of \$185,000). The properties at this level found in the community today consist of mostly town-homes, condominiums, twin homes or older small homes needing some rehabilitation.

Due to the national economic slowdown the targeted sales prices of new homes is coming down. Where new homes have been built to sell closer to \$250,000 or more over the last few years, homes are now essentially targeted closer to \$200,000. Greater densities enable greater financial feasibility or developers and borrowing capacity for buyers in today’s market place. Rental properties at this rent level are either not available or have very low vacancy rates. The current normal turnover rate is 3% or

less. Many potential for-sale products are being rented currently for a variety of reasons that are discussed later in this plan.

### **Housing Affordability at 80% of AMI**

Based on the new survey, the current average family size in Vernal is 2.95 (2.92 according to GOPB). When rounded to a three-person household, that equates to an 80% of AMI income of \$35,500 per year or \$2,958 per month. This means that housing costs must be \$888 per month or less to maintain the 30% rule. Rents in the Vernal area are currently higher than the recommended factor, reaching closer to \$1100/mo. for a two-bedroom apartment. This type of income calculation would allow a monthly payment in support of a mortgage of about \$140,000 based on 5 ¾ interest on a 30-year fixed term, including taxes and insurance. In the current Vernal market there is a very limited number of condominiums, twin homes or older, smaller homes at this price point. Further, many of the existing homes at this level need substantial rehabilitation that would not be economical, keeping in mind that the combined first and potential rehabilitation mortgages cannot exceed a total of \$888/month.

### **Housing Affordability at the Poverty Level of 30% of AMI**

The population of disadvantaged persons living at or below 30% of AMI includes elderly citizens on fixed incomes, disabled persons living on SSDI, some single-female heads of households, the homeless, the underemployed and the few unemployed households in the community (2.2%). These persons need housing that is available at \$333 per month or less (per 30% of income calculation) and there is an extremely small number of “subsidized” apartments available at these rent levels. All of these apartments have received limited amounts of below-market subsidies through some type of public lending program. There is some elderly housing available managed by the Uintah Basin Assistance Council including the following:

- Ashley Valley Shadows
- Golden Age Manor
- Spring Meadow Estates

These properties, which are limited to elderly residents, have rents within the limits of the elderly residents (30%).

The Uintah Basin Assistance Council also has rental housing for lower income families in the 22-unit Unity Place Apartments. There is only one other Low-income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) project in the City and a few Crown Homes (rent to purchase) financed with tax credits. There are only a total of 73 tax credit assisted units in all of Ashley Valley.

In 2000, vacant Housing in Vernal City was 8.4% of all housing, or 248 units. The number of vacant homes has since decreased. Current studies show only 125 vacant units. This significant factor plays into the creation of housing opportunities for lower income households.

Compared to the State of Utah, the number of families/persons owning their home is lower in Uintah County: 61% percent versus the Utah State average of 71.5%. In 2000, the number of renters was 767, or 35.7%. Currently, the number of renters is 1,365, or 39% of the population. The number of households needing to rent has increased as has the need for more affordable rental properties. Vacant housing can be a resource to be used to help increase homeownership in the city.

Of the nearly 2,300 rental units in all of Ashley Valley, only about 300 are affordable based on the previously stated definition. Consequently, most low- or very low-income families are living in high-priced market-rate units often of sub-standard condition with a high occurrence of overcrowding.

Disabled persons and other persons with special needs must be included in the category of persons living with incomes less than 30% of AMI. Persons with physical and/or mental disabilities are particularly vulnerable, and often have very low incomes. Many of these individuals are living on fixed disability incomes and are not able to work. Domestic abuse victims also often have limited incomes. This is true, also, for persons who are homeless due to health, unemployment or disabilities. Youth aging out of foster care and persons leaving incarceration are also part of this vulnerable group (See special needs section of this plan).

Due to the ever-changing economic conditions in the area this plan must also be sensitive to families that lose their homes due to foreclosures. In Uintah County in 2008, there have been 19 foreclosures and 244 families with sub-prime mortgage loans. There is one subdivision consisting of 132 vacant lots currently going through the foreclosure process. HUD has indicated that such foreclosures may as much as double in the coming year. Vernal City will address these issues in this plan.

**Credit Issues**

One of the most critical issues affecting the housing crisis in Vernal City are credit issues; including both abuse of credit by lower income households and the debt-to-income ratios experienced by suddenly wealthy households, especially youth. Persons with significant debt often have higher income, energy-related employment and are making payments but can not qualify for a housing purchase due to the amount of debt they have incurred. They are not able to meet the debt-to-income ratios mortgage lenders require to make loans. These individuals then simply rent properties originally intended to be sold. This is occurring despite the fact that incomes are up in the area and unemployment is down due to the energy-based growth. (See appendix 6 for credit enhancement counseling and training contacts).

It will be necessary to create opportunities for credit management training beginning in high school and to provide credit counseling and training for a significant number of households in the city. The need to help people plan for their future financial well-being is important especially, i.e., developing long term equity, asset saving and retirement planning in all types of economic conditions.

**Special Needs Housing**

Housing planning must include public awareness of the need for housing for persons least able to provide housing for themselves, and to address solutions for these housing needs. Special consideration must be given by the public sector to assist in providing housing affordable for these persons and families. The current number of persons living in the area with these special needs is listed in Table 9 for Uintah County. It assumed that, proportionately, 35% of the disabled population, at least, resides in Vernal City shown in parentheses in Table 9.

**Table 9  
Disability and Disadvantaged Populations in Uintah County**

Persons living with physical disabilities:	1,922 (673)
Persons living with mental disabilities	1,145 (401)
Persons over the age of 60	1,178 (Actual)

Single Female head of households (with children)	118 (41)
Persons with incomes below poverty levels	3,215 (12%) Vernal (1,125)
Homeless Persons (annual count)	81 (Most in Vernal) (10 Chronically homeless)
Victims of domestic abuse (including children)	211 (74)
Youth Aging out of foster care	4 ( Average annually)
Persons released from Incarceration (Approximation)	57 (average annually)

Accessible housing for the disabled is critical and will be specifically highlighted in this plan. Persons with mental disabilities are provided for in the Northeast Mental Health programs. Additional housing will no doubt be needed in the future for this agency's service population as well. Vernal City will work with the Active Reentry Program to plan for the creation of housing opportunities for person with disabilities.

Current housing dedicated for domestic abuse victims is at capacity. Therefore, significant funding should be obtained for additional housing for victims of domestic abuse. There is a need to create at least ten new units of shelter housing and twenty new transitional housing units in the city/county during this planning period (2 to 3 years). It is recommended that at least eight to ten of the twenty units to be large units, with at least 3 bedrooms. It is likely that additional housing will be needed as the population grows. Tracking the housing needs of these households is critical and can be performed in partnership with the Vernal Police Department and the Uintah County Sheriff.

Single female heads of households are distinctly disadvantaged in the population and need to have special housing assistance provided as they become self-sufficient through education and employment enhancement. These households should be given a competitive advantage in the allocation of resources related to housing (both rental and home purchases) as the opportunities arise.

## SECTION 3

### HOUSING NEEDS STATEMENT

Vernal City currently has 3,625 housing units. Thirty nine percent (or 1,414) of the 3,265 housing units in the City of Vernal, are renter occupied, many of whom are expending more than 30% of income for that housing.

