



Sanpete County

Market Analysis and Economic Strategic Plan



Sanpete County Market Analysis and
Economic Strategic Plan

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01

Introduction



Sanpete County, Utah, is centrally located in the state, approximately 120 miles south of Salt Lake City. With an estimated population of 29,644 in 2023, it ranks 13th out of Utah's 29 counties by population. The county seat is Manti, while the largest city is Ephraim. Known for its stunning natural landscapes and deep agricultural roots, Sanpete County has long been shaped by farming and natural resource industries. In recent years, it has also emerged as a growing destination for outdoor recreation, including fishing, snowmobiling, rock climbing, and scenic drives—as well as cultural tourism. The county is home to museums, art galleries, and events celebrating its rich pioneer heritage, making it a unique blend of rural tradition and recreational opportunity.

Project Scope

In November 2024, Sanpete County released a Request for Proposal (RFP) soliciting the services of a professional consulting firm to conduct a Market Analysis and Economic Strategic Plan. According to the RFP, the purpose of the project was to assess the current economic conditions, identify growth opportunities, and outline actionable strategies to foster long-term economic development and competitiveness in Sanpete County and particularly in the cities of Mount Pleasant, Ephraim, Manti, and Gunnison. The final report includes economic development goals, strategies, implementation steps, and key performance indicators.

Process & Methodology

TPMA utilized an integrated methodology to develop the Sanpete County Market Analysis and Economic Strategic Plan. This methodology consisted of three phases:

Discovery

The project's discovery phase involved an extensive and comprehensive review of planning documents and other relevant materials.

Analysis

The analysis phase involved a review of quantitative economic and industry data collected from primary sources and data aggregator, Lightcast. The stakeholder engagement phase included four focus groups, one for each of the cities of Ephraim, Gunnison, Manti, and Mt. Pleasant.

Stakeholder Engagement

The stakeholder engagement phase included four focus groups, one for each of the cities of Ephraim, Gunnison, Manti, and Mt. Pleasant.

Market Analysis and Economic Development Strategic Plan

Lastly, the project team, informed by the results of the discovery, analysis, and stakeholder engagement data, developed a Market Analysis and an economic development strategic plan with goals, strategies, and action steps for the County to consider in the short, medium, and long term to achieve a shared vision of Sanpete County's economic future.



02

Market Analysis

Quantitative Data Analysis

The report's quantitative data analysis is divided into three sections: Demographics and Socioeconomics, Workforce and Industry, and Housing. The data below have been used to guide follow-up research and are ultimately the foundation of many of the recommendations provided at the conclusion of the report.

Demographics & Socioeconomics

Population Projection

Sanpete County's population has grown steadily over the last twenty years. Between 2000 and 2010, the population increased by more than 5,000 people, or more than 22%. The growth rate slowed between 2010 and 2020, increasing by less than 1,000 people over the ten-year period. The most recent count, conducted through the 2020 Census, estimated the county's population to be 28,437.

Several projective models, including Esri, Lightcast, and the Kem C. Gardner Institute, are provided in Figure 1 to estimate future population growth. Due to methodological differences, these models vary slightly in their projections, and some extend further into the future than others. All models, however, predict that Sanpete County's population will grow faster over the next several years than experienced between 2010 and 2020. The Kem C. Gardner Institute, which provides the furthest-reaching and highest estimate of population growth, predicts that the county's population will reach 34,693 by 2040.

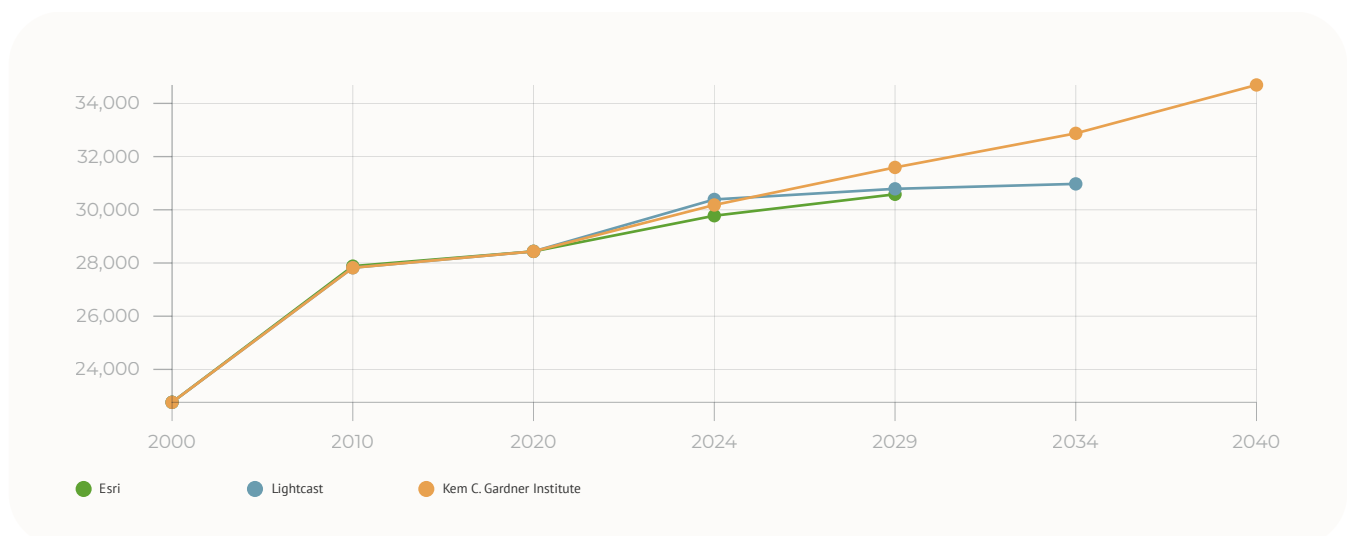


Figure 1: Population Projection. Source: US Census, 2020; Esri, 2024

Age Distribution

Much of Sanpete County's resident population is comprised of young people under the age of 25 years. In 2023, nearly 40% of the population belonged to this age group. As is the case across the country, data indicate that the local population is aging. This is due, in large part, to the transition of the Baby Boomer generation (which includes people born between 1946 and 1964) into later adulthood. Between 2013 and 2023, the portion of the population over 65 years in Sanpete County increased by 2.3 percentage points, from 12.06% to 14.36%. Over the same period, the median age in the county increased from 29.5 years to 33.8 years, or by about 14.6%, which is a significant change over such a short period of time.

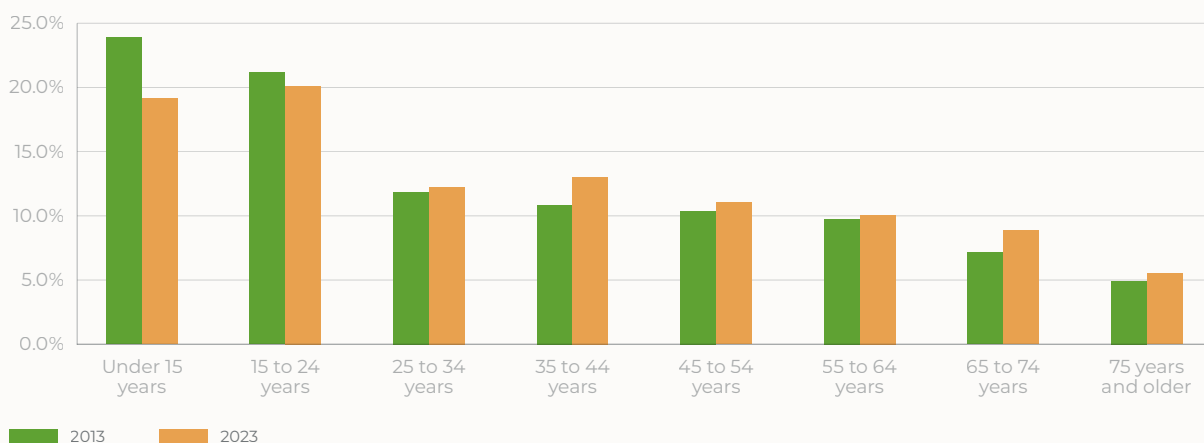


Figure 2: Age Distribution. Source: ACS 2023 5-Year Estimates

Although the percentage of people under the age of 18 years is lower in Sanpete County than in the rest of the state, its younger population still makes up a larger share of its population when compared to the rest of the country. A large population of young people can be an asset, especially for workforce development.

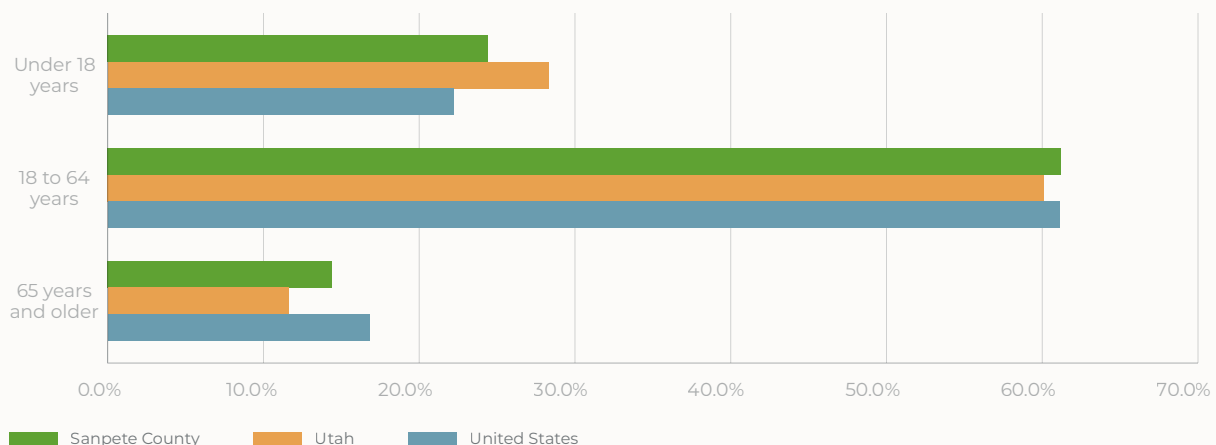


Figure 3: Comparative Age Distribution. Source: ACS 2023 5-Year Estimates

Race

The population in Sanpete County is primarily “White alone;” this population segment comprises more than 85% of the total population. The next most common racial designations are “Some other race alone” and “Two or more races,” which comprise 6.39% and 4.91% of the population, respectively.

