

**SMART GROWTH IN
CANYON COUNTRY:
CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES IN
MOAB, UTAH**

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In this paper, I have attempted to take a broad look at development policy in Moab and Grand

1960s, when demand declined sharply. Historically, agriculture and farming have never been the primary land use in Grand County, but, are important to the rural character of the area.

After the initial bust of uranium mining, Moab and Grand County went through a period of declining economic activity and population transition. By the late 1980s, Moab had lost 35% of its tax base, 25% of its population, and unemployment was about 20%.¹ Grand County was desperate for a new economic base to provide jobs for the people and tax revenue for the county, and tourism seemed like an ideal choice. Because of its proximity to the national parks, Colorado River and thousands of acres of public land controlled by the BLM, recreational tourism in Moab took off rapidly. It is now estimated that more than one million visitors pass through Moab annually.² In the year 2007 Arches NP had 860,181 visitors, Canyonlands had 417,560 visitors.³ It is also estimated that 47.2% of all jobs are Tourism and Recreation industry related, including jobs in the Leisure and Hospitality (32.2%) and Retail Trade (nearly 15%.) categories.⁴ In 1980, tourism directly and indirectly provided only about 11% of all income received by Grand County residents.⁵

Moab is a gateway town, meaning that the root of its appeal to tourists is that it serves as the gateway to the surrounding public land. Moab is the place that facilitates travel on the surrounding land, and is not itself a tourist destination. The area now attracts, among others, mountain bikers, hikers, kayakers, rafters, jeepers, off-road vehicle users, climbers, photographers and sightseers who will spend some time in the City of Moab.

Initially, some people welcomed the lessening of agricultural and extractive industries as a positive change from the perceived destructive nature of grazing and mining. Tourism also provided

a low-margin business, meaning that large volume of visitors is essential for an area to be profitable. Though costs for gear or guiding and instruction can be high, access to the land in the Western United States is usually cheap or free.⁷ Large numbers of tourists in the Western United States are attempting to recreate as cheaply as possible, and often, these tourists do not focus on the environmental and community costs. This mindset can produce recreational tourism that takes more than it gives to the

Parks and trends for new hotel room and campsite construction, it is likely that visitation rates are steadily rising. However, many outside factors could contribute to a slowing of tourist visitation.

(3) Sprawl development and encroachment on open space and public land. This is an important development problem in Moab because the scenic beau

use policy, and unpredictable popularity. Among the factors of concern in Moab and Grand County are rising gas prices and slowing American economy causing fewer people to travel. There is also the risk

guidelines for luxury developments into long-term planning documents. Moab and Grand County should also investigate adopting stronger rules for development of employee housing to accommodate the seasonal workforce.

(2) Encourage regional, community, and stakeholder collaboration. In Moab and Grand County, it is essential to collaborate private landowners, the National Park Service, the National Forest Service and the Bureau of Land Management. The Grand County and Moab Plans address collaboration with these agencies where appropriate. Both plans also repeatedly emphasize the importance of collaboration between Moab and Grand County on many development matters, and both include mention of collaboration with several different public and private agencies in certain circumstances. One of the most important aspects of regional colla

There are provisions in the Moab Plan to encourage the development of mixed-use housing, combining affordable housing with commercial use and building affordable housing units above commercial ground floor units, and to explore non-traditional housing options such as live/work housing, garage or garden apartments and caretaker units. Expansion of

retirement/second home ownership and natural resource development.”¹⁷ The Moab Plan did not mention the film industry, health care, and/or retirement second home ownership, but should be included if it is seen as desirable by the community. This is also where Moab or Grand County could include provisions requiring or encouraging business development that would provide a living wage or some degrees

PERSONAL STATEMENT

After my freshman year in San Francisco, and a year living and working in Montana, I transferred to Occidental College in Los Angeles. Nothing against Los Angeles, but I don't belong here. I have truly enjoyed living in a city of 8 million for the past few years, but I doubt I would have liked it as much without being able to retreat to a town of 5000 every summer. I find myself defending Moab to my friends in LA and defending LA to my friends in Moab.

In my paper, I have attempted to take a broad look at development policy in Moab and Grand County. I have used the General Plans of both areas as the starting point and guide. I chose the General Plan because it is a document created for the specific purpose of articulating the long-term goals and policies regarding development in the area. It is necessary for communities in the Western United States to have a clearly articulated plan regarding future growth and development, especially because historically, much development has taken place without careful consideration of the long term context.

I realize that my paper covers many topics that could each be full and detailed studies. This was a conscious choice. I have spent my time at Occidental studying urban areas, Los Angeles especially, and I saw this as an opportunity to learn more about planning in rural areas, specifically Moab and Grand County. Entire papers, if not entire books, could be written on subjects like affordable housing, open space preservation or the legacy of extractive industries in Moab and other national park gateway communities. I only touch on these subjects briefly. Though I realize that my brief discussion does not do justice to many of the topics I include in my paper, it was important for me that I try to get an overview of many of the issues facing Moab in regards to development. It was very difficult for me to stop researching and actually start writing, as almost every topic that I started to explore lead me down a path of more and more information that all seemed interesting and relevant.

INTRODUCTION

as tourists, the long-term growth and development plans must take into consideration the ways that a tourism economy creates benefits, problems, challenges and opportunities.

The central thesis of this paper is that the adoption of regionally tailored smart growth concepts as guiding development principles is the crucial first step toward creating a strong economy and community in Moab and Grand County that will have long term benefits for tourists and locals alike by allowing for mindful future development without sacrificing the region's unique sense of place.