Eastern Utah is experiencing a significant increase in gas and oil development. Thus, the City of Vernal is actively participating in seeking solutions to its housing problems and in the creation of affordable housing. Due to the demand for housing and the positive economic climate, the community is now capable of allocating general funds to use in providing housing that is truly affordable. Vernal has also secured additional federal funding for housing specifically for real property acquisition. The City of Vernal has a current population of 8,403 and will likely grow to 9,200 before 2,010 (projecting a 2%+ annual growth rate). Fortunately, the growth rate has slowed somewhat in that a majority of oil exploration and production companies have hired significant numbers of people and have stabilized their workforce. However, additional growth is expected if new federal energy leases are approved and if tar sands and oil shale leases are approved and expanded.

Currently, unemployment remains constant at less than 3%; jobs seem to be available to persons willing to work. However, many of the jobs are lower-income retail and service sector jobs that may fall short of providing for subsistence levels at or above the local poverty levels (based on family size).

#### Housing Needs Projection Model Information

A new housing needs projection has been made as part of this plan using the “Utah Workforce Housing Initiative” Housing Estimating Model. Results are included in Appendix 5.

#### Housing Needs Modeling

The projection model included with this plan identifies the current housing supply and housing affordability gaps and has analyzed the various workforce classifications (i.e., teachers, public employees, construction workers, other retail, etc.) present in the Vernal economy. Also, short- and long-term housing needs can be projected. Vernal has significant housing resources for those households with incomes above 80% of AMI. In fact, there is limited housing price disparity between 60% and 80% of the AMI. However, there are very real housing price gaps present at prices affordable for those below 60% of AMI and especially those below 30% of AMI. Table 10 does not show the actual physical deficiency but does show a significant discrepancy of housing costs and the ability to pay rental or mortgage payments.

**Table 10**  
**5 and 10 Year Housing Supply Projection (Orange numbers are deficits)**

	30% AMI	50% AMI	60% AMI	80% AMI	Median	120% AMI	+ 120% AMI
2007	355	113	82	585	1120	1289	766
2012	402	124	98	683	1303	1499	922
2017	421	110	128	818	1534	1765	1235

Utah Workforce Housing Estimating Software, 2009

Vernal City has a need to address the need for housing for households with incomes less than 60% of AMI. There is a deficit of rental housing affordable for households at 30% of AMI of at least \$292 per month and 355 units of housing needed in 2007 and an additional 402 over 5 years and additional units over 10 years. Within this income group a significant number are elderly and disabled persons with fixed incomes. The significant assumption in this projection is that there will be housing units provided for 60% of AMI at the same rate as in the previous years. However, even if this assumption proves true, there are only an excess of 98 units for the 60% of AMI households projected over a 5 year period using a 3% growth rate. Local government still needs to insure that apartment units at the median rent level (\$633 per month) are actually created.

In terms of housing the vital workforce, there are distinct price gaps in housing for teachers (\$119,000 for purchase) and public employees (\$86,000 for purchase) and retail workers (\$157,000 purchase), among others. In terms of rental properties, the most significant rent "gap" is for retail workers of \$256 per month. Rents must be in the \$377 per month range for true affordability. The only way 235 units of rental housing will be built to catch up with current demand is to create strong public sector investments by all levels of government. An additional 500+ rental units must be scheduled to be built in the next five years.

**SECTION 4  
REGULATORY REVIEW AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

**Table 9  
Regulatory Barriers Analysis**

<b>Barriers Questionnaire</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Yes</b>
#1. Active and Adopted Moderate Income Housing Plan? If the answer is no go to question #4 Response: Current plan was created and adopted in 2002 and is being newly written and adopted in 2008-09.	X	
#2. Has your community updated your moderate income housing plan with the last two years?	NA	NA
#3. Does your housing plan provide estimates of the projected housing needs for a 5 year period or longer?	NA	NA
#4 Do your housing needs projections specify the type and density of housing needed as well as recommended locations based on zoning? Response: This new housing plan will identify these needs with locations and deal with density limitations where present. The city will also be looking at optimal locations for moderate-income housing.	X	
#5. Prepare a comparison of zoning ordinances and development and subdivision regulations. Response: It is suggested that additional density be allowed in the R-4 zone.		X (See new plan)
#6. Do your current ordinances set minimum building size stipulations? Response: Yes, and these ordinances are being reviewed in the context of moderate-income housing.		X
#7. Are impact fees calculated based on actual capital investment directly related to the type of project proposed especially moderate-income housing projects. Response: An evaluation of project type will be applied in the project review process and fees will be evaluated based on project type.	X	
#8. Do you provide waivers of impact fees and/or other fees for projects that provide moderate-income housing consistent with this plan? Response: The Vernal fee ordinance allows flexibility currently.		X
#9. Rehabilitation Projects – does the application of building codes make allowances to encourage different levels of rehabilitation to be performed on a voluntary basis? Response: The city currently allows various levels of rehabilitation to be accomplished (See City CDBG rehabilitation policies).		X
#10. Is manufactured housing allowed in residential zones and is subject to the same standards as other housing types? Response: Yes		X
#11. Has a review been conducted in the past two years of the regulatory barriers currently existing? Response: Vernal encourages affordability but has not evaluated regs.	X	
#12. Do you provide allowances for the modification of infrastructure standards or new technologies to decrease these costs for moderate-income housing projects? Response: The city will consider these alternatives on a case-by-case basis especially in conjunction with PUD's.	X	
#13. Has the city adopted an expedited application and approval process for moderate-income housing projects? Response: It will be recommended to the city that they consider adopting this policy.	X	
#14. Have you adopted a time limit for the review and approval of moderate-income housing? Is there a penalty attached? Response: There is no current need to create time limit, projects will be expedited as much as possible.	X	
#15. Have modified parking requirements been adopted for affordable housing projects? Response: They will be considered based on housing type and cost.	X	
#16. Have special public hearing requirements been adopted to educate the public and to expedite the approval process for affordable housing developments. Response: Hearings are not a barrier under current statutes.	X	

## Regulatory Barriers

Currently, the Vernal City regulatory environment does not create significant barriers to workforce and moderate-income housing development. This plan identifies those amendments that could be made in order to improve and amend the ordinances to further enable income targeted housing to be built.

In Table 9, above, an analysis is presented of the barriers created in the regulations as currently constituted. Responses are also shown identifying what action Vernal City will take to address these barriers. The analysis of the regulatory barriers is focused around the lack of flexibility in the regulation of affordability. There have been no allowances identified that promote affordability or that allow it to be approved expeditiously. There have been very few truly affordable projects either proposed or built and therefore, the regulation base has not been modified to assist in providing incentives for affordability. The preceding evaluation lays some groundwork for regulatory modifications. The regulations should be modified according to the following recommendations:

- Housing needs projections have been stated in this plan and they must be accompanied with a regulation reform and an implementation strategy for obtaining the appropriate housing.
- Additional density is suggested in the R-4 zone allowing up to 40 units per acre with conditional use approval and the allowance of increased height allowances and without restrictions designating design parameters that include structure placement on site and adjoining property views. Location analysis is critical and current zoning should be established in support of the objective for sites appropriate for this density in the community.
- An allowance for the reduction of impact fees and fees generally should be made and specified in the impact fee regulation for affordability.
- Flexibility in Infrastructure requirements may be allowed on a case by case basis when cost savings can be verified and the integrity of the systems can be maintained. This would include water and sewer capacity, parking allowances, street widths, open space and landscaping requirements, etc.
- It is recommended that the city adopt a workforce housing overlay zone that can be established in the regulation base that will allow an expedited review of projects with specific time requirements built-in. A maximum of 90 days for approval of projects including conditional use permit processing would be included, as well as, a limitation of time involved in the public hearing requirements. The time requirement would begin when an applicant submits a complete application when affordability is intended for households with incomes at least below 80% of the area median income.
- Vernal City should adopt a modified version of inclusionary zoning which will require all developers with subdivisions of more than 5 units to develop 10% of all units that are affordable for families with incomes below 60% of AMI. In-lieu financial allowances should also be adopted but only be allowed in dire circumstances and when duress can be verified at the discretion of the planning commission and the city council. The Uintah Basin Assistance Council on behalf of Vernal City, as allowed, could administer in-lieu funds.