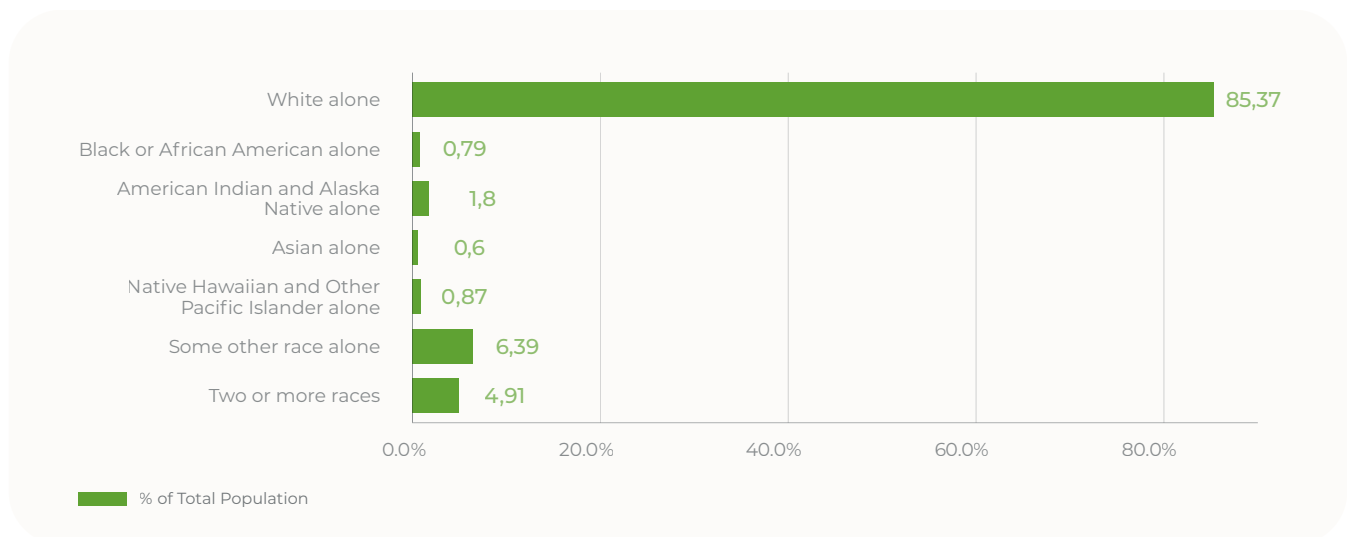


Figure 4: Racial Makeup. Source: US Census, 2020

Educational Attainment

In Figure 5, educational attainment rates are provided for both Sanpete County and the State of Utah. Roughly 91% of the resident population (over the age of 25 years) in Sanpete County holds a high school diploma or an equivalent certificate; about 23% has graduated from college and holds a bachelor's degree or a graduate degree. Compared to the rest of the state, educational attainment within the county is relatively low. At the state level, more than 38% of the population has attained a bachelor's degree or higher. While lower educational attainment rates do not necessarily indicate the local workforce's limited ability, they can be a barrier to attracting industries that require a workforce with specific skills or qualifications.

In addition, it is important to note that a large share of this population has completed some college but holds no degree. Many individuals who fall into this category have likely completed a certificate or training program offered through Snow College or some other regional institution, and their abbreviated post-secondary educational training might have been designed to prepare them for employment in a specific industry or position. For many occupations, a streamlined certificate program is a much more efficient means of acquiring the qualifications required to begin a career.

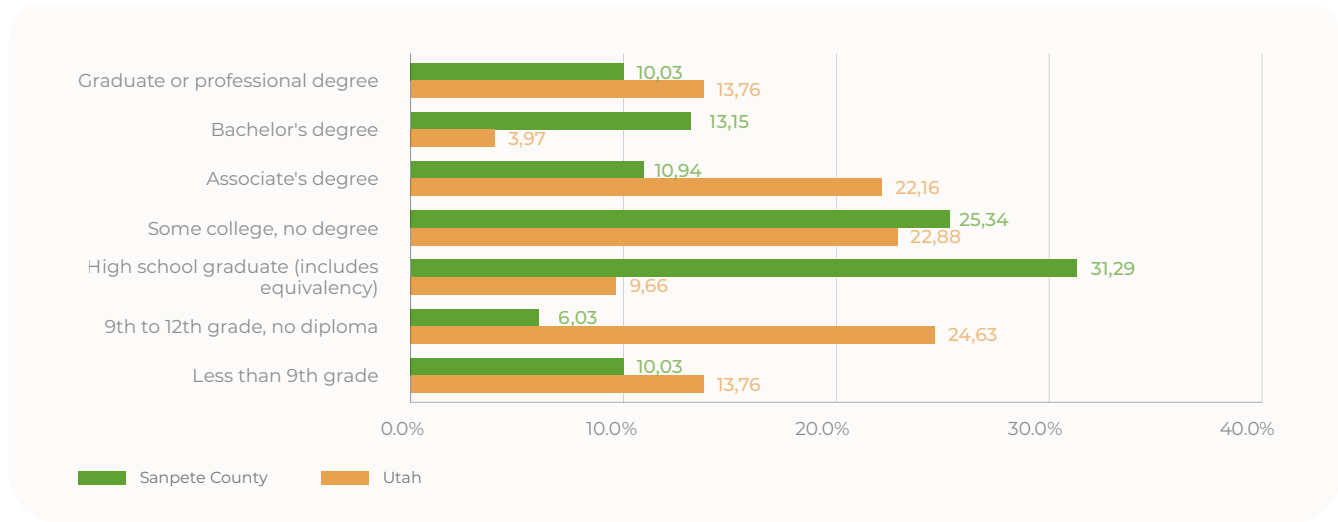


Figure 5: Educational Attainment. Source: ACS 2023 5-Year Estimates

Household Income

A reasonably even income distribution is observed across households in Sanpete County. In 2023, the median household income was \$67,459. Approximately 12.4% of households earn more than \$150,000 annually; about 29% earn more than \$100,000. On the other end of the earnings spectrum, about 13.9% of households in the county earn less than \$25,000 per year.

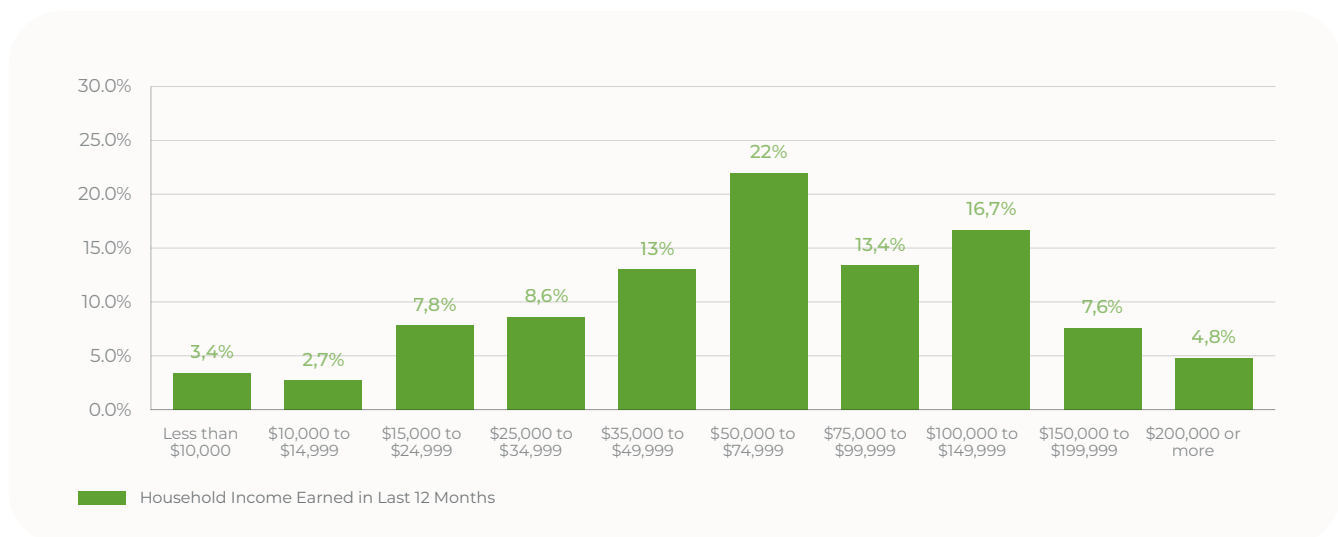


Figure 6: Household Income. Source: ACS 2023 5-Year Estimates

Poverty Rates

Poverty levels are set annually by the Census Bureau and vary depending on family size and composition. In 2023, about 15.3% of Sanpete County's population fell below the poverty line; this is about 3 percentage points higher than the poverty rate at the national level (12.4%). In Figure 7, poverty in the county is categorized by age group. The 18-34-year-old age group experienced the highest poverty rates in 2023 (23.7%). In the same year, about 20% of children under the age of 18 experienced poverty. Poverty rates taper as the age groups rise, and the population over the age of 65 years experienced poverty at the lowest rate (8.5%).

At the national level, smaller portions of the younger population (under the age of 35) are below the poverty level, while greater portions of the older population (over the age of 35) are below the poverty level. This could be due, in part, to the greater financial needs of large families, which are more common in Sanpete County than in the rest of the country.