BASIC MOAB INFORMATION

Moab is located in Grand County, in the Southeastern part of the Utah. It is about eight miles away from Arches National Park and 32 miles away from the Islands In The Sky entrance to Canyonlands National Park. Moab sits at an elevation of about 400 feet above sea level and covers an approximate 4-square mile area.²⁰ The town is situated on the Colorado River in an oasis surrounded by enormous red-rock and desert terrain. The climate in the desert can vary from more than 105 degrees Fahrenheit in the summer to below zero temperatures in the winter. The area gets very little rain, mainly in the spring and the month of October, but there are brief, intense thunderstorms during the summer months that often lead to flash floods. The plant life is typical of high or sub-desert biomes and includes sagebrush, rabbitbrush, saltbush, serviceberry, mountain mahogany, and other desert natives at the lower elevations. Juniper and pinion occur with desert shrubs until about 7,500 feet elevation where a mountain ecosystem of aspen, spruce, and fir takes over.²¹

The population in Moab fluctuates greatly throughout the year due to the high number of seasonal employees that inhabit the town for stretches of a few months during the tourist season, which spans from early April to late October. The actual number of year-round residents of Moab is about 5000, or 4,779 according to the 2000 census. As of 2006, the county population stood at 9,024 people. As of 2000, Moab was 90.4% white, 5.5% American Indian and Alaskan Native, 6.4% Hispanic or Latino (4.5% Mexican), and very small percentages of other racial groups. The median household income was \$32,620, and 12% of families and 15.7% of individuals lived below the poverty line. The average household size is 2.43 people and the average family size is 3.1 people.²²

²⁰ Website for the City of Moab, Utah – Moab's Natural Features. <http://www.moabcity.org/visitors/history.cfm>

²¹ Website for the City of Moab, Utah – Climate. <http://www.moabcity.org/visitors/history.cfm>

²² All of this statistical information came from year 2000 census information from Geographic Area: Moab. Obtained from www.census.gov.

MOAB AND GRAND COUNTY DEVELOPMENT HISTORY

This section outlines the history of Moab with special emphasis paid to the different types of dominant economy, as Moab has gone through phases of one economic boom after another. It is important to consider the history of the Moab region in order to get a better understanding of Moab and Grand County today. Tourism, which is now the dominant economy, must be viewed in the context of Moab's evolution up to the point of adopting tourism as the major economic focus.

THE TRACK TO A TOURIST ECONOMY IN THE WESTERN UNITED STATES

There is a common story of development in the Western towns that serve as gateway communities to public land such as national parks, national forests, national recreation areas, and bureau of land management land. First, there were the indigenous populations, who built structures ranging from the temporary dwellings of nomadic groups to cliff dwellings containing more than one hundred rooms.

Then came the days of the wild American frontier. To the non-indigenous populations, the Western United States was first a vast and mysterious place. The narrative of this first stage of exploration is seared into the collective memory of the country. This was the time period that produce

much larger tax base. Many people are left unemploy

Mountain Mission for the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (LDS). Upon arrival, they were confronted with the agricultural endeavors of the Ute tribe, including an extensive irrigation system.²⁶

The Mission was located in Spanish Valley, near present-day Moab and close to the Colorado River. It was established to be part of a strategic Mormon “corridor to the sea.”²⁷ This site in Spanish Valley was a practical area for initial settlement because of the good soil, clear water coming down from the La Sal Mountains and location along the well-established Old Spanish Trail.²⁸ The Old Spanish Trail was created as a trade route between the Mexican settlements of Los Angeles and Santa Fe, able to accommodate travel by packhorse or mule. A ford across the Colorado River, though potentially treacherous in high water, generally allowed for the safe passage of wagons and other large supplies.²⁹

For the first few months that these settlers were in the area, a fort was constructed and visited by a steady stream of Native Americans looking to trade. Many of the native peoples were enthusiastic to trade with the Mormons, and a few were converted to the faith.³⁰ By all historical indications, the

89.⁴² The first Mormon ward was not established until 1881, close to thirty years after the failure of the

AGRICULTURAL HISTORY

URANIUM MINING

During World War II, vanadium, a mineral related to uranium, was mined in Southeastern Utah. Vanadium was a vital element used in the hardening of steel, which was of great importance to the United States during wartime. Uranium could be accumulated from the vanadium tailings, and, though few realized the potential of uranium at the time, the United States would use a portion of the uranium accumulated from the vanadium tailings as part of the ingredients for the atomic bomb that destroyed Hiroshima.⁵⁷

After World War II ended, American involvement in the cold war created a demand for more uranium. Amateur prospectors began prowling the uranium-bearing strata around the Moab area in war-surplus jeeps with Geiger counters and Atomic Energy Commission (AEC) pamphlets describing how to find uranium-bearing strata. Everything changed for Moab in 1952 when an amateur prospector and geologist named Charlie Steen discovered the largest ore body of uranium bearing pitchblende ever found in the area, making Moab, “The Uranium Capital of the World.”⁵⁸ Almost overnight, Moab’s population boomed, increasing from about 1200 to 6000 people, creating Moab’s first big housing shortage. According to

By 1960, less than ten years after Steen's influential discovery, the uranium industry in Moab began to decline sharply. The United States government had stockpiled enough uranium and was no longer interested in acquiring more. Steen was forc

on the surface.⁶⁹ A few grand county residents are employed at the mine, which produces between 700 and 1,000 tons of potash per day.⁷⁰

The Potash Road, created for access to the mine, is now heavily used by recreationists. It is a very popular spot for rock climbing, and on most summer days the road is lined with young people climbing, belaying, or waiting their turn for either. Up the Potash Road is a popular place to drive and view ancient rock art and the put-in for the popular rafting trips from Moab down to Lake Powell by way of Cataract Canyon is at a boat ramp on Potash Road.

Extractive industries remained an important sector of the Moab economy for many years after the sharp decline of uranium mining in 1960. In 1980, income from mining in Grand County made up 62% of all income received by county residents.⁷¹ In 1984, the Atlas mine permanently shut its doors and by 1996, only 16% of all income received was from mining activities.⁷² By 2004, that number was only 2%.⁷³ It should also be noted that when the mining economy collapsed, the demand for housing in Moab decreased sharply. There was a brief period during which many locals were able to buy affordable homes before real estate speculation drove prices back up. Eventually, more affluent visitors to the area would notice the bargain prices and buy up a portion of the housing stock for vacation homes, retirement homes or general investment properties. Those who wanted to purchase a home but were unable to act quickly sometimes found themselves outbid by outside investors with more money.⁷⁴