## Current Zoning Requirements

### Residential zones

The Vernal City land use development ordinance creates six residential zones including the “Planned Residential Unit Development” (PRUD) ordinance where increased density is allowed in a conditional use environment. The residential zones vary density allowances from 4 units per acre in the R-1 and RA-1 to 16 units per acre in the R-4 zone. Multiple unit rental properties can be a maximum of 30 units unless they are given approval to expand the number of units through the conditional use process.

There are no specialized allowances for projects providing moderate-income housing. It is suggested that the ordinance allow for some increased density when affordability is built into the project, even with mixed incomes. It is also suggested that the code allow greater flexibility when a project is addressing the needs of those with very low incomes less than 30% of AMI and those with rents affordable for those with incomes between 30% and 50% of AMI.

Density analysis: All density increases beyond the specified allowed number of units is enabled through the conditional use stipulations in the ordinance. It is suggested that a maximum density be more flexible when affordability is part of the projects provisions. Minimum development property sizes should be made more flexible, allowing smaller than four acres in a development zone stipulation.

Landscaping Requirements: Landscaping requirements should be flexible when some innovative designs are proposed such as clustering housing units with natural or xeriscape allowance for open space areas.

Regulatory innovations analysis: This general plan should enable the creation of an inclusionary zoning allowance along with the previously identified low-income housing overlay or floating zone and it creates bonus or incentive provisions and flexibility allowances in PUD regulations, senior housing, housing for the disabled, group homes for youth and homeless permanent housing. The city may desire to evaluate the innovative "Form Based Planning" zoning approaches as applicable in connection with expedited reviews and design flexibility especially for workforce housing development.

### **Regional Housing Planning Coordination**

This plan takes into account the need to coordinate all land uses with all contiguous municipalities and with Uintah County. Vernal City will encourage and participate in regional planning efforts to address existing and future housing issues. An example of the need for coordination is the regional homeless coordinating committee. This plan suggests stronger homeless planning efforts should be undertaken. Not every community needs a domestic abuse shelter or a homeless shelter, or an assisted living center for the elderly, but they are needed somewhere in close proximity for potential users. Through regional cooperation, solutions and locations can be found for specialized housing needed by those persons in each community. The city has no contiguous federal and state land and coordination is not necessary with federal land management agencies.

Vernal City should invite continuous discussions with Three Corners Mental Health, Active Reentry (Price), Uintah County Health Department and the Utah Department of Human Services offices and the Utah Department of Community and Culture (housing and homeless programs, etc.).

**SECTION 5**

**IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY**

**Gaps Analysis**

Vernal City has established the following housing gaps (listed by priority) to help address the need for workforce housing:

- 1) Rental workforce housing for families making less than 50% of AMI (\$22,000 for a family of 3) with higher densities.
  - a. 40 units annually
  - b. Location: Downtown redevelopment or infill in Vernal City near employment centers, shopping, medical care and public transportation
- 2) Rental workforce housing for families with incomes less than 80% of AMI (\$35,500 for a family of 3).
  - a. 40 units annually
  - b. Location: Downtown redevelopment or infill in Vernal City near employment centers, shopping, medical care and public transportation
- 3) Workforce Housing for families at 80% or less of AMI focusing on single family homes to purchase including condominiums and townhomes in the form of duplexes or larger, higher density properties. The city should also act to identify locations for “self-help” housing developments and CROWN Homes in consultation with the Uintah Basin Association of Governments and the Uintah Basin Assistance Council.
  - a. 15 units annually
- 4) Lower cost, subsidized, rental property for persons with special needs.
  - a. Elderly housing for persons on fixed incomes
    - i. 20 units per year, based on the aging of the population
  - b. Accessible rental housing for persons with disabilities including physical and mental disabilities and with incomes below 50% of AMI, separate or as part of all other rental housing that is approved.
    - i. Units Annually (Based on the Federal Low Income Housing Tax Credit development that requires a 5% set-aside for accessibility in all new projects, see 1 and 2 above)
  - c. 10 additional shelter units and 20 units of transitional housing for victims suffering from domestic abuse.
- 5) Housing for the homeless (including youth aging out of foster care and persons coming out of incarceration)
  - a. 6 units of additional housing for the homeless
  - b. within two years, with full supportive services funded.
  - c. 2 units of transitional housing for youth aging out of foster care (3 year goal)
  - d. 2 units of transitional housing for persons exiting incarceration (5 year goal)
- 6) Workforce Housing for families at 120% or less of AMI focusing on single family homes to purchase including condominiums and town homes in the form of duplexes or larger higher density properties.
  - a. 10 Units Annually
- 7) Workforce Housing for families at 80% or less of AMI focusing on multifamily housing for rent in the form of duplexes or higher density properties.
  - a. 20 Units Annually
- 8) Credit Counseling program needs to be enhanced through Utah State University, Uintah Basin Association of Governments and other professional counseling agencies such as

Triple AAA Fair Credit. Credit management should be taught in conjunction with long-term financial management courses; they should particularly be made available to help especially single males and single female heads of households. Additional educational planning should occur:

- a. long term wealth management
  - b. benefits of homeownership
  - c. preparation for homeownership including debt and credit management; incentives for attending these training sessions will be provided
- 9) Creating housing solutions in partnership with major employers, especially those in the oil and gas industry. Vernal City/Uintah County should create a “Blue Ribbon Housing Task Force” to create housing solutions for the workers difficult to house and who are currently living in motel rooms. The members of the task force should include employers, housing providers, the real estate industry, mortgage lenders, landlords, city and county leaders, and citizen mentors. This task force will likely be created in mid-2009 by Mayor Mashburn and will meet monthly for the first six months of the year. A report with goals, objectives, and outcomes will be developed along with an implementation strategy containing milestones and assignments made with accountability monthly through the end of 2009. Solutions, goals, and objectives will be realized during the year.

### **Preferred Locations for Priority Housing**

Vernal City prefers to develop higher density rental housing in downtown infill sites first due to the proximity of the sites to employment centers, services and health care. It is understood that the downtown properties will be relatively expensive but that optimal location is critical for the long-term success of particularly higher density rental properties. Vernal City will create appropriate zoning in these locations to facilitate preferred housing in these locations. Vernal City will act to acquire some of these parcels with public funds where appropriate, based on these priorities.

**Redevelopment:** Vernal City will work toward redeveloping or revitalizing areas of the city that are important, that currently are underutilized, that have deteriorated or which have unsightly/antiquated housing or commercial development.

- 1) Current mobile home development on 5<sup>th</sup> East and 200 North
- 2) Older, downtown area in central Vernal area, focusing on older housing stock

**Locations near educational centers:** The new Utah State University Campus location will require public acquisition of real property, some of which will be utilized for the development of affordable workforce housing at the university and for other employers in the area.

**Single family, homeownership development sites:** Locations will be identified where opportunities can be developed. Housing that will be facilitated with city involvement will be housing for lower income homebuyers in the 50% to 80% of AMI range. This housing would include UHF Crown homes, Rural Development Self-Help Homeownership homes and other subsidized homeownership programs. Other moderate-income single family housing for purchase includes town-homes and condominiums including potential conversions.