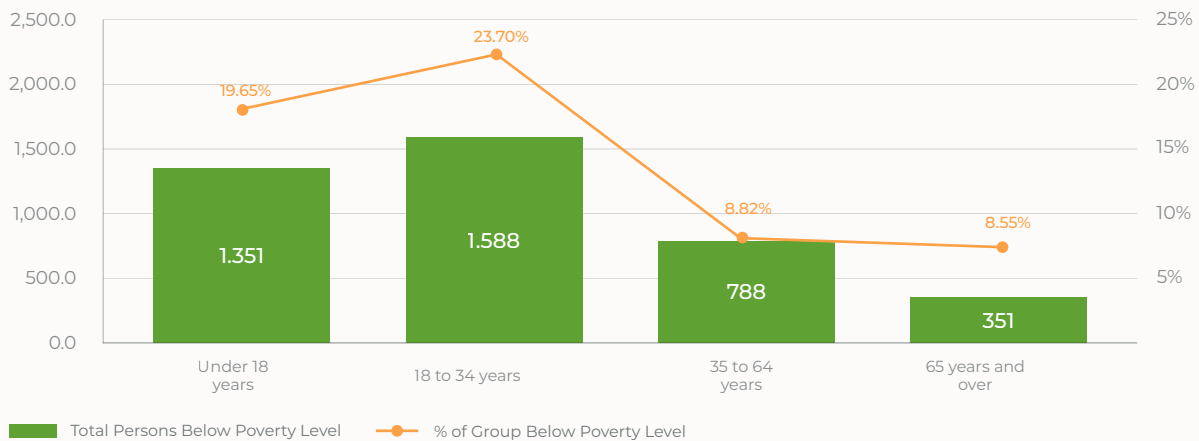


Figure 7: Poverty Rates. Source: ACS 2023 5-Year Estimates

Workforce & Industry

Labor Force & Unemployment

Over the last 10 years, the civilian labor force in Sanpete County has increased steadily. This civilian labor force includes all people in the county who are over the age of 16 years and are classified as either “employed” or “unemployed.” In other words, these individuals are either employed or actively seeking employment.



Between 2015 and 2024, the labor force increased from about 11,400 to about 13,900 workers, an increase of about 28.6%. Over the same period, the county's unemployment rates remained relatively stable. In 2015, the countywide unemployment rate was 4.0%; by 2025, it had fallen by 0.3 percentage points to 3.7%. A growing labor force and stable, low unemployment rates indicate a healthy, growing local economy.

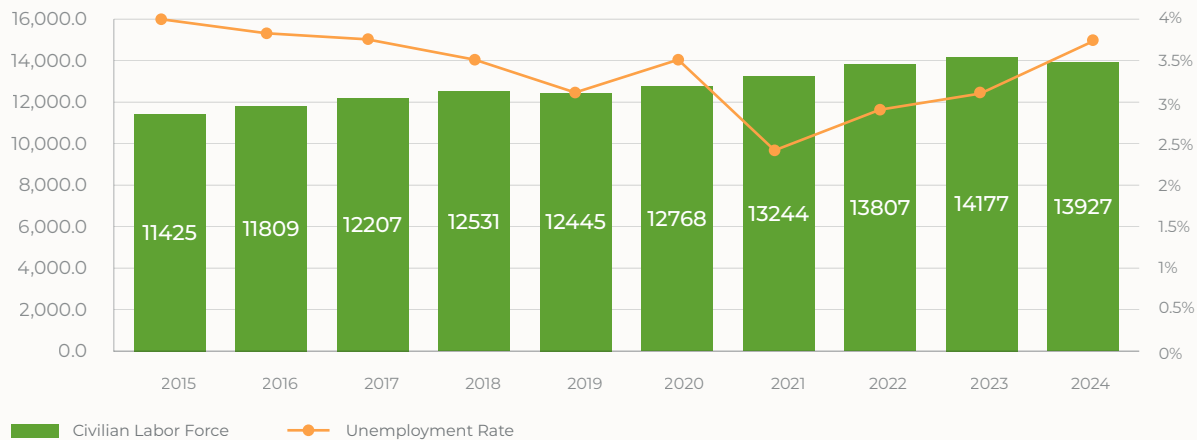


Figure 8: Labor Force & Unemployment. Source: Utah Department of Workforce Services, 2025

Top Industries by Employment

In this study, industries are categorized by 4-digit codes called North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) codes, and federal agencies use these categorizations to collect and analyze economic data. In 2024, an estimated 10,772 workers were employed in Sanpete County. In Figure 9, the top ten industries in Sanpete County are measured by total employment. The top four industries capture public organizations at the state and local levels. Local, public organizations employed about 1,850 workers in 2024. The “Education and Hospitals (Local Government)” industry is the largest in the county, employing about 1,260 people. This industry captures public schools and public health providers. State-level public organizations employ roughly 1,300 people in the county.

It is important to note that public sector industries, although they are some of the top employers in the county, only account for about 30% of the employment within the county. The remaining 70% of jobs are held in local, private industries. The top private sector industries include the “Restaurants and Other Eating Places,” “Animal Slaughtering and Processing,” and “Warehouse Clubs, Supercenters, and Other General Merchandise Retailers” industries, which collectively employ about 1,200 people within the county. The average annual earnings of workers vary significantly from industry to industry.

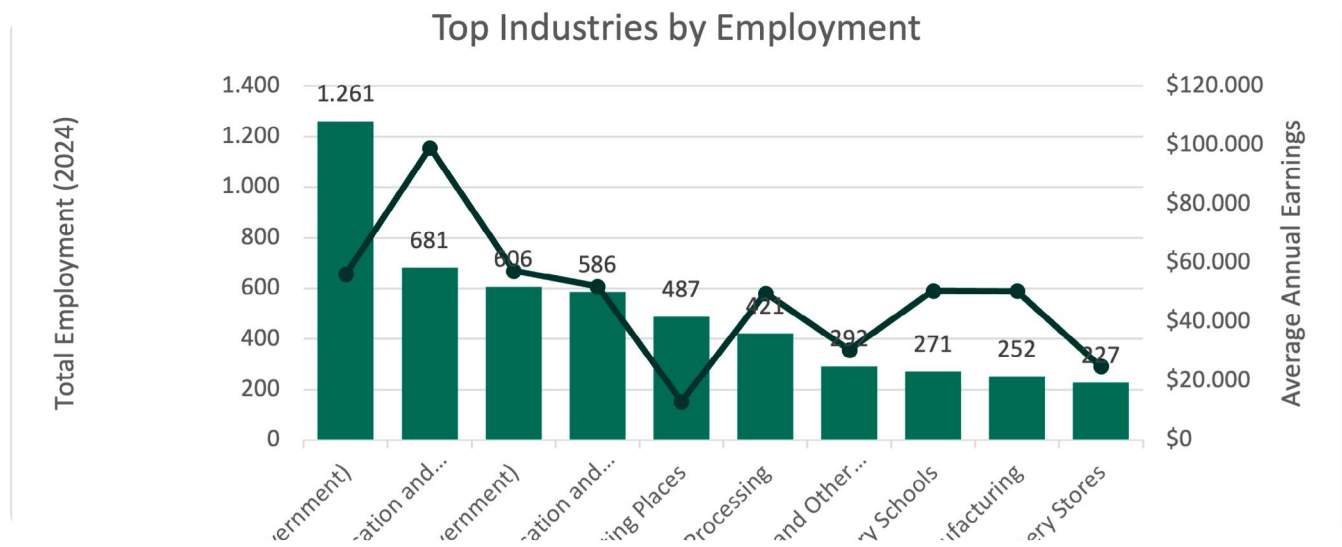


Figure 9: Top Industries by Employment. Source: Lightcast 2024.4

Top Industries by Projected Growth

The county's top four most prominent industries – all public sector industries – are expected to realize the most growth over the next ten years. Collectively, these industries are projected to add 643 new jobs between 2024 and 2034. The “Other Fabricated Metal Product Manufacturing” industry is the fastest-growing private industry in the county and is projected to add 88 new jobs by 2034. “Employment Services,” “Building Finishing Contractors,” and “Individual and Family Services” industries are the next-fastest growing and are together projected to add about 200 jobs within the county.

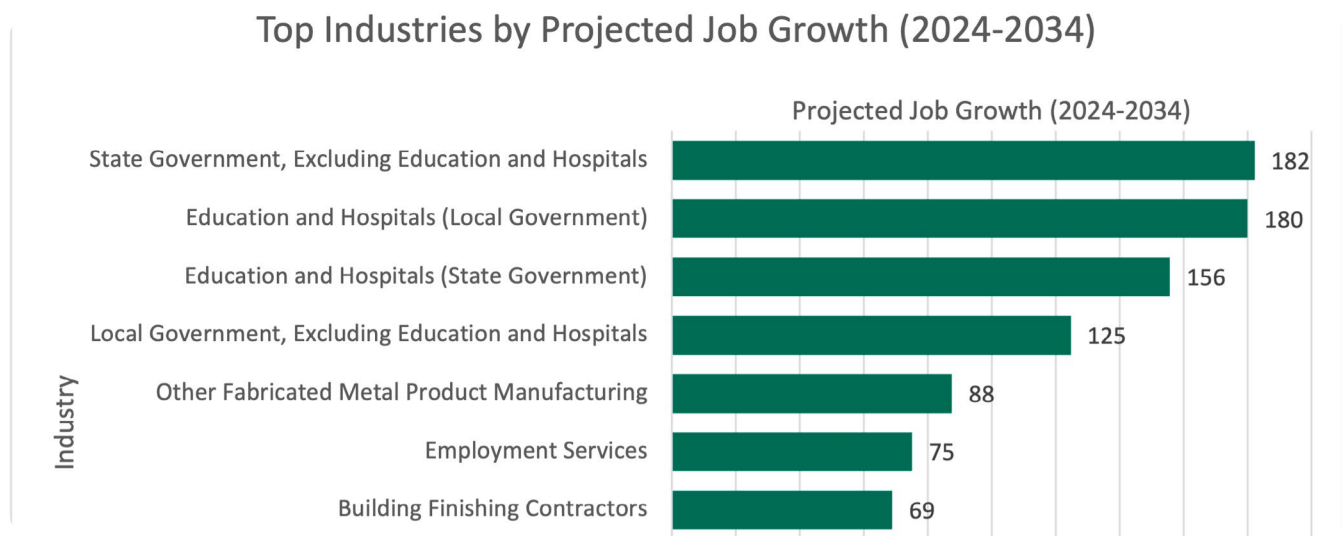


Figure 10: Top Industries by Projected Growth. Source: Lightcast 2024.4

Highly Concentrated Industries

Employment concentration measures the concentration of employment within an industry relative to comparable geographies throughout the country. An average score equals 1. If an industry has an employment concentration score of 1, its employment count equals the national average for other geographies of a comparable size. Highly concentrated industries can be more competitive than other industries since other areas of the region are likely to rely on them to meet their demand; therefore, these industries are often useful for earning revenue from beyond the county's borders.