⁶⁹ Jose Knighton, *Coyote's History of Moab*

TOURISM IN MOAB AND GRAND COUNTY

TRANSITION TO TOURISM

Over the years, tourism in Moab had many advocates. Forty years later, Faun McConkie Tanner ends her detailed history of the Moab and La Sal region with this prediction for the future of Moab; “If all other industry in the region fails, Moab and La Sal can serve humanity well in the industry of

film director John Ford came to Moab scouting for new locations for *Wagonmaster*, the newest of Ford's popular Westerns. Ford found exactly what he was looking for in Moab, choosing to film within a few miles of George White's ranch along the Colorado River.⁸⁵ White's ranch exists today as a resort catering to more upscale tourists. The resort is visible from the popular Fisher Towers section of the Colorado that numerous rafting companies float down every day during the summer season. Since Ford's westerns, many other films have been shot in the areas around Moab including *Thelma and Louise*, *City Slickers II* and *Mission Impossible II*. Today, Moab can be spotted in many print and television advertisements as the stereotypical rugged place to drive a tough car or drink an extreme soda. Surely, this all adds to the Moab appeal.

The Moab area offers many recreational opportunities, but the thing that really propelled Moab to the status of recreational tourism Mecca is the sport of mountain biking. In the mid-1980s, mountain biking emerged as a separate activity from biking on paved roads, and found its home in Moab because of the way that the specific landscape of the area catered so well to this new sport.⁸⁶ The remnants of jeep trails from the days of uranium prospecting proved ideal, as they allowed bikers to ride side-by-side along the old two-track roads. Also, the "slickrock" formation that exists in this area is perfect for gripping bike tires and providing fun and scenic trails. Inspired by a story seen in *National Geographic* about the region, the editor of *Mountain Bike* magazine featured Moab prominently in the first issue. In 1986, a local bike and outdoor gear shop sponsored the first ever Canyonlands Fat Tire Festival. Today,

less able to handle the trash and car and human traffic that the parks were used to dealing with.⁸⁸ After significant growth in visitation rates to Arches National Park and Canyonlands National Park during the late 1980s and early 1990s, visitation slowed in 2000, only to steadily rise back up to close to the high numbers of the late 1990s by 2007.⁸⁹

MOAB'S APPEAL

Three members of the planning department of the City of Moab were interviewed for this study;⁹³ all three made the distinction between the appeal of Moab the town and the Moab area. Moab is a gateway town, meaning that the root of its appeal

Management, Alison Gill states that, if unchecked, the negative impacts will likely result in declining tourist visits and a down marketing of tourist products.¹⁰⁷

In Moab, the downside of tourism is often something that is experienced very personally. As one member of the planning commission said, some tourists come into the area only to treat it as their own personal Disneyland, and the people who live there as the Disneyland staff. The visitors are here to see things, but not to participate in the community. It is an often-heard complaint around town that some people – not all – who visit the area simply have no respect for the land or the people. Because most Moabites include the surrounding land in the connection they have with their home, disrespect for the

bicycles act as if they own the road, they sit through green lights, they insist on riding bikes, walking, and running where there is no room for them whatsoever, but almost none of them can use the facilities that are put there for them. They jaywalk, stand in a state highway simply to climb on the rocks, fail to use turn signals, attempt to read maps while driving, operate unlicensed (and probably uninsured) vehicles on the roads. Basically, if something can be done wrong they will do it wrong.

In one study of rural areas, it was shown that rural tourism can “make effective contributions to rural development”, but often do not deliver on income and employment expectations. This same study does claim, however, that tourism policy has had important beneficial impacts on the rural policy process by bringing in new attitudes and ideas and causing a reexamination of current, sometimes outdated, practices.¹¹³

Not all new visitors or residents in an area cause problems, and it can often be

of the town. These are people who talk about Moab's

terms: rednecks and hippies. He states that “rednecks are folks who can claim, ‘My great-granddad

reflects a state-wide trend where net in-migration has decreased and the only counties facing significant growth pressures are those on the Wasatch Front on the outskirts of the Salt Lake City metropolitan area.”¹²⁸ Grand County has a very low population density, only about 2.3 persons per square mile over the 3,689 square miles in the county. This compares with a Utah statewide average of 27.2 persons per square mile.¹²⁹

The greatest amount of population growth in Grand County will take place in Moab and unincorporated areas, specifically, Spanish Valley, which is essentially a suburb to the south of Moab. Both Moab and the unincorporated areas are projected to experience an 11% population growth rate from 2000 to 2030. By 2030, Moab is expected to have a population of 5,719 (compared with 4,779 persons in 2000) and 4,035 (compared with 3,357 per

homes built now will likely be sold in a couple of years when the initial builders move on. Second homeowners are people who would not be completely invested in the Moab economy, meaning that they full or partial sources of income from outside Grand County and do not support themselves fully by entering the Moab workforce.

In a recently published study of housing in Grand County, it was found that the level of new residential construction has remained relatively consistent over the past ten years, with about 100 new units added each year. Since 2000, 728 new housing units have been built in Grand County. Of these, nearly 50% have been mobile homes, 35% are single family homes, 3% are town/twin homes, and less than 2%, or only 14 units are apartments. The majority, or 65%, of new housing units were constructed in unincorporated areas of Grand County.¹³⁶ These numbers show that housing construction is not accelerating at an exponential rate. It is important to note that the majority of new units are being built in

reaching a peak number of visitors in 1999 (446,160 people), then a decline to a relative low number in

hotel space was restricted, it might cause more people to camp out on the surrounding land. There would need to be increased regulation to ensure that people were not camping illegally in sensitive areas. This would all require more money than Grand County would likely want to spend on such enforcement, as well as clash with a general aversion to overregulation of business activity and public land access.

Another problem with limits on the number of visitors that an area will receive, and this not a problem to be overlooked, is simply that if fewer people are able to access the area, the people who do get access will likely be the wealthier or better connected people. A place like Moab is surrounded by public land – national park service, forest service and bureau of land management land – and it is very concerning to think about indirectly limiting access to these public lands by limiting access to Moab; the gateway community to these areas.