- 1) Area around Vernal Middle School
- 2) Infill projects in the older area of Vernal City some with zoning issues that need to be resolved

- 3) Identify new targeted neighborhoods with deteriorated housing by conducting a survey of housing quality

**Infill analysis of existing undeveloped lots and vacant or dilapidated housing:** Location analysis of possible appropriate sites for development including vacant lots will be conducted by the city. Initial priority will be undeveloped lots included in this plan, and include the following:

- 1) Vacant lot at 100 South 300 East
- 2) Vacant lot at 375 So. 100 E.
- 3) Properties being foreclosed or are vacant.
  - a. There are 19 foreclosures underway in Uintah Co. and there are 13 bank-owned properties in the Ashley Valley area and a 132 unit foreclosed subdivision as previously referenced.

An analysis will be performed by Vernal City to determine a priority of foreclosed properties and other dilapidated housing that will be prioritized for acquisition/rehabilitation in conjunction with the Uintah Basin Association of Governments and other developers as appropriate based on property size and location.

**SECTION 6**

**FINANCIAL RESOURCES EVALUATION**

**General Fund appropriation for housing projects:** Through capital planning, Vernal City has the opportunity to allocate scarce but increasing general funds for implementation of this plan. The priority will be the acquisition/land banking of real property, especially vacant undeveloped land and foreclosed properties at lower than market prices.

**CRA and EDA Funding:** In the future, Vernal City will likely evaluate the creation of Community Redevelopment Areas (CRA) or Economic Development Areas (EDA). These designations will generate 20% of the expected tax increment for moderate-income housing. Vernal City should plan to begin generating the housing-related increment in year one of the expected budget period. A specific plan will be implemented for the expenditure of the revenues with established housing priorities.

**Community Impact Board Funding (CIB):** Vernal City has accessed the Community Impact Fund for important capital investments projects according to its adopted Capital Investment Plan (CIP). Although not a common practice, housing related infrastructure, both on-site and off-site improvements, are eligible CIB costs and can be accessed through this means to decrease the costs in targeted affordable and/or workforce housing development. Only projects that are owned by public entities (Non-profit) are eligible. The capital investment priority list will need to include housing infrastructure related costs as priorities in advance planning applications.

**Other Federal and State Funding**

**Community Development Block Grant Funding (CDBG):** Vernal City has successfully competed for and utilized CDBG funding for the rehabilitation of housing and for the acquisition of real property on which to site workforce housing. This trend could continue annually with Vernal City as outlined in its housing plan.

**Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) 202/811 program funding:** In addition to the CDBG and HOME program funds, additional specific HUD funds are available on a competitive “Super Notice of Funding Availability” (NOFA) basis. Section 202 funds are available for housing projects targeted toward low-income senior citizens. Section 811 funds are provided for accessible housing for disabled persons. Both programs provide grants and low interest loans to maximize affordability. Vernal has some housing funded by the 202 program. In fact, Ashley Valley Shadow Apartments received funding from this program. It is expected that in the next 5 years an application for Section 202 funding will be submitted for additional senior housing to address the need to house aging persons on fixed incomes.

**Rural Development (USDA):** RD provides low interest loans and a limited amount of grant funds for both housing and infrastructure support projects. Vernal City will evaluate the use of these funds on a case-by-case basis mostly for infrastructure support loans.

**Uintah Basin Revitalization Funding:** In partnership with Uintah County, Vernal City will explore potential housing investment opportunities in Vernal City and in unincorporated areas to help implement both the county and city housing plans.

**Low Income Housing Tax Credit Program (LIHTC):** The primary federal subsidy that will make a profound difference in implementing Vernal City’s workforce housing initiative is the tax credit program administered by the Utah Housing Corporation (UHC). Project funding is provided from this fund; private syndicators provide the funds and in turn receive tax benefits for their investments. The funds are not calculated in the debt service to projects but rather act as

direct equity. Applications are accepted once per year by UHC. Although the competition for funds is arduous, it is suggested that Vernal City, through development partners, plan to apply for tax credits for specific projects annually beginning in 2009 and in each of the following three years to draw nearer to identified needs and to assess the market for needs hereafter to determine future feasibility patterns. Vernal City should support all efforts to include rural communities, itself included, to be part of the qualified 130% basis boost process making additional funding available to cover actual increased costs to build projects.

**Federal Home Loan Bank:** Located in San Francisco, the Federal Home Loan bank is a potential funding partner for rental workforce housing projects, especially to drive further affordability through project subsidies. It is expected that funding applications will be made as appropriate to annual FHLB criteria for rental housing projects in Vernal City over the planning horizon of 5 years.

**Olene Walker Housing Loan Fund (OWHLF):** Funds from both the Utah State Legislature and the HOME Program funds from the federal Department of Housing and Urban Development are administered by the staff of the OWHLF. These funds, especially when matched with LIHTC funding, can truly create housing available to low-income residents in Vernal. The OWHLF has four application cycles in which funds can be obtained. These funds are primarily low interest loans that can be deferred or can be repaid in a variety of ways. These funds are not available for large, long-term debt. However, the funds are often the key gap-financing tool that makes projects affordable for targeted incomes below 40% of AMI. There will be applications for OWHLF projects in Vernal or in Ashley Valley as appropriate to viable project applications over the next 5 years for typical project costs including predevelopment, acquisition, construction financing and limited gap financing of long term debt. It should be noted that program guidelines are re-established on an annual basis and must therefore be tracked closely for impacts on priority projects in this housing plan.

**Private Activity Bond Program:** This program is administered by the State of Utah Division of Housing and Community Development and has some funding available for housing. PAB funds have not typically been used for affordability projects due primarily to underwriting requirement differences. However, in certain instances when rents can target the 80% of AMI level or for home purchase properties, PAB funding could be an alternative for Vernal City.

**Private Funding Partnerships:** The primary source of private funding for workforce housing includes funds from local financial institutions under the Community Reinvestment Act (CRA), with the exception of credit unions that are not mandated to do so under these federal guidelines. Institutions set forth their own plans annually – there is no prescribed funding level mandated but rather institutions conduct needs analysis and establish internal goals/objectives. These plans include lending, investments, and services within their service footprint. Typical activities include affordable housing, small business lending and financial educational services for consumers. The Utah Community Reinvestment Corporation (UCRC) is the primary agency through which these funds flow. Funds can be obtained directly from banks in addition to UCRC through project application processes.

There are different kinds of financial institutions available to communities for housing related funding.

- Limited purpose banks: These banks are not physically found in most communities and are investment banks only. They do not offer checking or savings accounts but do have significant amounts of CRA funding to loan to projects with obvious benefits for communities.
- Community banks are also available for partnerships and often provide CRA funds for projects of high community priority. Creating partnerships with all local banks with offices in the community is important.

- Regional and National Banks can also be partners in developing housing projects.

Most banks are interested in loaning funds for real property acquisition, predevelopment costs (market studies, architectural and engineering designs, etc.) and construction financing.

**Credit Unions:** Credit unions with offices in the community should also be invited to participate in helping to fund housing projects. While not subject to the federal CRA requirements they are willing to participate with loan funds to help communities create housing opportunities. Mountain America Credit Union is well established in Vernal and could be contacted as project financing is needed.

**Foundations:** Foundations are primarily located along the Wasatch Front area and have specific application requirements and must be consulted directly. Other regional and national foundations should be explored. The Utah Non-profits Association makes a foundations guidebook available that can be consulted for criteria applicable to local activities.