The most highly concentrated industry in Sanpete County is the "Forest Nurseries and Gathering of Forest Products" industry, which has an employment concentration of nearly 107 times the nationwide average. Several manufacturing industries are highly concentrated in the county, with industries like "Audio and Video Equipment Manufacturing," "Motor Vehicle Body and Trailer Manufacturing," and "Other Fabricated Metal Product Manufacturing," being between 13 and 20 times more concentrated in the county than in other, comparable geographies.

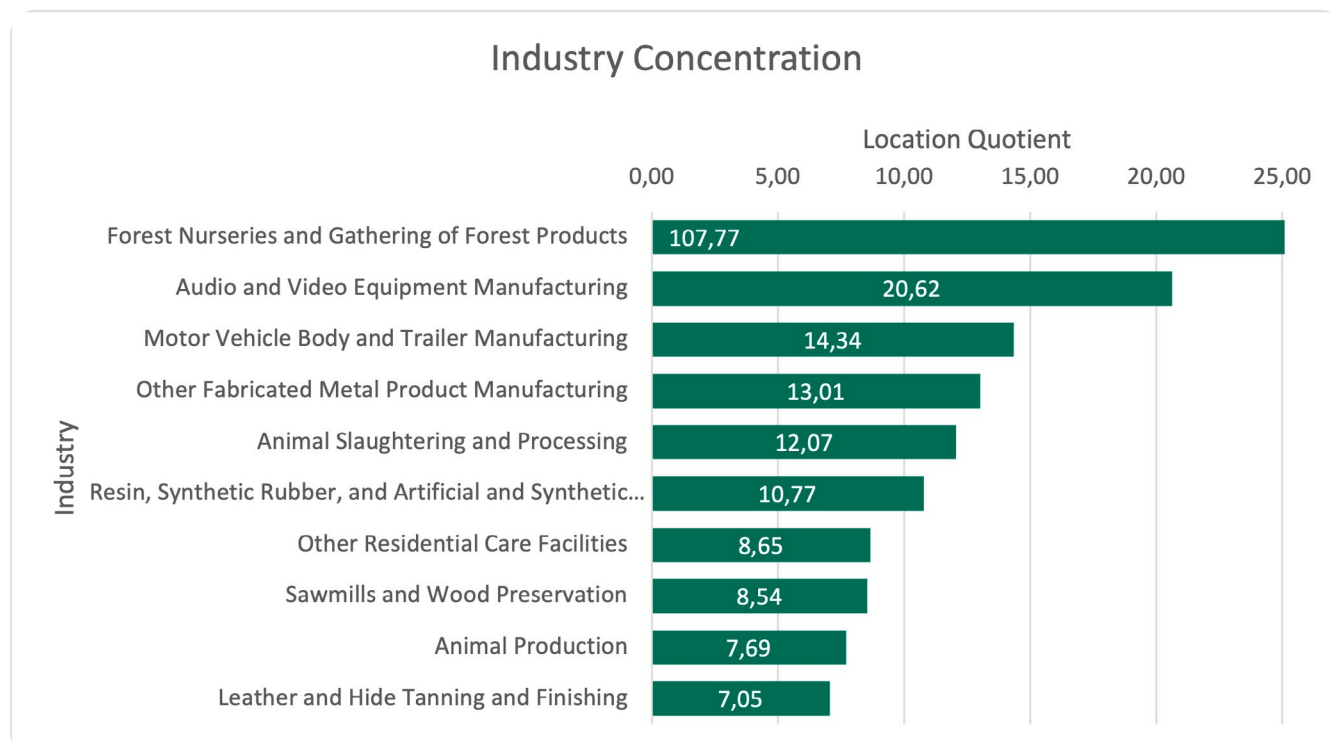


Figure 11: Highly Concentrated Industries. Source: Lightcast 2024.4

Top Industries by Gross Regional Product (GRP)

GRP measures the final market value of all goods and services produced in the region of study which, in this case, is Sanpete County. GRP is similar to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP); the only difference is that the former measures only industries within the county while the latter measures industries at the national level.

In Sanpete County, the “Animal Production” industry creates the most dollar value, with a GRP of more than \$129 million in 2023. Other high-value private industries in the county include “Wired and Wireless Telecommunications (except Satellite)” and “Animal Slaughtering and Processing,” which were evaluated as having GRPs of \$57 million and \$34 million, respectively, in 2023.

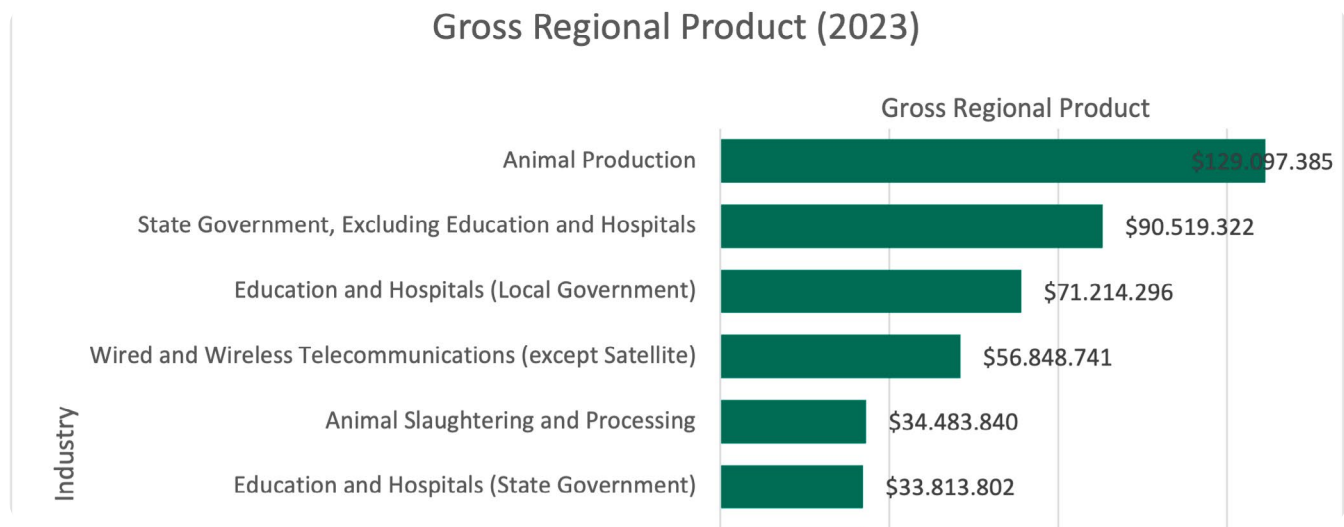


Figure 12: Gross Regional Product. Source: Lightcast 2024.

Top Companies by Employment

To supplement general industry data, it can be helpful to understand which specific companies are employing the most workers in the county. In Table 1, the top companies measured by average annual employment are listed. The largest employer is Snow College, which the Utah Department of Workforce Services estimates to employ between 1,000 and 1,999 workers. The State of Utah, followed by both school districts in the county, are the next highest-employing companies.

Rank	Company	Industry	Average Annual Employment
1	Snow College	Educational Services	1,000-1,999
2	State of Utah	State Government	500-999
3	South Sanpete School District	Educational Services	500-999
4	North Sanpete School District	Educational Services	250-499
5	Pitman Farms	Manufacturing	250-499
6	Wal-Mart	Warehouse Clubs/Supercenters	250-499
7	Gunnison Valley Hospital	Health Care and Social Assistance	100-249
8	Intermountain Health Care	Health Care	100-249
9	Christensen Arms	Manufacturing	100-249
10	ACT Aerospace	Manufacturing	100-249
11	Cotiviti	Finance and Insurance	100-249
12	Terrel's Foodtown	Retail Trade	100-249
13	Wasatch Academy	Educational Services	100-249
14	Sanpete County	Public Administration	100-249
15	Oxbow Academy	Educational Services	100-249
16	Central Utah Counseling	Public Administration	50-99
17	CentraCom	Information	50-99
18	Ephraim City	Public Administration	50-99
19	Maple Leaf Company	Wholesale Trade	50-99
20	CO Building Systems & Manufacturing	Manufacturing	100-249

Table 1: Top Companies in Sanpete County by Employment. Source: Utah Department of Workforce Services, 2023.

Top Occupations by Employment

Occupational data provides an alternative view of the local economy; while industry data describes businesses, occupational data is useful for understanding the workforce. Occupations are categorized by the federal standard, Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) codes.

In Figure 13, the top occupations in Sanpete County are ranked by total jobs. For additional context, the median annual earnings for each occupation are provided on the secondary axis and are measured by the line chart. The largest occupation in the county, measured by total jobs, is “Construction Trades Workers,” which employs nearly 600 workers. Workers in this occupation typically earn about \$44,000/year. The next largest occupation by total jobs is “Preschool, elementary, middle, secondary, and special education teachers” followed by “Material moving workers,” which together employ just over 1,000 workers in the county.