One suggestion is that the Moab Travel Council be disbanded, and further government-supported promotion of tourism in the area be stopped.¹⁴⁰ If fewer people were aware of the Moab and Grand County, fewer people would visit. This, too, presents some challenges. The most notable is that neither members of Moab and Grand County government or a critical mass of the overall population has expressed desire to try to decrease or limit the number of tourists. This may be changing. Moab is not as desperate for money and jobs as it was when it first started to promote tourism heavily. Tourism is very well established in the area, and there may come a point when the number of visitors starts to detract from the reason that some people wanted to visit the area in the first place, namely the ability to pursue recreation in a place free from the hassles of crowded urban life.

When considering local decisions about growth, it is also essential to realize that while, in theory, people may have certain visions about ideal growth and new development in an area, many people are in a situation where economic survival trumps these ideals. It is crucial that this reality be considered when evaluating the growth management decisions of an area. As one member of the city council said, “the more tourists, the better, since this is what we make our money from.”¹⁴¹

of the community, and it must not be compromised. This is well recognized by the City of Moab, and is articulated in the general plan as “Visitor-oriented businesses and related growth and development may alter scenic and natural qualities that attracted visitors in the first place. A scenic community that protects its environment attracts more visitors and hence brings in more income. For that reason, the City of Moab is committed to preserving the scenic beauty of the area.”¹⁴²As mentioned earlier, the scenic beauty is also key to the sense of place that many residents feel toward Moab.

Moab is in an interesting geographical position. The actual city of Moab is encompassed in Grand County, but Spanish Valley, which is essentially a suburb of Moab, extends south of town into San Juan County. Members of the Moab city planning department pointed out that development is not uniformly regulated across counties, and restrictions made on development in Moab and Grand County may not apply just a few miles south in San Juan County. They gave the example of the newly developed Moab Business Park, which, ironically, is not actually in Moab. This is what they consider sprawl building. It was poorly planned and architecturally uninteresting. The ability for sprawl to occur in San Juan County can undermine some of the protective ordinances enacted by the city of Moab.

businesses, there is need in the community for certain things, such as children's clothing, that could be provided cheaply by a large corporate retailer. He also said that currently, many residents must make trips to Salt Lake City or Grand Junction, Colorado in order to do major shopping for certain items. This is fine for some, but it is a great obstacle for others who have limited ability to take time off of work and purchase gas and possibly lodging in order to shop for needed items.

There has been a lot of controversy in Moab lately about the possible development of a Wal-Mart or other big-box store. A moratorium was put on new development exceeding 75,000 sq feet for one year starting in 2007 and ending in early 2008 while the planning commission could come up with a recommended ordinance regarding large-scale commercial development. The planning commission came out with recommendations for limiting new business development to 75,000 sq feet and imposing other restrictions such as posting a demolition bond before starting construction to ensure that Moab would not be left with an empty Big-Box store to deal with if the company pulled out. The Moab City Council rejected the recommendations of the planning commission, and capped development at 200,000 sq feet. A major argument for rejection was that if Grand County enacted restrictions that were too strict, a big-box store could be built in neighboring San Juan County and cause the same negative effects as if it was built in Grand County, but without Grand County receiving any of the tax benefits. It is also a major concern that if an ordinance were too restrictive, a large-scale retailer would not locate in Moab, thus depriving the citizens of needed goods. There is much controversy surrounding this issue. Many people fear that a Wal-Mart Superstore would put the beloved local grocery store, and major Grand County employer, out of business. This store is itself a store owned by Kroger, a multinational corporation. It is also feared that the only place that a store of this size could be located is on the north end of town, which is the area that most visitors enter through. So, if a superstore were built, it would be the first thing that visitors saw upon arrival. Currently, when visitors enter town, the first thing they see is several hotels also owned by large multinational corporations and a locally owned company offering

property taxes increase, causing some to be forced to sell their homes because of an inability to pay the higher property taxes. The concerns about a significant amount of second homes and real estate investment by non-residents focus on the harm done to the ability of the local population to purchase a home. This is especially problematic when it is per

and houses, often housing twice as many people as are officially allowed to live there. For those that are unable to find a housing situation, or in the time between arrival in Moab and finding a place to live, many stay in housing situations that are already overcrowded or camp out on public land, either setting up tents or sleeping in the backs of trucks and cars. It is also important to note that much of the seasonal workforce spends much of the summer traveling, either on breaks from work or as part of a job such as a river guide, who may be out on multi-day river trips for much of the summer and not residing in their housing units. So, though units may be overcrowded, in many instances, the residents are not all consistently at the housing unit for the entire work season.

Moab is also home to a significant population of South and Central American immigrant workers, both seasonally and year-round. Very little information on these workers exists. From my experience, I assume that the majority of these workers are employed in the food service sector and living in similarly overcrowded housing units, but without the same benefit of jobs that require traveling, and thus, certain amounts of time spent away from the crowded home. I also assume, based on my experience, that the demographics of this population are different from other seasonal workers; they are often families instead of the young, the single workers that are attracted to work in the food service as well as retail and recreational guiding sectors. Crowding many people into one dwelling seems to be the preferred way to deal with the affordable housing shortage for all types of seasonal workers. One member of the Moab City Council agrees with 'COhP4L5FxDC'wOaPG5LLxL'OtP4p5wLC'CO P4L5CwzpLzOtP4

homeowners and the money that will be spent in the community when the occupants are in the area.¹⁵⁴ However, it is unclear whether or not second home development aids or harms the local population's tax base. One study conducted in Vermont indicates that second home development increases the tax burden for the local population,¹⁵⁵ while another states the opposite, arguing that costs are shared between more households.¹⁵⁶ Still another study finds that, "for the United States, it is estimated that second homes generate revenues that just cover the increased expenses of public services."¹⁵⁷

WORKFORCE CHALLENGES

Employment trends have a significant relationship to development trends. Simply put, the types of jobs and levels of income that people have will dictate the demand for different types of residential and commercial development.