### **Community Involvement**

Significant public involvement has been obtained during the research and development of this plan. Input meetings have been held with business leaders, realtors, appraisers, title companies and other stakeholders. Input has also been obtained from Utah State University, Uintah School District, Utah Workforce Services, The Uintah Basin Association of Governments, Naples and Vernal City officials and Uintah County officials and the special service districts in the area. A public hearing was held in concert with this effort. A public interview was held with the local radio station, as well. Public participants talked about the need for more housing options in the area, especially for lower income households. Participants also spoke about problems for the local workforce members, especially the underemployed and others who must have two or three jobs, find it difficult to afford housing. Many businesses in the area reported difficulty in finding employees, due in part to the cost of living in the area, particularly housing costs.

It will now be necessary to begin to educate the residents of Ashley Valley about what is going to be done to help address the housing issues in the area based on the findings and directions of this plan. Educational newspaper articles will need to be promoted, additional radio interviews conducted, and public meetings scheduled and held. Coordination with the general plan preparation will be necessary.

**Appendix 1**

**Implementation Resolution**

The Vernal City council hereby resolves to implement the following strategy concerning the housing element of the general plan.

The housing needs of Vernal are that 131 units of housing affordable for those households with incomes less than 50% of AMI need to be built annually in the vernal area.

Vernal City has established the following housing gaps and housing related needs in a comprehensive way; needs are listed by priority to help address the immediate and on-going development of workforce housing.

1. Rental workforce housing for families making less than 50% of AMI (\$22,000 for a family of 3) with higher densities.
  - a. **Number of Units:** 40 units over two years
  - b. Location: Downtown redevelopment or infill in Vernal City near employment centers, shopping, medical care and public transportation
2. Rental workforce housing for families with incomes less than 80% of AMI (35,500 for a family of 3).
  - a. **Number of Units:** 40 units over two years
  - b. Location: Downtown redevelopment or infill in Vernal City near employment centers, shopping, medical care and public transportation
3. Workforce Housing for families at 80% or less of AMI focusing on single family homes to purchase including condominiums and town homes in the form of duplexes or larger, higher density properties.
  - a. **Number of Units:** 10 units over two years
4. Lower cost, subsidized, rental property for persons with special needs.
  - a. Site acquisition and construction of 10 additional domestic abuse shelter units and 20 new transitional housing units for domestic abuse victims.
  - b. Elderly housing for persons on fixed incomes
    - i. **Number of Units:** 20 units per year based on the aging of the population
  - c. Accessible rental housing for persons with disabilities including physical and mental disabilities and with incomes below 50% of AMI separate or as part of all other rental housing that is approved. (Part of the 5% federal accessibility requirement for all new rental units or 10 units per year, see 1 and 2 above)
  - d. Housing for the homeless including youth aging out of foster care and persons coming out of incarceration.
    - i. **Number of Units:**
      1. 10 units of transitional housing for the homeless
      2. 2 units of transitional housing for youth from foster care
      3. 2 units of housing for incarcerated persons
5. Workforce Housing for families at 100% or less of AMI focusing on single family homes to purchase including condominiums and town homes in the form of duplexes or larger higher density properties.

6. Workforce Housing for families at 80% or less of AMI focusing on multi-family housing for rent in the form of duplexes or higher density properties.
7. Credit Counseling program needs to be enhanced through Utah State University, Uintah Basin Association of Governments and other professional counseling agencies such as Triple AAA Fair Credit. Credit management will be taught but also long term financial management courses should be available to help especially single males and single female heads of households, plan for long term wealth management including the benefits of homeownership and preparing for homeownership including debt and credit management. Incentives for attending these training sessions will be provided.
8. Creating housing solutions in partnership with major employers especially in the oil and gas industry. Vernal City will create a “Blue Ribbon Housing Task Force to create housing solutions for the workers difficult to house and who are currently living in motel rooms. The members of the task force will be from employers, housing providers, the real estate industry, mortgage lenders, landlords and city and county leaders. This task force will be created in early 2009 by Mayor Mashburn and will meet monthly for the first six months of the year and a report with goals, objectives and outcomes will be developed along with an implementation strategy containing milestones and assignments made with accountability monthly through the end of 2009. Solutions will be realized during the year.

**Priority #1**

**Objective:** Vernal City will purchase property (4.65 acres) on which to construct up to 120 units, in two phases, of two and three bedroom units of mixed income rental housing targeted towards households with incomes less then \$30,000 or those in the 60% of AMI range or less (\$26,625 for a family of 3) and some 40% (\$17,750) of AMI. These will be units eligible for Utah Low Income Housing Tax Credits (LIHTC) and Olene Walker Housing Loan funding. At least 5% of all units will be fully accessible for the disabled persons with special needs identified in need #4.

**Staff Assignment:** City Planner, in consultation with the Vernal Planning Commission and other property owners in the area.

**Completion Milestone:** June 2009

Create a development partnership with Utah Non-Profit Housing Corporation and/or like entities to assist in the development of this project as well as other projects to be created within the city.

**Related Project development steps:**

- Obtain an Olene Walker or bank Predevelopment Loan (\$20,000) application submitted: June 2009
- Prepare market study to determine feasibility with the University of Utah June 2009
- Detailed Architectural/engineering Drawings completed September 2009
- Tax Credit/OWHLF Application Completion: September 2009
- Ground breaking and construction start date: April 2010, construction likely to follow 90 days thereafter; dependant on LIHTC and other lender procedures.
- Construction completion: April 2011 or 12 months from loan closing.

**Priority #2**

**Objective:** Vernal City will begin the process of developing a new single-family homeownership project. Vernal City will work to find an appropriate site through partnerships. The city will involve Utah Non-Profit Housing Corporation (UNPHC) and/or a like entity to be the development partner. The city desires to construct up to 14 lots in the first phase of development. Purchase price point targets will be affordable for schoolteachers and other public employees and service workforce members. Affordability will be based on 80% of AMI households making \$35,500 or less. The purchase price of the homes in this project will need to be about \$140,000. The city will explore different construction and financing options to help bring the construction price down. The lots will be sold significantly below market value especially to teachers wanting to purchase these homes.

**Staff Assignment:** City Planner in consultation with Tightline Community Resources, Lotus Community Development and UNPHC and/or a like entity

**Completion Milestone:** January 2010 for site location and initial design development. Construction of houses to begin fall 2010 and construction to be completed July 2011.

Create a development partnership with Utah Non-profit Development Corporation and/or a like entity to assist in the development of this project spring 2010.

**Related Project development steps:**

- Meetings with potential partners (Utah Housing Corp., School district, etc. concerning qualified buyers, land transfer, subdivision layout, loan stipulations, etc. September/October 2009.
- Bank financing applications prepared and submitted by April 2010 for predevelopment, development and construction financing. Other mortgage lenders will be brought into the project as buyers are identified.
- Detailed Architectural/engineering Drawings completed June 2010
- Ground breaking and construction start date: September 2010
- Construction completion: July 2011

**Priority #3**

**Objective:** Vernal will adopt this moderate income housing element of its general plan as amended and begin implementing this separate ordinance committing itself to the priorities and milestones herein included.

**Staff Assignment:** City planner, city manager, Tightline Community Resources, Lotus Community Development

**Completion Milestone:** June 2009

**Priority #4**

**Objective:** Vernal City will identify recommended multi-family development sites for future development and will establish appropriate zoning for the development of these sites. This will be done on conjunction with the new general plan being developed by the city. The city will find development partners to develop these properties working in concert with landowners to ensure affordability. Potential development will include the trailer development on 5<sup>th</sup> South in Vernal. Vernal will evaluate other sites in possible annexation areas for development. Vernal will also identify the preferred location for a new domestic violence shelter and locations for transitional housing for victims of domestic abuse.

**Staff Assignment:** City Planner, in consultation with the Vernal Planning Commission and other property owners in the area.