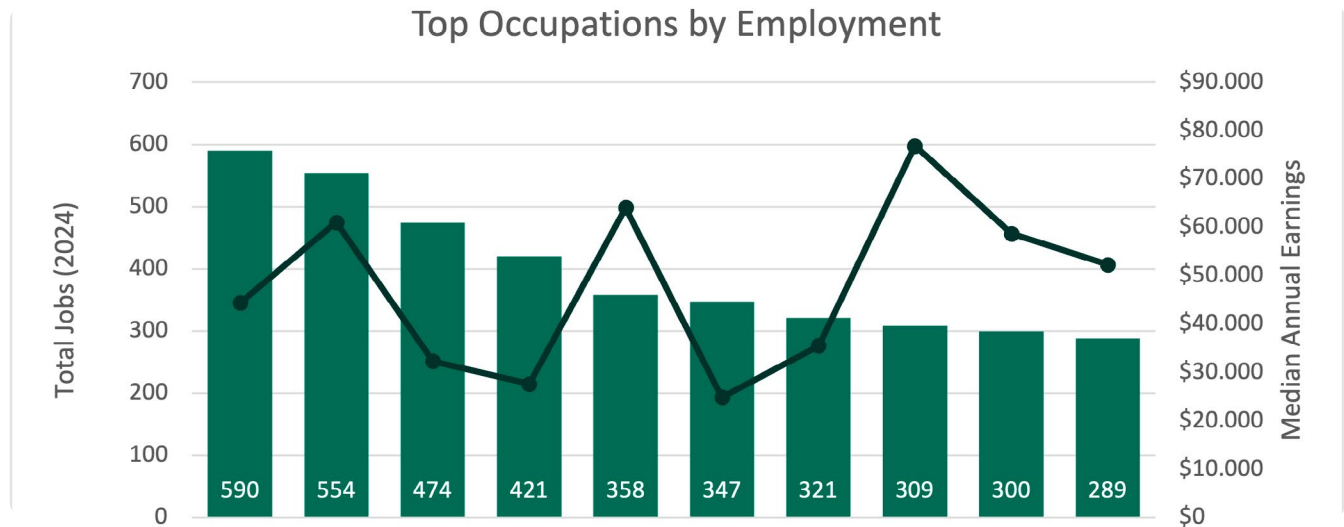


Figure 13: Top Occupations by Employment. Source: Lightcast 2024.4

Top Occupations by Projected Growth

Some of the largest occupations in the county are also those that are expected to realize the most job growth between 2024 and 2034. The “Construction Trades Workers” occupation is projected to increase by more than 150 jobs over the ten-year period, and the “Material Moving Workers” occupation is projected to increase by about 120 jobs. Various other occupations are expected to grow, including those in production, public service, and healthcare sectors.

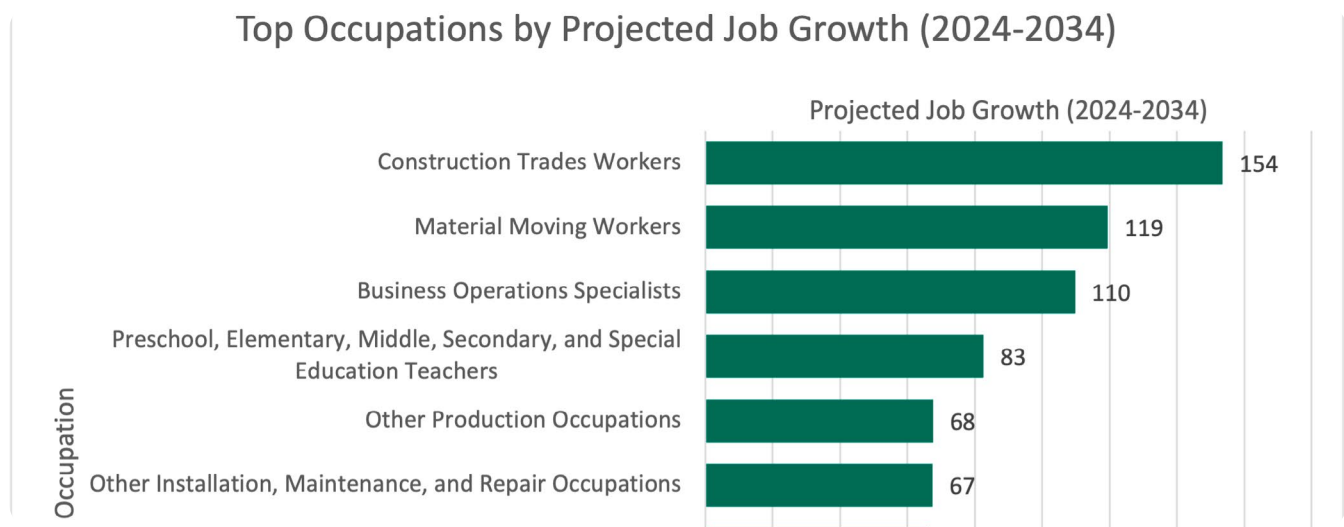


Figure 14: Top Occupations by Projected Growth. Source: Lightcast 2024.4

Highly Demanded Skills

To understand which skills are most highly demanded within a region, Lightcast collects and analyzes job posting data. In Figure 15, data from job postings made in Sanpete County between January 2024 and December 2024 have been provided. These data describe the number of times each skill is mentioned across all unique job postings within the time period.

The skills in highest demand by employers are “Physical and Inherent Abilities,” which are likely to be requirements for many of the county’s construction-related jobs. Media and Communications and “Health Care” experience are the next most highly demanded skills in the county, and they appeared 615 times in local job postings in 2024.

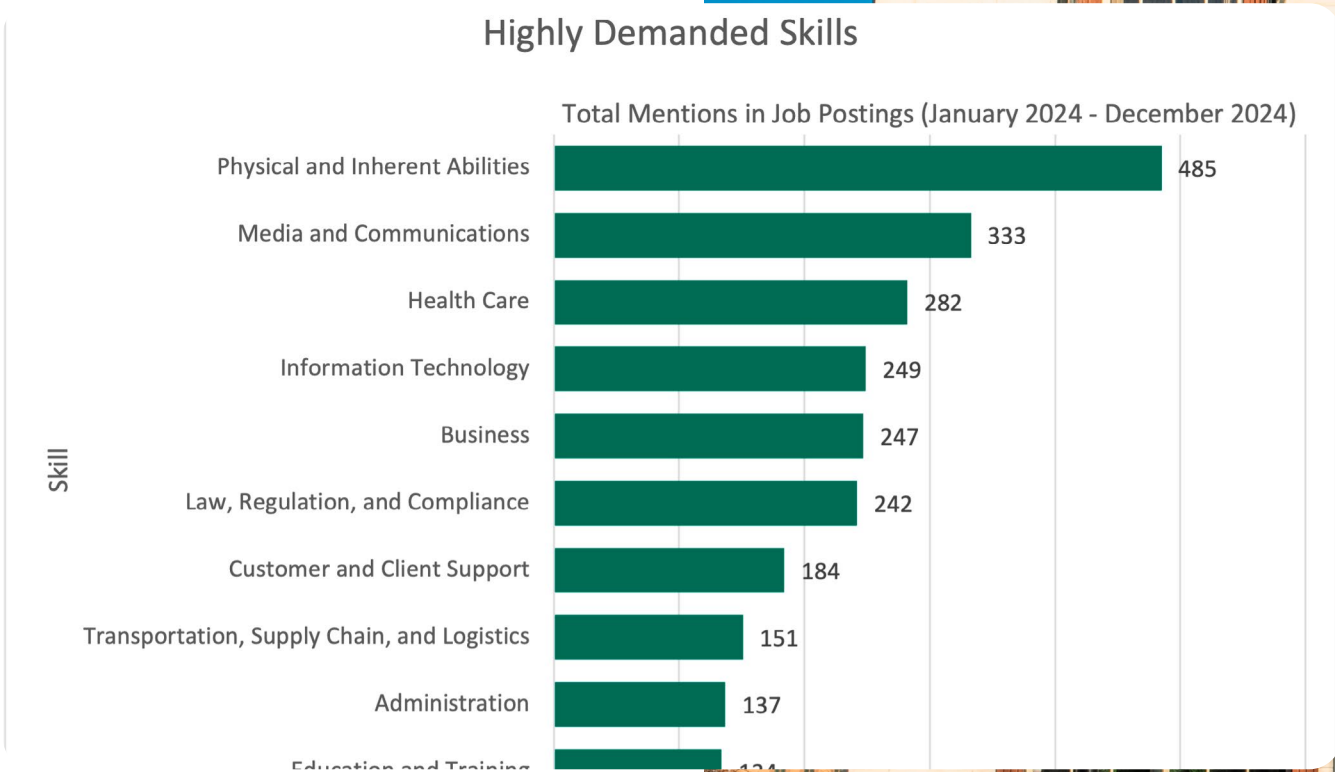


Figure 15: Highly Demanded Skills. Source: Lightcast 2024.4

Commuting Patterns

As can be seen in Table 2, the regional workforce is geographically mobile. Workers throughout the region have demonstrated that they are willing to tolerate relatively long commutes to reach their place of employment. In Sanpete County, approximately 5,160 people are estimated to leave the county on a regular basis for work; about 2,749 people are estimated to enter into the county for work. Roughly 5,109 people both live and work in the county.

These data illustrate that many more people leave the county for work than travel to it, which could indicate that the county has the workforce to support the expansion of the local business community. In addition, it is important to note that a greater share of Sanpete County residential workers is employed outside of the county, relative to other regional counties. If a greater number of attractive employment options existed within the county, a larger share of the workforce would likely opt to reduce their commute and work closer to home, thereby supporting the growth of the local economy.

County	Inflow	Outflow	Net Commuters	Residential Workers (RW)	% RW Employed Out-of-County
Sanpete County	2749	5160	-2411	5109	50.25%
Sevier County	3220	3941	-721	5470	41.88%
Wayne County	346	382	-36	669	36.35%
Piute County	127	336	-209	170	66.40%
Juab County	1641	2114	-473	3087	40.65%

Table 2: County Commuting Patterns. Source: Department of Workforce Services, 2024

In Table 3, commuting data for each occupation in Sanpete County is provided. As this data comes from a different source than those provided in the previous table, the figures are not perfectly aligned. Nevertheless, the key finding is the same: for most occupations, more workers leave the county to find work than come into it. While some occupations leak more workers into surrounding counties than others, it is clear that attracting employers across a variety of industries could help retain local workers in the county.

Occupation Description	2024 Net Commuters (Sanpete County)
Life, Physical, and Social Science Occupations	13
Farming, Fishing, and Forestry Occupations	4
Protective Service Occupations	0
Military-only occupations	0
Unclassified Occupation	0
Community and Social Service Occupations	-11
Legal Occupations	-14
Arts, Design, Entertainment, Sports, and Media Occupations	-17
Architecture and Engineering Occupations	-39
Personal Care and Service Occupations	-42
Educational Instruction and Library Occupations	-55
Healthcare Practitioners and Technical Occupations	-59
Installation, Maintenance, and Repair Occupations	-74

Building and Grounds Cleaning and Maintenance Occupations	-75
Healthcare Support Occupations	-105
Computer and Mathematical Occupations	-123
Production Occupations	-124
Business and Financial Operations Occupations	-216
Management Occupations	-257
Transportation and Material Moving Occupations	-278
Food Preparation and Serving Related Occupations	-292
Construction and Extraction Occupations	-318
Sales and Related Occupations	-325
Office and Administrative Support Occupations	-444

Table 3: Commuting Patterns by Occupation in Sanpete County. Source: Lightcast, 2024

Housing

Housing by Age

Many of the homes in Sanpete County are quite old, having been built before 1940. These homes make up more than a fifth of the overall housing stock. The impacts of an older housing stock can be varied. Older, historical homes can add lots of value to a community in terms of character and charm; however, older homes typically come with greater maintenance and upkeep costs, which can be a barrier to accessibility.