As illustrated by the reduction in unemployment rates over time, tourism does provide jobs. However, these jobs are often low skill and low wage jobs, with little opportunity to advance. An examination of the personal and household income in Grand County illustrates this point. In 1999, per-capita personal income stood at \$21,106, this was an increase of 6.4% from the previous year, but still below the state average of \$23,288 per-capita.¹⁵⁸ And, according to the Grand County General Plan Update, this figure "may show that relatively few individuals earn a disproportionately large income while the vast majority earns a much lower income."¹⁵⁹ Average annual household income in 1999 was \$32,969, which was 65% of the state average of \$50,769 yearly. According to data from the 2000 census, 17DC'wO P4L5C.7DC'wO FwxDO%FFxLLxL'O P4L5CwzpLxOoP4L5FxDC'wOfPp5GwDGwO P4L5C

residents (22.3%).¹⁶² There is little opportunity for higher education within Grand County. There is a small extension of Utah State University (USU) in Moab now. The USU campus shares offices in the Moab Higher Education Center, which also houses the USU Cooperative Extension Service office and seven classrooms. There is a move to bring a 4-year destination campus that is an extension of Central Utah University or Utah State University to Moab, which would help provide higher education access to more people who grow up in the area as well as draw new residents to the area and provide year-round employment. Residents and members of the City Council, County Council and city and county planning commissions have all expressed a desire for expansion of higher education facilities in Moab. The seasonality of the economy has been identified in the Moab and Grand County General Plans as being a

If people are able to make ends meet working in a seasonal economy, then the off-season can provide a welcome break from tourists and a chance for locals to reclaim the area. One long time Moab resident explains that, “Moab had been full of people who loved our town when it went dead in wintertime. We wanted to be part-timers. We looked forward to the prospect of unemployment and reduced responsibilities.”¹⁶³

There are advantages to conducting business in areas such as Grand County. A study of a similar area, in this case the areas surrounding Yellowstone National Park, indicated that many small business entrepreneurs are attracted to such areas because of “quality-of-life” variables.¹⁶⁴ An Australian study showed that many moved to areas in proximity to national parks because of “lifestyle motives alongside strong family-related goals.”¹⁶⁵ One of the planners interviewed for this study explained that when he and his wife recently moved to the area, many people told his wife of the exciting niche business opportunities that existed in Grand County due to an increase in residential and tourist population and the lack of many specific types of business.

POTENTIAL WIDESPREAD NEGATIVE CONSEQUENCES IF TOURISM SLOWS

The potential that tourism could slow in the area is a development issue because of all of the abandoned buildings that would be left if tourism businesses went under, what types of new development (if any) would be happening, and how the development needs of the population would change as the economic base changed. Throughout its history, Moab and Grand County have often experienced a “boom and bust” model of economic growth. For example, Moab went through a period of economic depression when mining interests scaled

Even with the variety of businesses in the area, depending so heavily on tourism for an economic base is precarious. As described by Bill Hedden, fo

CONCLUSION AND POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

This section outlines the smart growth concepts that are essential to adopt as part of the long-term planning process in order to mitigate some of the development issues arise in a tourism dominated economy such as Moab and Grand County and maintain the key aspects of the sense of place of the area that are most important to residents and visitors.

The concept of smart growth emerged in the 1990s and continues to gain momentum in state and local land use planning.¹⁶⁹ The idea was developed as an answer to the endurin

shopping, and services; to prevent shopping malls and big box retail locating outside city limits where they would destroy the city's economy and generate automobile traffic.¹⁷⁶

In Moab and Grand County, it is essential to collab

recommended that Moab/Grand County make serious attempts and coming up with regional planning goals in collaboration with San Juan County.

COMMUNITY AND STAKEHOLDER COLLABORATION – the community must be included in the development decisions that affect their lives directly and indirectly.

Community collaboration and participation in the planning process is crucial in an area like Moab/Grand County, where the economy is dependant on tourism. The sense of ownership felt towards ones community is affected by the ownership that visitors also feel of certain aspects of that community.

and sustained effort is being made by policy makers in the area to include a high degree of public participation.

Though public participation is incorporated into the plan in numerous ways, the problem of controlling for the influence of some groups over others is not directly addressed in either plan. The planners interviewed for this study strongly stated that certain groups have more ability to make their voices heard over others. They cited factors such as education level, ability to find the time required for public participation (taking time off of work or away from children), and the belief that their opinion is

MIX LAND USES

of existing historic buildings, but it is unclear to how much of the housing stock this distinction would apply. If Moab and Grand County do not take the lead in this endeavor, it is possible that these homes will be demolished or remodeled by outside investors who are looking for second home or investment properties.

Both plans would do well to explicitly state a commitment to directing development toward existing communities whenever possible, especially working to rehabilitate dilapidated housing.

PRESERVE OPEN SPACE, FARMLAND, NATURAL BEAUTY AND CRITICAL ENVIRONMENTAL AREAS – Open space preservation supports smart growth goals by bolstering local economies, preserving critical environmental areas, improving our communities quality of life, and guiding new growth into existing communities.¹⁸⁸ In regards to Moab and Grand County, open space means not only the vast public lands that make up the majority of the land in the area, but also the parks established within Moab and Spanish Valley.

Open space, farmland and natural beauty are part the surrounding landscape and agricultural character of the region that is valued so highly by residents and visitors. Both plans include several mentions of the importance the preservation of these qualities, and each directly makes a strong commitment to the preservation of open space and farmland and the availability public parks. The City of Moab Plans includes several implementation strategies such as providing density bonuses as incentives for open space and preservation, provide

lots.”¹⁹⁰ The importance of open space was expressed in a number of aspects of “rural character”, such as being “five minutes in any direction to the County’s vast, accessible open lands”, and having “protected view sheds to large open spaces, like a park – e.g. the LaSal Mountains.”¹⁹¹¹⁹² The Grand County Plan includes language in several places that encourages architectural design such that, “building design and color treatment should blend into the natural setting and avoid drawing undue visual attention.”¹⁹³ This illustrates a strong commitment on the part of Grand County to ensure that new building incorporate smoothly into the existing areas. The City of Moab Plan similarly includes extensive plans for how to maintain Moab’s rural character, access to unspoiled public land and protected viewsheds, including the protection of “the visual resources of Moab including ridgelines, mountain views, the night sky and other scenic assets”¹⁹⁴, using native and drought-resistant plants in Moab’s parks, planting strips and medians, developing a historical preservation ordinance and rehabilitating historical properties, and encouraging “the development and vitality of a central commercial district compatible with small-town living.”¹⁹⁵

It is important that both Plans have made very strong commitments to preserving the aspects of the town that make up the rural character and open space that is so highly valued by the community. It is important that these ideas are strongly worded in guiding policy such as the General Plans.