**Completion Milestone:** December 2009 for completion of the site determination and zoning implementation. The city will create a development partnership with landowners and development partners by February 2010.

**Related Project development steps:**

- Prioritize the sites and begin the development process on next highest priority site by determining the appropriate housing type (domestic abuse shelter and housing) and financing options.
- Applications will be prepared and submitted by March 2011 for predevelopment, and by December 2011 for development and construction financing.
- Other mortgage lenders will be brought into the project as buyers are identified and pre-qualified.
- Detailed Architectural/engineering drawings completed December 2011.

**Priority #5**

**Objective:** Vernal City will complete the review of all zoning ordinances in conjunction with the general plan update process. The City will modify its ordinances to minimize its regulatory barriers to moderate-income housing as suggested in this plan. The city will analyze the potential of adopting a new inclusionary zone ordinance as suggested in this housing plan.

**Staff Assignment:** City Planner in consultation with the Vernal Planning Commission and consultants, as necessary.

**Completion Milestone:**

- July 2009 for completion of the evaluation of varied zoning approaches for regulatory reduction and review mitigation to support affordability.
- Vernal City will adopt an inclusionary zoning ordinance, if desired, by the planning commission and city council by November 2009.

**Priority #6**

**Objective:** Vernal City will prepare an in-fill study identifying and evaluating all potential infill properties that can be developed into workforce housing properties. Locations that should be included in this analysis are vacant properties, irregularly shaped properties, “hard to develop” properties, properties with deteriorated, vacant structures, foreclosed properties, redevelopment properties, etc. Determine priority properties based on the review and prepare development timelines based on landowner willingness to work with the city. Also, evaluate desirability for development based on location, infrastructure support, potential cost, etc.

**Staff Assignment:** City Planner, in consultation with Tightline Community Resources, Lotus Community Development and others desired by Vernal City

**Completion Milestone:** Foreclosed property analysis completed by June 2009, overall study to be completed by January 2011.

**Related Project development steps:**

- Create a development plan for prioritized properties in partnership with landowners/mortgage lenders and development partners.
- Prepare a funding application for NSP funding from the State of Utah by June 2009.
- Create a line of credit to purchase and land-bank properties for redevelopment using state and local funding where appropriate.

**Priority #7**

**Objective:** Vernal City will assist in the creation of an enhanced credit-counseling program in collaboration with Utah State University, Uintah Basin Association of Governments and other professional counseling agencies such as Triple AAA Fair Credit (SLC). Credit management will be taught but also long-term financial management courses should be available to help especially single males and single female heads of households, plan for long term wealth management including the benefits of homeownership and preparing for homeownership including debt and credit management. Incentives for attending these training sessions will be provided.

**Staff Assignment:** City manager and staff from Uintah County and Naples City with assistance from a group of counselors currently practicing in the Vernal area (USU, UBAOG and others) and assisted by Tightline Community Resources, Lotus Community Development and others desired by Vernal City.

**Completion Milestone:** The revised program will be fully implemented by Dec. 2009 in the Uintah County area.

**Related Project development steps:**

- Create an organization of counselors in the area to frame the new program and hold the first meeting of the group by June of 2009.
- Invite Triple-A-Fair Credit to come to Vernal and train the trainers and to put on a community workshop on credit enhancement and homebuyer training during the summer of 2009.
- Create incentives including a down-payment assistance program for participants in the program.

**Priority #8**

**Objective:** Vernal City will assist in the creation of a “Blue Ribbon Housing Task Force” to create housing solutions for workers difficult to house, some of which are living in motel rooms and rental properties. Retail employee housing will also be evaluated in terms of overcrowding, distance from employment and housing cost burdens. The members of the task force will be from employers (oil and gas, retail, service providers and the local Chamber of Commerce), housing providers, the real estate industry, mortgage lenders, landlords and city and county leaders.

**Staff Assignment:** Vernal Mayor, Naples Mayor and City Councils and Uintah County Commission and staff, assisted by the city managers, Chamber of Commerce and Tightline Community Resources, Lotus Community Development and others desired by Vernal City

**Completion Milestone:** The first meeting of the task force will be held in September 2009 and will complete its mission by April 2010 with recommendations and an implementation strategy created to begin in June 2010.

**Related Project development steps:**

- Members of the task force will be determined and invitations sent out by July 2009.
- The task force will prepare an implementation strategy containing milestones and assignments made with monthly accountability through the end of 2010. The policy will include goals, objectives and outcomes.
- Solutions will be realized during the year.

**Priority #9**

**Objective:** Prior to January 2011, Vernal City will revisit the housing element of the general plan and evaluate its goals, objectives, accomplishments and its current housing situation and reestablish and adopt a new set of two year goals, objectives, outputs and milestones for the next two year period (2011 to 2013) and will report its performance to the State of Utah, Division of Housing and Community Development.

**Staff Assignment:** City Planner and City Manager, in consultation with Tightline Community Resources, Lotus Community Development and others desired by Vernal City.

**Completion Milestone:**

- Plan evaluation will commence in Sept. 2010 and the new plan for the next two-year period will be adopted by the planning commission and the city council by February 2011.
- A program report will be submitted to DHCD by February 2011.

**Appendix 2**

**VERNAL CITY HOUSING SURVEY**

Tabulation April 2008

Survey taken February through March 2008  
(Random survey with a +/-5% Margin of Error)

**Survey Size:** 1300 Survey's distributed in Ashley Valley based on a random selection process. A random number of addresses were selected and then evaluated based on addresses in Vernal City, Naples City and unincorporated county areas. The survey instrument noted the location of the respondent.

**Response:** There were 186 surveys returned from Vernal City households representing 537 persons.

**Demographics:** Elderly persons made up only 8% of the persons surveyed.

There were 53 persons who are currently unemployed (9% of respondents) and 11 of these persons are disabled (2%) and not able to be employed.

There are a small number of minority families living in Vernal City currently making up 7% (37) of the population.

There are 44% of households with children under the age of 18.

**Living Arrangements:** 68% of Vernal families (128) are single families living with only immediate family members

16% of the population of Vernal is single persons living alone and only seven persons are living as roommates.

**Income:** 28% of all households have only 1 employed person  
29% of all households have 2 employed persons  
8% of all households have 3 or more employed persons

20% of the current residents have household incomes of less than \$20,000 per year

32% of the current residents have household incomes of less than \$40,000 per year but more than \$20,000.

35% of the current residents have household income less then \$80,000 but more than \$40,000 per year.

13% of the current residents have household income more than \$80,000 per year.

**Housing: Renters**

18% of the households who responded are renters and the remainder are homeowners.

50% of renters are paying more than 30% of income for rent.

Rent has increased over the last two years for 41% of all renters.

41% of renters fear that they may become homeless in the near future.

**Homeowners**

79% of households own or are purchasing a home at the time of this survey (the remainder did not respond).

36% of all homeowner households have purchased a new or existing home since the year 2000.

Only 12% stated that their mortgage payment is more than 30% of their income.

The majority (23%) of the homes owned by the respondents were valued at between 200,000 and \$175,000. There were only 19% of the homes valued at more than \$225,000.

**Conclusions**

- 20% of all employed residents make less than \$20,000 limiting their housing choices.
- There needs to be more rental housing available in that will meet the needs of lower income families.
- The population has a significant number of younger families with children and a smaller elderly population in the area.
- Some larger housing units are needed that are affordable as families increase in size.
- The aging of the population will require some increased housing options for seniors because a majority of people in the population are middle aged.
- There are a significant number of families with incomes less than \$20,000 and they are less likely to be able to find housing affordable to them.
- The market needs more ownership opportunities available for homes less than \$200,000 because that is price point that people have been purchasing wherever possible.