Excepting the share of homes built before 1940, the housing stock is fairly evenly distributed in terms of age. Many homes in the county (about 27%) were built in the 1980s; housing development rates have declined steadily in the decades since. Housing units built since 2020 account for only about 1.5% of the overall housing stock.

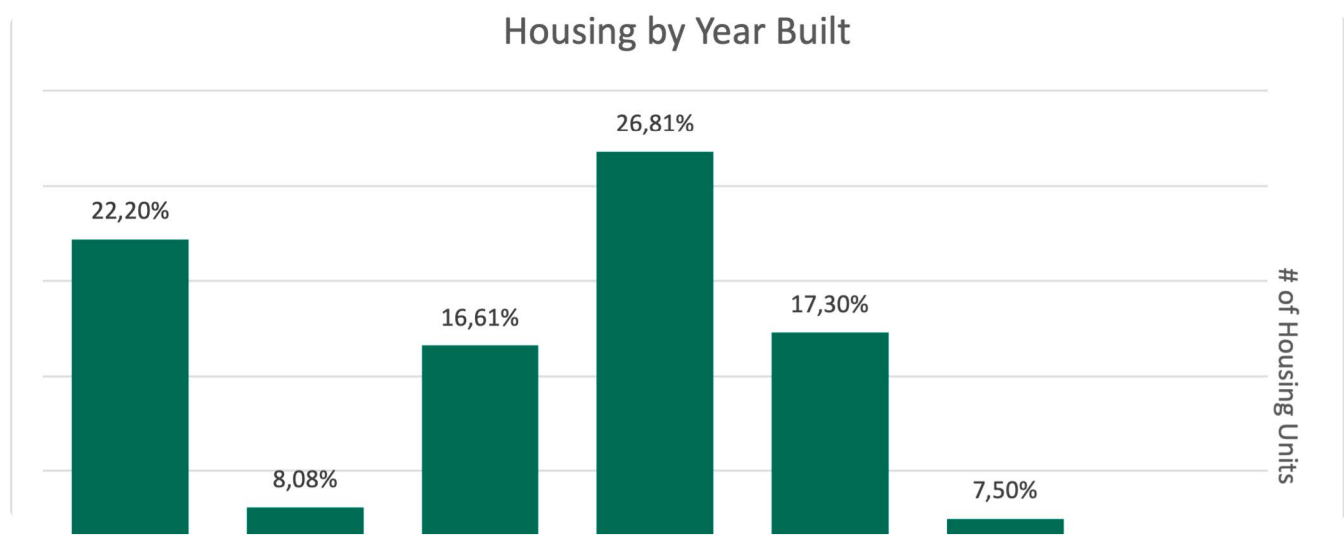


Figure 16: Housing by Year Built. Source: ACS 2023 5-Year Estimates

Housing by Type

Housing in Sanpete County is overwhelmingly single-family, detached housing, which is common for rural communities. Of the estimated 8,748 housing units in the county, more than 7,600 (or 87%) are single-family, detached homes. Mobile homes make up the next largest share of housing by type, followed by high-density multi-family apartments with at least 10 units in the structure.

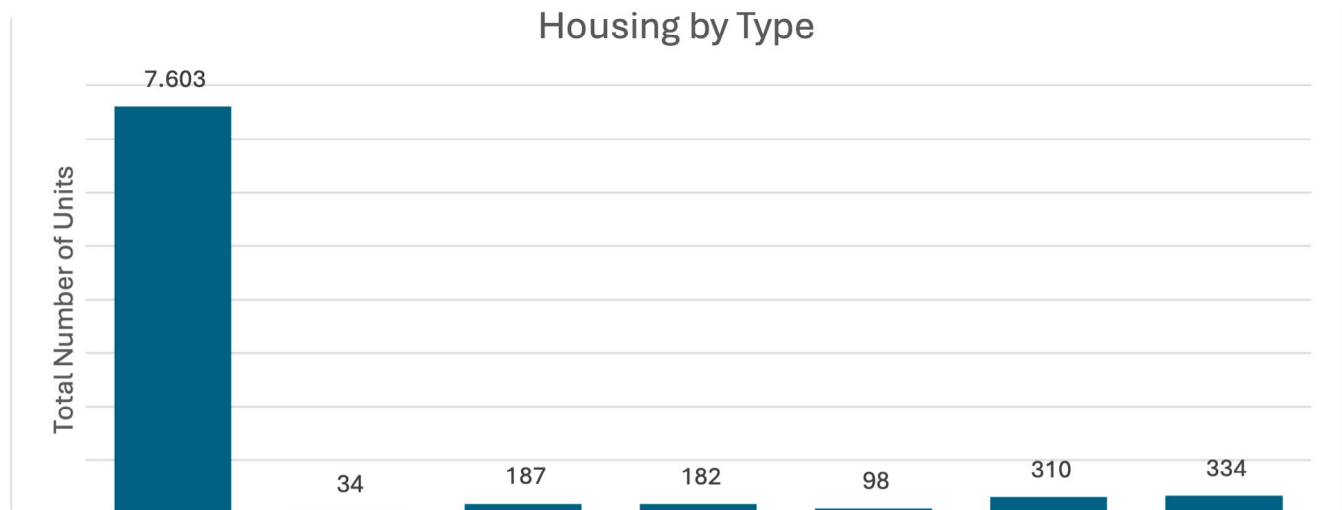


Figure 17: Housing by Type. Source: ACS 2023 5-Year Estimates

Housing Tenure

Just over three quarters of the occupied housing units in the county are owner-occupied; the remainder are occupied by renters. That nearly a quarter of units are renter-occupied indicates that many of the units occupied by renters are not high-density housing units, but single-family homes.

Housing Tenure

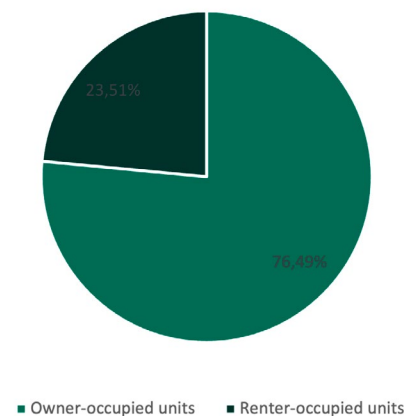


Figure 18: Housing Tenure. Source: ACS 2023 5-Year Estimates

Residential Vacancy

In Figure 19, residential vacancies in the county are categorized by housing type. Single-family, detached homes make up the largest share of vacant housing units; in 2023, it was estimated that there were nearly 1,400 vacant single-family homes in the county, which is equal to roughly 18% of the available stock. Mobile homes are much more likely to be vacant, however; in the same year, more than one third of mobile homes in the county (or about 118 units) were vacant.

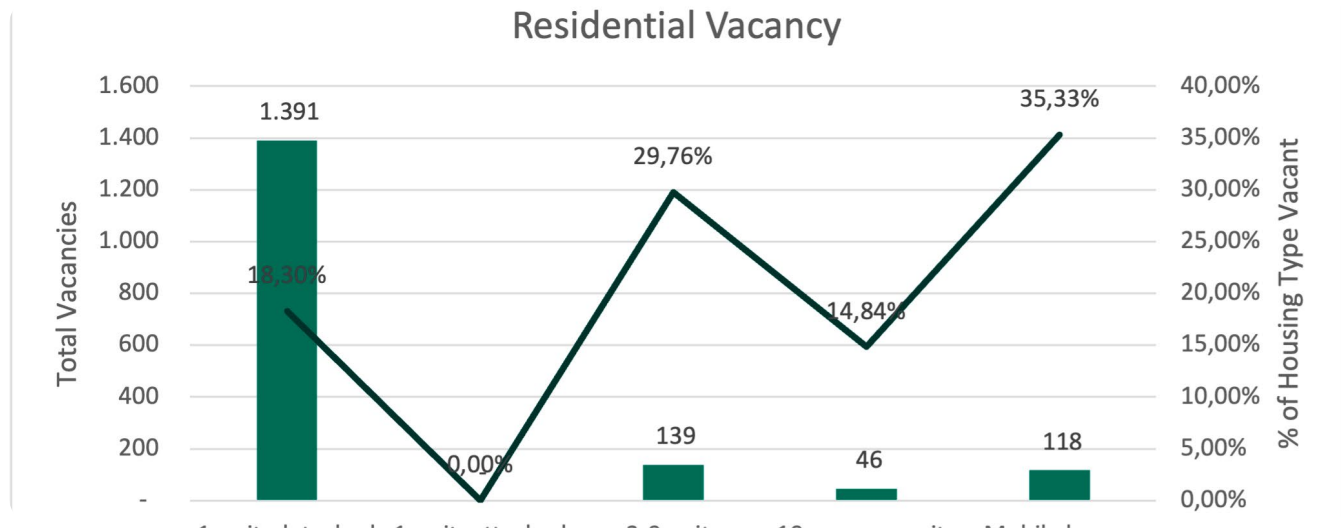


Figure 19: Residential Vacancy. Source: ACS 2023 5-Year Estimates

Housing Sale Price Trends

Over the last five years, sale prices of single-family homes have increased. In November 2019, the median sale price was \$191,705; in November 2024, that figure had increased to \$315,250, which is equal to an increase of 64.4% over the five-year period. The greatest increase in sale price can be seen to have occurred between 2019 and the end of 2021. In the years since, sale prices appear to have stabilized.