The rural character and distinctness of the area could be compromised by further corporate franchise development and residential subdivision development. The importance of the strong and distinct sense of place of Moab should be considered heavily against other concerns when making decisions regarding whether to allow such development, and should be clearly articulated in both plans.

DIVERSIFICATION OF ECONOMY AND PRESERVATION OF LOCAL

BUSINESS– This does not fit clearly into any one of the smart growth principles, but it is also

essential to consider the how the long term goals

Moab is clearly articulated in each plan so that when political and personal conditions are more accommodating, the commitment will still be there.

AREAS FOR FURTHER STUDY

EVALUATION OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PRINCIPLES ARTICULATED IN THE GENERAL PLAN

An obvious area of further study would be to investigate how the goals of the General Plans have translated into actual policy, and the degree of su

David Sakrisson, Moab's mayor, has expressed strong interest in adding green and sustainable development principles into the General Plan the next time it is updated. Currently, neither the Moab nor the Grand County plan contains any direct provisions regarding green and/or sustainable development. Moab is already a leader in sustainable energy as it is the first EPA Green Power city in the nation. Starting in 2003, the city began purchasing wind power for 50% of the City Office building demand, and in starting 2006, at least 5% of Moab's electricity customers switched to purchasing pollution-free wind energy.

spent in Moab, I have often visited a certain park in town. Starting in the summer of 2007, I noticed that every evening several Hispanic families would gather in the park, the adults would all sit together and cook or socialize, and the children all run around together playing in the park. This was not the case the first two summers I lived in Moab. I think that this is an illustration of the growing importance of the Hispanic community in the Moab area. Further study should be conducted to see if the specific needs of this community are being met in Moab, and if not, what should be done.

STUDY OF THE SEASONAL WORKFORCE

In researching for this study, I found no information on the seasonal workforce of Moab. I did not even find an estimated number of seasonal workers. The economy of Moab is highly dependant on the contributions of workers who reside in Moab for the summer season and work in retail, restaurants or recreation/guiding, but there is no information on this population. A study should be conducted to investigate (a) the demographic characteristics of the seasonal workforce, (b) what jobs are done by the seasonal workforce, (c) what attracts seasonal workers to the Moab area, (d) the housing characteristics of the seasonal workforce including wherwzOrP4w5DC'xxOaPG5LLGwLrn&'wFCG'OxrPp5Gwx'COmP4G5DD'

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- a. Encourage and create incentives for developers to provide housing for employees.
- b. Encourage employers in the City to assist in finding, and possibly providing, housing for temporary and seasonal workers.

3. Assist homeowners and owners of rental properties in the renovation of existing units.

Implementation:

- a. Encourage a salvage program for demolition materials of homes and commercial structures for recycling into affordable housing or renovation construction.
- 4. Support the development of affordable, small-scale residential housing which fits the character of the City and is interspersed with market-rate units.
- 5. Encourage 25 percent of new housing units to be affordable (as defined by HB-295) to area median income. At least 35 percent of the 25 percent goal shall be affordable rental housing targeting families at or below 50 percent of the area median income.
- 6. Encourage organizations and business to consider creative housing for their employees.
- 7. Identify key land parcels in and near the City which are suited for affordable housing.
Work with and encourage property owners to develop affordable housing on the lands identified appropriate for such use.
- 8. Encourage private/public partnerships for the development and management of affordable housing. Special considerations should be shown to non-profit sponsors of affordable housing and special use housing.
- 9. Encourage affordable housing to be dispersed throughout the community, consistent in scale and character with surrounding neighborhoods.
- 10. Encourage in-fill development of affordable housiaes.

ENCOURAGE REGIONAL, COMMUNITY, AND STAKEHOLDER
COLLABORATION
REGIONAL COLLABORATION
CITY OF MOAB

DIRECT –

“Special Challenges.” Pg. 5 –

Although City services and administration stop at the City limits, we know that the reasons people are moving to the area or staying here are not limited to the City of Moab. Therefore, careful cross-agency planning should occur, along with appropriate inter-local agreements. It should be a priority for City and County planning bodies and City and County governing bodies to share compatible goals for the larger Moab area.

4. Cooperate with Grand County in land use planning and management.

Implementation:

**ENCOURAGE COMMUNITY AND STAKEHOLDER COLLABORATION
CITY OF MOAB**

DIRECT –

Pg. 10 Public Process

1. Draft Plan is made available to the public in written form, via email, or floppy disk at the City Hall

include publishing in the local newspaper.

2. The Planning Department/Planning Commission sponsors a public workshop.

The Draft Plan is revised pursuant to direction of Commission.

3. The Planning Commission holds a public hearing, followed by a comment period.

4. The Draft Plan is revised, pursuant to direction of Commission.

5. The Planning Commission adopts the General Plan and sends it to the Moab City Council for Request for Public Hearing.

6.

AVOID SPRAWL DEVELOPMENT WITH POLICY THAT WILL: CREATE WALKABLE AND BIKABLE NEIGHBORHOODS CITY OF MOAB

DIRECT –

1. Encourage the establishment and vitality of “walk-able” neighborhoods.

Implementation:

- a. Improve public streets and rights-of-way.
- b. Add and improve sidewalks.
- c. Add additional parks as needed.
- d. Install traffic-calming devices such as street medians and traffic circles planted with trees and native shrubs and by the narrowing of street widths.
- e. Invite and encourage community participation in neighborhood improvement projects.
- f. Encourage planned unit developments with supporting community facilities, parks, open spaces and complementary commercial and employment uses.
- g. Provide density bonuses as incentive for open space preservation.
- h. Provide for adequate and attractive buffers where needed.
- i. Provide incentives to preserve agricultural land. (Sec. 3. III.1.a-i)

5. Maintain and encourage a pedestrian environment for the historic neighborhoods and central business district.

Implementation:

- a. Complete sidewalks, plant trees and maintain City-dedicated planting strips.
- b. Develop a traffic circulation plan that is convenient for internal traffic movement, while discouraging through traffic in residential areas. (Sec. 3. IV.5.a-b)

a. Identify areas to acquire for use as a public plaza that will encourage foot traffic in the core commercial area, and serve as a public gathering place for residents and/or visitors. (Sec. 4. I.6.a)

6. Locate and acquire downtown property for a public plaza, gazebo, and public restrooms to promote pedestrian activity in the downtown area and to link off-Main Street areas to Main Street. (Sec. 6. I.6)

II. PEDESTRIAN

Goal: To achieve a pleasant, safe, efficient and complete pedestrian transportation network which provides a viable transportation alternative for daily circulation, activities and recreation.