**Appendix 3**

**Draft Inclusionary Zoning Ordinance**

Inclusionary Zoning

Sec. 1: Purpose.

The purpose of this Chapter is to promote the public health, safety and welfare by promoting housing of high quality located in neighborhoods throughout the community for households of a variety of income levels, ages and sizes in order to meet the City's goal of preserving and promoting a culturally and economically diverse population in our community.

Based upon the review and consideration of reports and analyses of the housing supply in the City, it is apparent that the diversity of the City's housing stock has declined for many reasons including increasing property values and construction costs. The City recognizes the need to provide affordable housing to households of a broad range of income levels in order to maintain a diverse population and to provide housing for those who live or work in the City. Without intervention, the trend toward rising housing prices will result in an increasingly inadequate supply of affordable housing for city residents and local employees, which will have a negative impact upon the ability of local employers to maintain an adequate local work force and will otherwise be detrimental to the public health, safety and welfare of the city and its residents. Since the remaining land appropriate for new residential development within the City is limited, it is essential that a reasonable proportion of such land be developed into housing units affordable to low and moderate income households and working families.

The regulations set forth in this Chapter are in furtherance of a key goal of the City's Comprehensive Plan: to create and preserve affordable housing opportunities. The regulations also support other goals of the City including the reduction of traffic congestion and associated air pollution; and the prevention of sprawl through the maintenance of the urban services boundary. The regulations are intended to encourage and provide a structure for cooperative participation by the public and private sectors in the production of affordable housing.

While this Chapter provides specific alternatives to the production of on-site affordable housing units, the intent and preference of this Chapter is for the provision of permanently affordable housing units constructed on-site and privately produced, owned, and managed.

Sec. 2: Covered Development Projects. [1]

The provisions of this Chapter shall apply to all new developments that contain or result in (a) five or more residential dwelling units; or (b) a new subdivision of land that results in (i) five or more single-family lots or (ii) two-family lots with the potential for six or more residential units. The types of development subject to the provisions of this ordinance include, without limitation, the following:

- 1) A multifamily development that is (i) new residential construction that creates 5 or more dwelling units or (ii) new mixed-use construction with a residential component of 5 or more dwelling units.

- 2) A development that is the renovation or reconstruction of an existing multifamily residential structure that increases the number of residential units from the number of units in the original structure by 5 or more dwelling units.
- 3) A multifamily development that will change the use of an existing building from non-residential to residential having 5 or more dwelling units.
- 4) A new subdivision of land into five or more single-family lots.
- 5) A new subdivision of land into two-family lots with the potential for six or more residential units [same comment as above].

**Sec. 3: Percentage of Affordable Housing Units or Lots Required.**

- 1) General requirement. Except as otherwise specifically provided, the affordable housing component shall provide for the permanent affordability (as defined in Sec. 13 below) of [amount to be determined] percent of the approved dwelling units, as further detailed in Sec. 7 below. Further, except as otherwise specifically provided, the affordable units shall be located within the covered development.
- 2) Calculation. For subdivision proposals, each lot that is large enough for only one single-family dwelling unit or that is limited by restrictive covenants to development only with a single-family dwelling unit shall be deemed to house one single-family dwelling unit. Each lot that is large enough for a two-family dwelling unit or that is allowed by restrictive covenants to develop with a two-family dwelling shall be deemed to house two dwelling units. The minimum number of affordable units for a subdivision shall then be determined by multiplying the maximum number of dwelling units permissible within the development proposal as determined herein by the percentage specified above.
- 3) Cash payment in lieu of housing units.
  - a. General applicability. In accordance with Sec. 9 below, the Planning Commission may accept a payment in lieu of affordable housing for all or part of the affordable housing obligation imposed by this Chapter. If the calculation of the housing obligation results in a fractional number of units, the fractional amount shall be fulfilled with a payment in lieu (calculated in accordance with subsection (3) below).<sup>[2]</sup>
  - b. Amount and use of cash in lieu. The per unit payment amount shall be determined by the City Council and set forth in the City's annual fee resolution. The per unit amount shall be based on an estimate of the cost of providing an affordable housing unit in \_\_\_\_\_. The Council shall base the annual per unit payment amount on the differential between the cost to produce such a unit and the price it can be sold for, as determined by averaging the actual differentials reported over the previous 12 months by two or more developers actively producing affordable housing stock in \_\_\_\_\_ or in close proximity to \_\_\_\_\_. All cash payments received pursuant to this Chapter shall be deposited directly into the Revolving Acquisition Fund <sup>[3]</sup> for purposes authorized under Sec. \_\_\_\_ [relevant section of the \_\_\_\_\_ code].
  - c. Calculation. For purposes of determining the total in lieu payment amount, the per unit amount established by the City pursuant to Paragraph (C)(2) of this Section shall be multiplied by 15 percent of the number of units proposed in the covered development. For purposes of such calculation, if 15 percent of the number of proposed units results in a fraction, the fraction shall not be rounded up or down. If the cash payment is in lieu of providing one or more but not all of

the required units, the calculation of required affordable dwelling units shall be prorated as appropriate.

Sec. 4: Application and Inclusionary Housing Plan

- 1) *Application:* For all covered developments, the applicant or owner shall file an application for approval on a form provided and required by the City. The application shall require, and the applicant shall provide, among other things, general information about the nature and scope of the covered development, as well as such other documents and information as the City Manager may require. The Manager shall also have the authority to require, as part of the application submittal, such portions of the inclusionary housing plan required under subsection (b) of this section as the Manager shall deem necessary to properly evaluate the proposed covered development under the requirements and provisions of this Chapter. If the applicant intends to request permission to provide an alternative to on-site affordable housing units as provided under Sec. 9 of this Chapter, the applicant nonetheless is required to demonstrate with reasonable specificity what the project would look like if the project included on-site integration of affordable housing units, per Sec. 8 of this Chapter. In accordance with Sec. 9, the applicant who seeks to provide an alternative to on-site integration shall demonstrate that the proposed alternative will further affordable housing opportunities in the City to a greater extent than compliance with the otherwise applicable on-site requirements of this Chapter.
- 2) *Inclusionary Housing Plan:* As part of the approval of a covered development project, the applicant shall present to the City an inclusionary housing plan that outlines and specifies the covered development's compliance with each of the applicable requirements of this Chapter. The plan shall be subject to approval by the City and shall be incorporated into a binding agreement to be called the Affordable Housing Performance Agreement between the applicant and the City as required pursuant to Sec. 5 of this Chapter. Minor modifications to the plan are subject to approval by the City Manager; major modifications are subject to Council approval and will be considered promptly upon petition from the applicant. The plan shall specifically contain, at a minimum, the following information regarding the covered development:
  - a. A general description of the development
  - b. The total number of market rate units and affordable units in the development
  - c. The number of bedrooms and bathrooms in each affordable unit
  - d. The approximate square footage of each affordable unit
  - e. The approximate location within any multifamily residential structure, or any subdivision of land, of each affordable unit
  - f. The pricing for each affordable housing unit [or lot?]
  - g. The pricing of each unit or lot shall be determined at time of approval. At time of sale this price may be adjusted if there has been a change in the median income or a change in the formulas used in this ordinance
  - h. The order of completion of market rate and affordable units
  - i. Documentation and plans regarding the exterior appearance, materials and finishes of the development for each of its affordable units unless it is stated that market units and affordable units shall have identical exterior finishes [4]

Sec. 5: Affordable Housing Performance Agreement and Other Documents.