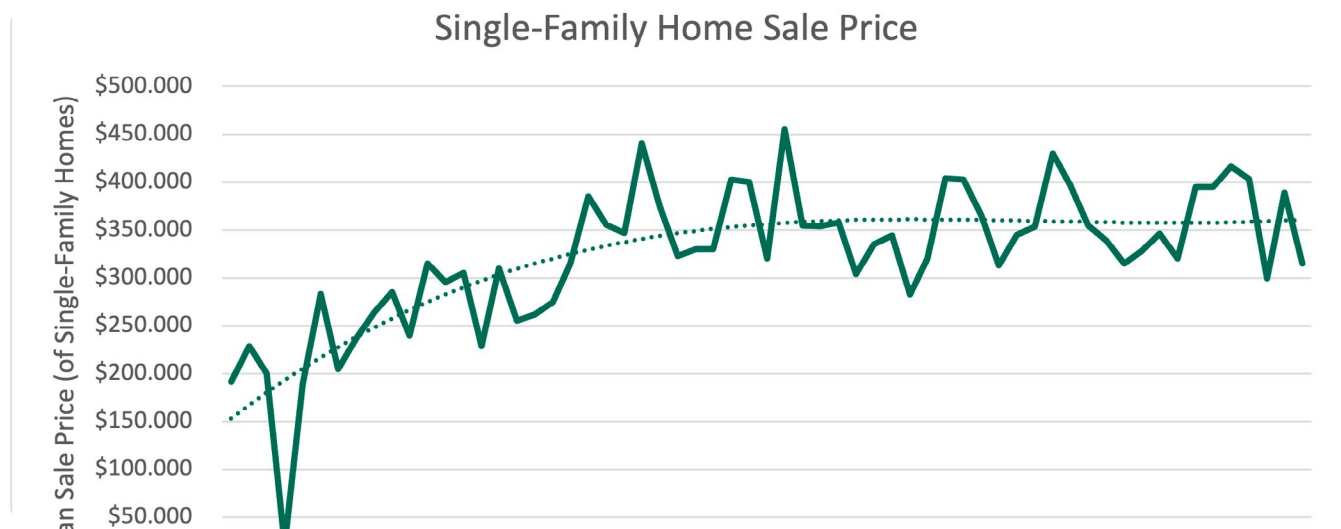


Figure 20: Single-Family Home Sale Price. Source: Redfin, 2024

Market Rent Trends

Between 2015 and 2021, market rent (for multi-family units) in Sanpete County increased steadily. Over the 7-year period, the average market asking rent per unit increased by \$136. Then, in 2022, a development which provided 35 new multi-family housing units was completed. The resultant effect on the average market asking rent can be seen in the graph; average rent levels fell by about \$140. In 2024, the average market asking rent for a multi-family unit in the county was estimated at \$1,121.

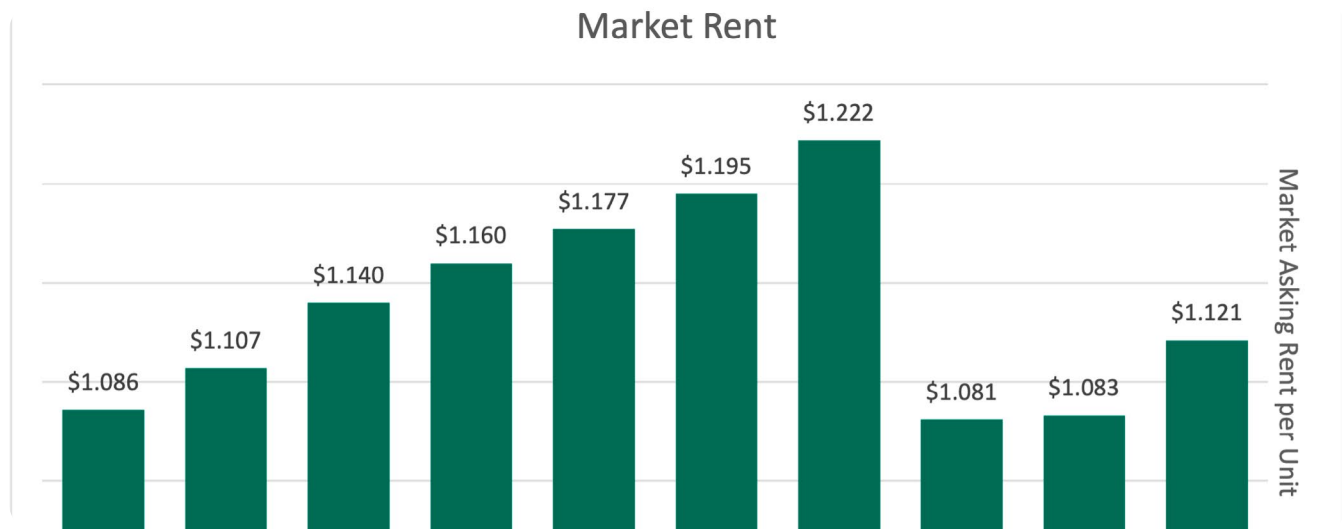


Figure 21: Market Rent. Source: CoStar, 2024

Housing Cost Burden

HUD defines a cost-burdened household as any household which spends more than 30% of its income on housing costs. An extremely cost-burdened household spends 50% or more of its income on housing costs. In 2023, approximately 20.8% of owner-occupied households in Sanpete County were cost-burdened; 12.6% spent between 30%-50% of their income on housing costs, and 8.2% spent more than 50% of their income on housing costs. Cost-burden rates in renter-occupied households are higher. In 2023, 37.1% of renter-occupied households were cost-burdened; about 18.7% were extremely cost-burdened.

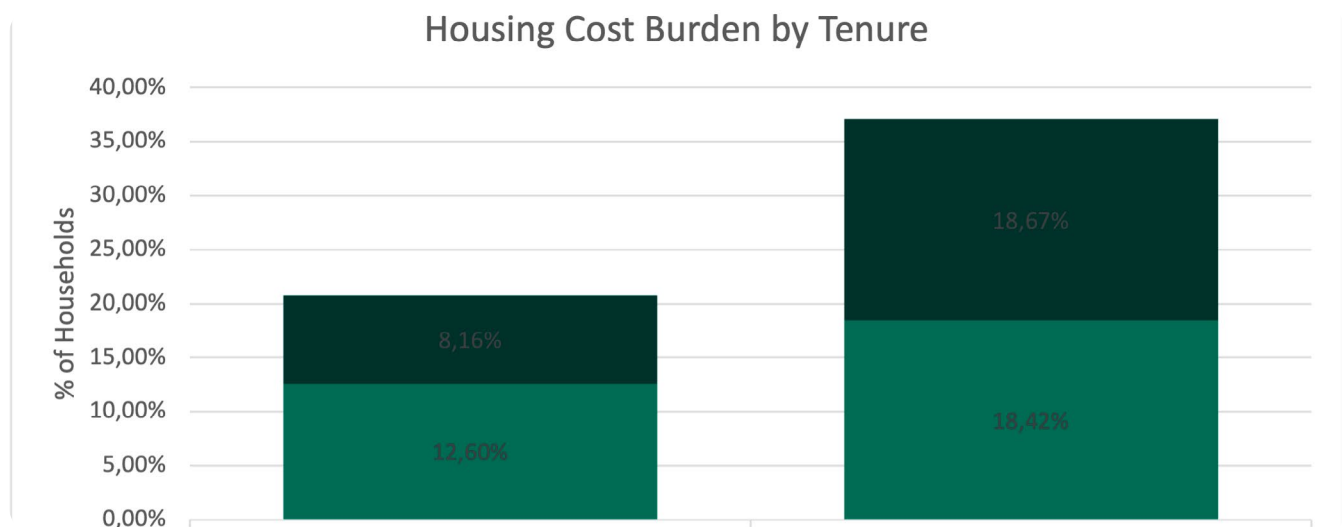


Figure 22: Housing Cost Burden by Tenure. Source: ACS 2023 5-Year Estimates
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Cost burden occurs at higher rates in low-earning households. Of the households that earn less than \$20,000 per year in Sanpete County, more than 83% are cost burdened. That rate falls as household income increases, and only around 4.8% of households earning more than \$75,000 per year are cost burdened.

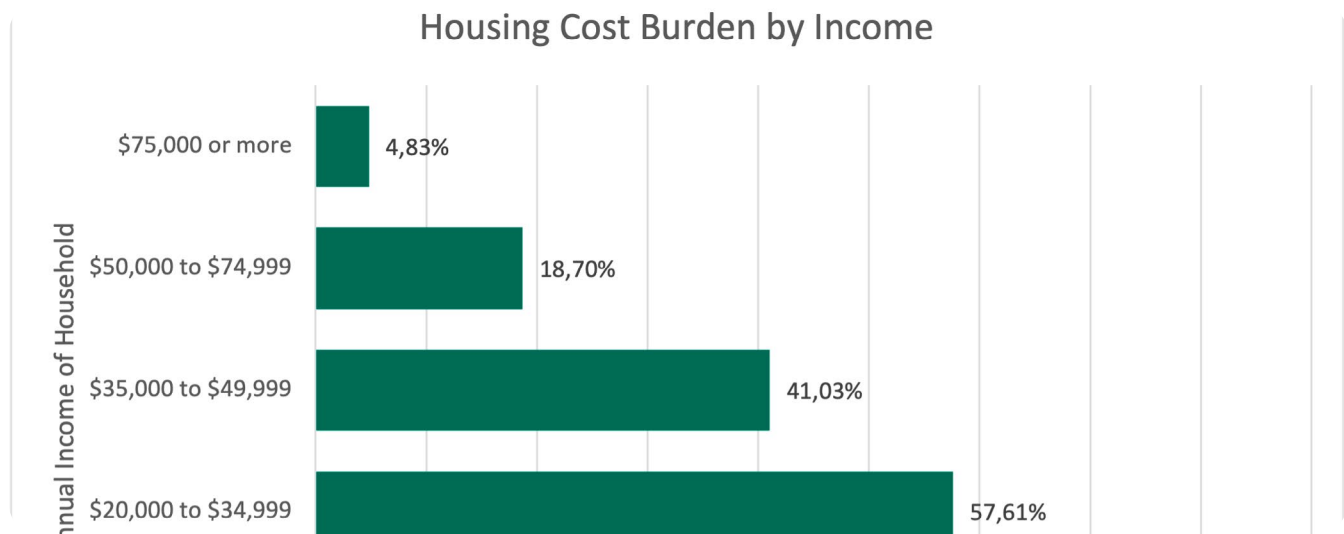


Figure 23: Housing Cost Burden by Income. Source: ACS 2023 5-Year Estimates

Competitive Analysis

Assessing Sanpete County's performance in relation to neighboring counties offers a nuanced perspective on its regional socio-economic position. Sanpete County and its neighbors enjoy scenic landscapes, outdoor recreational opportunities, and a shared cultural heritage of hard work and perseverance. Although less populated than counties along the Wasatch Front, Sanpete County serves an essential economic role in central Utah's light manufacturing, education, workforce, and commerce industries and boasts historic and cultural significance. Through demographic, economic, and workforce comparisons of Uintah County, Sevier County, and Carbon County, a more complete picture of the regional competitive landscape emerges.