Policies:

1. Provide for sidewalks of sufficient width and clear of obstructions or conflicts with other forms of transportation or land use.
2. Continue to develop the Mill Creek and Pack Creek Parkway system that includes a variety of urban walking experiences and provides for a throughway of non-motorized local access.

Implementation:

- a. Create a walkway/bikeway along Highway 191 from the Colorado River to approximately Bowling Alley Lane linking motels and other outlying services to the downtown district.
3. Provide pedestrian routes to parks, schools and other public facilities and through residential areas, separate from motor traffic.

Implementation:

- a. Replace deteriorated and unsafe sidewalks. Construct high quality sidewalks.
- b. Use buffering to separate incompatible uses. Separate walking traffic from bicycle traffic where possible.
- c. Enforce “no bicycles, skateboards, and roller blades” zones on sidewalks.
- d. Maintain clear views of intersections for safety.
- e. Provide safe crossing areas by defining crosswalks more distinctly (perhaps by elevating them or paving them

with bricks), particularly around schools and other high pedestrian/high traffic volume areas.

f. Develop walking tours and a variety of levels of walking experiences, including connections to hiking trails outside the City.

g. Create inter-local agreements with Grand County to develop bicycle lanes and walking trails linking City roads and trails to county recreational features.

h. Provide centralized, off-street city/public parking with easy, clear access to walking trails and business districts.

4. Encourage a more pedestrian-oriented business district.

Implementation:

a. Identify areas that could be designated “pedestrian only” streets and boulevards with median strips.

b. Cluster commercial businesses. Provide amenities such as plazas, sitting and gathering sites, shade and buffering.

c. Enforce “no bicycles, skateboards and roller blades” zones on sidewalks.

5. Make the City “access friendly” for persons with disabilities. (Sec. 7. II.Goal.1-2.a.3.a-h.4.a-c.5)

III. NON-MOTORIZED VEHICLES

Goal: To provide bike path systems of sufficient width and clear of obstructions or conflicts with other forms of transportation and land use; to provide transportation alternatives for daily activities and recreation.

Policies:

1. Consider a variety of urban bicycling experiences and provide for a throughway of local access on the Mill Creek and Pack Creek Parkway system.

2. Provide a pleasant, safe bicycle experience and encourage the development of bicycle-associated activities.

Implementation:

a. Develop more thoroughly the concept of a bicycle system with a variety of routes including connections to trails and routes outside the City.

b. Use buffering to separate incompatible uses. Separate bicycle traffic from walking and vehicular traffic where possible.

c. Maintain views near vehicle and pedestrian traffic areas for safety.

d. Provide safe bicycle lanes on roads and crossing areas by defining those spaces distinctly.

e. Provide sufficient parking at trailheads.

3. Encourage bicycle-user accommodations in the commercial business district in order to enhance shopping opportunities for the local community.

Implementation:

a. Cluster commercial businesses.

b. Provide safe and orderly access to pedestrian amenities such as plazas, sitting and gathering sites, and shade.

c. Provide bicycle racks. (Sec. 7. III.Goal.1-2.a-e.3.a-c)

INDIRECT –

a. Further develop a trail network and park system highlighting the Mill Creek and Pack Creek parkways. (Sec. 1. I.4.a)

2. Promote the use of alternative transportation that is non-polluting and reduces fossil fuel consumption. Implementation:

a. Develop and promote a pedestrian and bicycle system within the city, providing access to outlying Bureau of Land Management and other public trails. Form a team with county or federal agencies in the creation of such trails.

b. Promote the use of public transportation or support the private development of public transportation when it is deemed necessary.

(Sec. 2. IV.2.a-b)

11. Allow neighborhood shopping areas in order to provide convenience goods and services to neighborhoods. Such shopping areas will be located along collector or arterial intersections; will not exceed 5,000 square feet per lot; and serve a one-mile radius area. (Sec. 3. II.11)

a. Adopt community site design guidelines for streetscape activities such as roads, pedestrian walkways, bikeways, plazas and mini-parks. The components to be considered are signing, lighting, street furnishing, plantings, building to property line, shared access and parking, reduction of street widths, location of utilities and the proportionality of the various streetscape elements. (Sec. 4. I.1.a)

11. Consider the feasibility of a shuttle system serving downtown Moab. (Sec. 7. IV.11)

VI. SIDEWALKS & STREETS

Goals: To provide a safe, efficient and low cost sidewalk and street service to the community.

Policies:

1. Encourage the installation of sidewalks, curbs and gutters in deficient areas to insure proper street drainage, and to clean and beautify public streets to provide for safe pedestrian traffic. (Sec. 8. VI.Goals&1)

GRAND COUNTY DIRECT

MIX LAND USES

CITY OF MOAB

DIRECT –

11. Encourage the development of mixed-use housing, combining affordable housing with commercial use. Promote the building of affordable housing units above commercial ground floor units. (Sec. 5. II.11)

INDIRECT –

2. Explore options for non-traditional housing and adjunct housing such as live/work housing, garage or garden apartments, and caretaker units. (Sec. 5. II.2)

12. Consider the development of accessory dwelling units. (Sec. 5. II.12)

GRAND COUNTY

DIRECT AND INDIRECT

CITY OF MOAB

DIRECT –

3. Encourage the development and vitality of a central commercial district compatible with small-town living. (Sec. 3. II.3)

c. Explore an in-filling and redevelopment incentive. (Sec. 3. II.3.c)