Prior to issuance of a zoning compliance permit for any covered development, the applicant or owner shall have entered into an Affordable Housing Performance Agreement with the City regarding the specific requirements and restrictions regarding affordable housing and the covered development. The applicant or owner shall execute any and all documents deemed necessary by the City, including, without limitation, restrictive covenants and other related instruments, to ensure the permanent affordability of the affordable housing units or lots in accordance with Sec. 13 of this chapter. The agreement shall set forth the commitments and obligations of the City and the applicant and shall incorporate, among other things, the inclusionary housing plan; it shall also contain the agreements and decisions regarding the applicability of any one or more of the alternatives to the provision of on-site affordable housing units as set forth in Sec. 9 of this Chapter. The agreement and all documents described above shall be recorded in the **Orange or Durham** County Registry of Deeds as appropriate.

### Sec. 6: Development Cost Offsets.

An applicant who fully complies with the requirements of this chapter shall, upon written request, receive from the City, with regard to the affordable housing units or lots in the covered development, a waiver of all the otherwise applicable application fees, building permit fees, plan review fees, inspection fees, and such other development fees and costs which may be imposed by the City, except for any fees associated with water or wastewater **[stormwater?]** which shall be charged at market process.[5]

### Sec. 7: Density Credits.

[This section is to be determined; the subcommittee's report (see Final Report) provides a starting place.] [6]

### Sec. 8: Integration of Affordable Housing Units.

- 1) *Location of affordable housing units.* Affordable housing units or lots shall be situated within the covered development, unless the applicant qualifies under Sec. 9 below for an exception or alternative to providing on-site housing. The locations shall be recommended by the Planning Commission, and approved by the city council.
- 2) *Phasing of construction.* The inclusionary housing plan and the Affordable Housing Performance Agreement shall include a phasing plan that provides for the timely and integrated development of the affordable housing units as the covered development project is built out. The phasing plan shall provide for the development of the affordable housing units concurrently with the market rate units. Zoning compliance permits shall be issued for the covered development project based upon the phasing plan. The phasing plan shall be approved by the City Council (or Planning Commission, if appropriate) prior to the issuance of any zoning compliance permit. Subsequent to approval, the phasing plan may be adjusted by the City Manager when necessary in order to account for the different financing and funding environments, economies of scale, and infrastructure needs applicable to development of the market rate and the affordable housing units.
- 3) *Exterior appearance.* The exterior appearance of the affordable housing units in any covered development shall be compatible in style and quality with the market rate units in the development.

- 4) *Interior appearance and finishes.* Affordable housing units may differ from market rate units with regard to interior finishes. As a matter of City policy, the units should be energy-efficient.
- 5) *Gross floor area.* [Needs development.] [7]

Sec. 9: Alternatives to On-Site Affordable Housing Units.

- 1) In lieu of the provision of all or part of the affordable housing on the site of the covered development as otherwise required by Sec. 3 of this Chapter, the City Council, following consideration by and a recommendation from the Planning Commission, or the Planning Commission, if appropriate, may approve one or more of the three alternatives for affordable housing as set forth in subsection (b) of this section. Utilization and the requirements of the provisions of this section shall be specifically set forth in the Affordable Housing Performance Agreement for the covered development. This section shall not be utilized unless the applicant demonstrates to the satisfaction of the City Council (or Planning Commission, if appropriate) that
  - a) the alternate means of compliance will further affordable housing opportunities in the City to a greater extent than compliance with the otherwise applicable on-site requirements of this Chapter
  - b) the provision of on-site affordable housing is not economically feasible.
- 2) Any one or more of the following affordable housing alternatives may be utilized in lieu of all or part of the otherwise applicable on-site requirements of Sec. 3 of this Chapter.
  - a) A dedication of land to Vernal City or the City's not-for-profit designee.
  - b) The provision of affordable housing units at another site within the City
  - c) A cash payment in lieu of housing, to be deposited directly into the Revolving Acquisition Fund [9] for purposes authorized under [the section of the \_\_\_\_\_ code that defines that fund]. The per unit amount payment may not be less than the per unit payment established pursuant to Sec. 3(c)(2) of this Chapter.
  - d) An alternative proposed by the applicant that directly provides or enables the provision of affordable housing units within the City. [To be further discussed.]

Sec. 10: Target Income Levels for Affordable Housing Units or Lots.

Income levels shall be provided as follows:

- 1) Single family subdivisions shall be for families at 80% of AMI or less
- 2) Multiple Family developments shall be for 50% of AMI or less depending upon the density bonus being targeted.

Sec. 11: Price of rents and for sale affordable units or Lots.[11]

- 1) Rents shall be priced at 30% of income of families with incomes less than 50% of AMI and receive density bonuses. Rents may be priced at fair market rents as established by HUD for all other affordable rents.
- 2) (b) Affordable housing units will be priced at 30% of the income of families at 80% of AMI or less.
- 3) (c) Affordable lots in subdivisions will be priced at one half of the prices of the market rate lots within the development.

Sec. 12: Priority of Eligible Households.[12]

Only eligible households with pre-approved loans shall be permitted to make an application for an affordable housing unit or lot for purposes of this chapter. Priority will be given:

- 1) First to verifiable employees of the City and school teachers hired by the school district(s) of the city
- 2) Second to employees of businesses located in the City, and to employees of other governmental agencies of the city/county, provided they have been an employee for a minimum of 12 months.
- 3) Third to residents of Vernal City provided they have been a resident for a minimum of 12 months.
- 4) Fourth to residents of Uintah County, Utah, provided that they have been a resident for a minimum of 12 months.
- 5) Fifth to the general public.

**Sec. 13: Period of Affordability.**

In covered developments that contain for-sale units or lots, affordable housing units or lots shall be resold to low- and moderate-income households in perpetuity or as long as permissible by law. The owner shall execute and record all documents required by Sec. 5 of this Chapter to ensure compliance with this subsection.

**Sec. 14: Affordability Controls; Resale of Affordable Housing Units or Lots.**

*Private party purchases.* In the resale of affordable housing units or lots, the parties to the transaction shall execute and record such documentation as required by the city including, without limitation, restrictive covenants and other related instruments to ensure the continued affordability of the housing units or lots. Such documentation shall include the provisions of this chapter and shall provide, at a minimum, each of the following:

- 1) The affordable housing unit or lot shall be sold to and occupied by an eligible household as provided for in section 4-12.
- 2) The affordable housing unit or lot shall be conveyed subject to restrictions that shall permanently maintain the affordability of such affordable housing units or lots for eligible households.
- 3) Resale calculations for dwelling units. Calculation of the price of a resale affordable unit shall be determined by taking the original sales price of the affordable unit; adjusting the price for inflation by adding the percentage of the original sales price that is equal to the increase in the cost of living since the unit first sold, as determined by the CPI (Consumer Price Index as determined by the Bureau of Labor Statistics, US Department of Labor and not compounded annually); adding to the sales price the fair market value of any capital improvements made to the unit; and adding allowance for the closing costs initially paid by the buyer of the unit.
  - a. The fair market value of the dwelling and any other capital improvement shall be determined by a licensed Utah appraiser.
- 4) Resale calculations for lots. Calculation of the price of a resale lot or lot with owner built dwelling shall be determined by taking the price of the affordable lot; adjusting the price for inflation by adding the percentage of the original sales price that is equal to the increase in cost of living as determined by the CPI (not compounded annually); adding to the sales price the fair market value of the dwelling if any; and adding allowance for the closing costs initially paid by the buyer of the lot.

- a. The fair market value of the dwelling and any other capital improvement shall be determined by a licensed Utah appraiser.

**Appendix 5**

**Housing Analysis Model**