4. Encourage the development of existing commercially zoned land prior to rezoning additional land. (Sec. 3. II.4)

1. Encourage preservation/rehabilitation of existing structures. (Sec. 3. IV.1)

(3) Rehabilitation of existing historic buildings. (Sec. 3. IV.3.e.(3))

6. Establish a central town focus to enhance the visual organization and attractiveness of the city. (Sec. 4. I.6)

12. Consider the development of accessory dwelling units. (Sec. 5. II.12)

b. Cluster commercial businesses. Provide amenities such as plazas, sitting and gathering sites, shade and buffering. (Sec. 7. II.4.b)

a. Cluster commercial businesses. (Sec. 7. III.3.a)

4. Reduce traffic congestion and conflicts. Curb cuts shall be minimized where possible, especially those opening onto Main Street (Hwy 191). Businesses should be clustered and associated parking access should avoid Main Street where possible. Traffic studies should be required for major new developments. (Sec. 7. IV.4)

Work with The Nature Conservancy, Utah Division of Wildlife Resources, and Bureau of Land Management, as well as Moab-based outdoor education programs. (Sec

2. Purchase land along the proposed Mill Creek Parkway and other areas for flood hazard reduction, recreation, and pocket parks.

Implementation:

a. Work out agreements with land owners for easements or outright purchase of necessary lands. (Sec. 9. I.2.a)

GRAND COUNTY

DIRECT

Identified from the Key Person Interviews, Grand County residents identified:

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Identified from the responses to the Citizen Questionnaire:

(Sec 2.2.2)

INDIRECT

**FOSTER DISTINCTIVE, ATTRACTIVE COMMUNITIES WITH A STRONG
SENSE OF PLACE**

CITY OF MOAB

LANDSCAPE

DIRECT –

4. Enhance City services and protect the scenic assets of the community and its surrounds. (Sec 1. I.4)

e. Support efforts to protect the beautiful scenery that surrounds the area. (Sec. 1. I.4.e)

f. Encourage use of native and low-water plants to maintain a regional sense of place and to conserve water. (Sec 1. I.5.f)

Views in and around the City of Moab are spectacular and contribute substantially to the quality of life and economic viability of Moab. Views of the ridgeline

County.

c. Require applicants for new development to use story poles or other methods to portray roofline and structure impacts near ridges for purposes of assessing visual impacts before development occurs. Setbacks, designation of maximum roofline heights and lot relocation in these areas are some of the tools that should be used to eliminate the visual impact of structures.

d. Require development that occurs, as permitted by ordinance, on hillsides or ridgelines to use existing vegetation and topography for visual screening and require other visual mitigation methods such as paint, cutoff light fixtures, etc.

(Sec. 2. III.1.a-d)

2. Protect scenic views and night skies when viewed from the rims surrounding Spanish Valley, from the LaSal Mountains, from Arches National Parks and as well as from other public lands, and seek to minimize light pollution within the City and in surrounding areas..

Implementation.

a. Adopt a light ordinance that considers intensity, type, and quantity of light for streets, buildings, signs, parking lots and for other uses of exterior lighting.

b. Provide resources that help educate residences on using more efficient and effective methods of lighting.

c. Demonstrate the use of efficient and effective lighting on City property and right of ways. (Sec. 2. III.2.a-c)

I. LAND USE -- GENERAL

Goal: To encourage a balanced mix and rational organization of land uses that enhances Moab's distinctive small-town character, economic health, and natural environment, allows economic provision of public services, and meets the needs of residents.

Policies

1. Require that all new zone changes conform with the General Plan.

2. Adopt new zones as necessary to protect the health, safety, and welfare of the community and work to preserve the natural environment and character of a small-town community.

3. Encourage the elimination of nonconforming uses. (Sec. 3. I.Goal.1-3)

II. STREET TREES AND CITY LANDSCAPING

Goal: To create a calm, inviting atmosphere and a sense of place by planting native or drought-resistant trees, shrubs, flowers and grasses on Moab's streets, parks, planting strips and medians.

Policies:

1. Improve the overall visual quality and protect the environmental r'L5' d b'O PpxLwzwFOsP4p5zFCLF=bpGz5Lx

- c. Delineate and define the historic character of potential historic districts, including the “Old Town” area.
- d. Evaluate current zoning ordinance for consistency with existing historic properties (setbacks, lot sizes, parking, street widths etc.) and revise if necessary.
- e. Develop a historic preservation ordinance, addressing:
 - (1) Establishment of a historic district;
 - (2) Design guidelines (voluntary or mandatory) for new construction in historic districts, based on existing

a. Enforce and periodically review and update the sign ordinance to reflect new technology, advancements

12. Encourage upgrade in the appearance of commerci

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CITY OF MOAB

DIRECT –

8. Support the development of agricultural products and businesses. (Sec. 1. I.8)
11. Encourage the development of a strong arts community. (Sec. 1. I.11)
12. Support the development of a college campus in the Moab area. (Sec. 1. I.12)
5. Support the expansion of educational opportunities offered by Utah State University and the College of Eastern Utah. (Sec. 9. V.5)

INDIRECT –

I. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Goal: To encourage development that increases the City tax base, reduces unemployment, creates higher wages and/or improves the standard of living and provide services and stated policies related to growth. (Sec. 1. I)

2. Encourage diversity in new businesses and seek to attract business that will strengthen the economy, enhance the rural character of the community, and provide year-round employment without compromising the natural environment. (Sec. I. 2.)

e. Encourage industries that provide off-season employment. (Sec. 1. I.6.e)

9. Encourage and support the development of convention facilities. (Sec. 1. I.9)²⁰⁴

a. Protect the economic base of Moab by identifying areas where desired and appropriate growth can occur and emphasizing diversity in growth. (Sec. 2. I.5.a)

6. Encourage variety in new commercial developments and businesses. (Sec. 3. II.6)

V. INDUSTRIAL

Goal: To provide for varied, viable, and small, attractive light industrial districts. (Sec. 3. V.Goal)

GRAND COUNTY

Identified from the Key Person Interviews, Grand County residents identified:

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INDIRECT