Gross Regional Product and Population

Uintah County, Sanpete County, Sevier County, and Carbon County exhibit considerable variation in Gross Regional Product (GRP) and population projections. Of the assessed counties, Uintah County reports the highest gross regional product (GRP), reaching nearly \$2.5 billion in 2024, followed by Sevier County at \$1.33 billion, Carbon County at \$1.3 billion, and Sanpete County at \$1.2 billion. Despite a comparatively low GRP, Sanpete County's population is projected to reach 29,094 by 2028, remaining higher than both Sevier County and Carbon County, but lower than Uintah's population of 40,844.

County	2024 GRP	2028 Population Projection
Sanpete County	\$1,202,703,774	29,094
Carbon County	\$1,302,503,049	21,349
Sevier County	\$1,380,616,176	23,197
Uintah County	\$2,496,565,719	40,844

Table 4: Competitive Analysis: GRP & Population Projections. Source: Lightcast 2025.1

Industry Composition Across Uintah County, Sanpete County, Sevier County, and Carbon County

Often, agriculture and construction serve as core pillars of rural economies in the United States. From 2019 to 2024, these two sectors had pronounced differences among Uintah, Sanpete, Sevier, and Carbon Counties. In the agriculture sector, Uintah County’s workforce declined by 9%, and Sevier County experienced a 16% reduction, while those of Sanpete County and Carbon County increased by 17 and 18%, respectively. Construction also shows substantial contrasts: Uintah County climbed by 96% to 1,767 jobs, Sevier County and Sanpete County each expanded by roughly 30%, and Carbon County declined by 2%.

Similarly, manufacturing and arts-related sectors diverge across these four counties. Uintah County doubles its manufacturing base, whereas Sevier, Sanpete, and Carbon Counties grow at more moderate levels of 6%, 12%, and 33%. In arts, entertainment, and recreation, Uintah County advances by 88%, Sevier County by 59%, Sanpete County falls by 9%, and Carbon County rises by 13%.

Job Change by Industry (2019-2024)					
	Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing, and Hunting	Construction	Manufacturing	Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	Accommodation and Food Services
Sanpete County	17%	29%	12%	(9%)	11%
Carbon County	18%	(2%)	33%	13%	5%
Sevier County	(16%)	30%	6%	59%	19%
Uintah County	(9%)	96%	100%	88%	7%

Table 5: Competitive Analysis: Job Change by Industry. Source: Lightcast 2025.1

Labor Force and Participation Rates and Educational Attainment

Workforce participation trends across central Utah counties generally align with population patterns in the region, with modest variation in unemployment rates and commute times. As of 2024, Uintah County maintained the largest labor force at 15,902, followed by Sanpete (13,790), Sevier (10,709), and Carbon (8,475) Counties, respectively. Participation rates were closely aligned, with Sanpete County at 62.4%, Sevier County at 62.2%, and Carbon County at 52.8%. Unemployment remained relatively stable, at 4.5% in Sanpete County and 4.2% in Sevier County. Commuting times, however, revealed more distinct

differences. Sanpete County's average commute of 22 minutes exceeded Sevier County (17.1 minutes) and Carbon County (17.4 minutes), alluding to Sanpete County's aforementioned outbound labor force. When taken collectively, these figures suggest that Sanpete County possesses a comparatively more active workforce, but many residents commute to industry centers of surrounding counties.

Educational attainment levels in the same counties shed further light on workforce capacity. Sanpete County records 22.4% of adults holding a bachelor's degree or higher, a figure that places it above Uintah County (18.1%) and Carbon County (16.8%) and just shy of Sevier County's 23.9%. This relatively educated labor pool, in combination with Sanpete County's higher labor force participation rate, indicates a workforce potentially suited for mid-level professional or technical roles. However, given the county's more pronounced commuting times, much of this talent may seek employment outside of Sanpete County unless new local opportunities emerge at compensation levels that compete with those in adjacent counties.

County	Labor Force	Labor Force Participation Rate	% of Population with bachelor's degree
Sanpete County	13,790	62.4%	22.4%
Carbon County	8,475	52.8%	16.8%
Sevier County	10,709	62.2%	23.9%
Uintah County	15,902	56.4%	18.1%

Table 6: Competitive Analysis: Labor Force, Participation Rate, & Educational Attainment. Source: Lightcast 2025.1



Cost of Living, Earning, and Median Household Income

Cost-of-living index (COLI) indicators across the central counties reflect the diverse economic landscape formed by degrees of affordability, wage competition, and median household earnings. Uintah County is the most affordable, with a COLI of 94.6, indicating that residents spend less, on average, on essentials compared to neighboring counties. Sanpete County follows with a moderate COLI of 97.1, while Sevier County and Carbon County are slightly more expensive, both hovering just above 100. But affordability, when taken alone, does not capture the full economic picture, what people earn is of equal importance. In Uintah County, for example, the average annual earnings are \$64,778, giving workers more income to help balance the counties higher living expenses. Sevier County and Sanpete County, with average earnings of \$54,997 and \$52,093 (respectively), provide slightly less earning power. When viewed alongside the cost of living, these income differences can influence how people think about where they work and live.

County	Cost-of-Living Index	Average Annual Earnings
Sanpete County	97.1	\$52,093
Carbon County	100.1	\$58,313
Sevier County	100.6	\$54,997
Uintah County	94.6	\$64,778

Table 7: Competitive Analysis: COL Index & Average Annual Earnings. Source: Lightcast 2025.1

Summary of Stakeholder Engagement

In order to collect valuable input from local stakeholders, four virtual focus groups were conducted in March 2025. Members of local government, industry leaders, and political representatives convened to discuss the current condition of Sanpete County's economy and conceptualize strategies for future development. Below is a consolidated list of key findings from the four focus groups. These findings, along with the results of the quantitative data analysis, have been used to inform the strategic framework provided in the final section of the report.

Assets

When asked to discuss the community's greatest assets, stakeholders identified the following.

CULTURAL HERITAGE & SENSE OF COMMUNITY

- » A rural charm characterizes many communities in the county, which helps retain and attract residents.
- » A new LDS temple can be leveraged to continue to attract permanent residents and tourists to the county.
- » Unique attractions, such as the Track-89 Caboose Village and Cleone Peterson Eccles Equestrian Center in Mount Pleasant, or the Mormon Pioneer National Heritage Area in Ephraim, draw visitors to the region.
- » The Sanpete County Chamber of Commerce is working to strengthen the local businesses network and connect members to support resources.

EDUCATIONAL & TRAINING RESOURCES

- » Snow College provides a variety of training programs and credentials to a local workforce, and many talented individuals are attracted to the county for their offerings. Snow College is expanding their academic programming and is likely to continue to attract new people to the county.
- » Both public school districts provide high-quality education to the county's youth.
- » The Wasatch Academy, in Mount Pleasant, is a valuable asset for families interested in preparatory boarding school.

INFRASTRUCTURE

- » Some parts of the county have expanded their infrastructure to support a variety of residential and commercial developments. In Ephraim, expanded well and sewer systems, as well as a newly developed gas-powered generator, will support growth into the future.
- » Two airports are located in the county: Manti-Ephraim Airport and Salina-Gunnison Airport. While both are relatively low-traffic at present, opportunities exist to expand their operations.
- » Because of their rural location, many cities in the county have plenty of land to develop for residential, commercial, or industrial purposes.

EXISTING & EMERGING INDUSTRY

- » The agriculture industry has long been a staple in Sanpete County and continues to be one of the most significant economic drivers in the region.
- » Industrial parks in Gunnison and Mount Pleasant host manufacturing-related businesses and have the capacity to support additional operations.
- » Intermountain Healthcare is developing a 35-acre site in Ephraim, which will provide skilled jobs and expand local access to healthcare.
- » The Central Utah Correctional Facility is located in the county and provides many stable jobs.
- » Tourism is on the rise in Sanpete County; hotel and restaurant tax revenues are increasing, indicating continued demand for visitor services.

RECREATION & NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

- » Many parks, trail systems, and camping sites provide plenty of recreational options for residents and visitors alike.
- » The Sevier River, Sanpete River, and the San Pitch Mountains are attractive natural assets.

Challenges

When asked to discuss some of the biggest challenges faced in local economic development, stakeholders identified the following.

AVERSION TO GROWTH

- » Many community members prefer to limit the growth of the county or the cities within it; therefore, it can be difficult to capitalize on new development opportunities.
- » Some developments are difficult to advance because of inefficient partnerships. Land around the Salina-Gunnison Airport, for example, could be developed further, but Sanpete County and Sevier County have experienced challenges in working to advance those developments in the past.

INSUFFICIENT HOUSING OPTIONS

- » While some recent developments have helped to alleviate the issue, there remains high demand for affordable, workforce, and transitional housing.
- » Many developments have been approved throughout the county but have not yet started.
- » A strong argument can be made for higher-density housing in some of the cities, especially because more localized development reduces the burden placed on water infrastructure. Many residents, however, are opposed to high-density housing and prefer more sprawling developments.

LACK OF TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURE

- » The lack of major highway access in the county makes it difficult to attract businesses that would rely upon such access for distribution. In addition, low traffic through the county often means low business visibility, which can be undesirable.
- » Several stakeholders expressed an interest in developing a rail line throughout the county. Many local producers – such as those in the agriculture industry – could benefit from rail access.

LIMITED CAPACITY

- » Few full-time staff are employed in local government offices, which means they must be selective about the projects they support, and project timelines are often extended or delayed.
- » Low operating budgets can make it difficult to advance certain economic development projects.
- » Licensing and permitting processes can be slow, which sometimes discourages prospective developers.

WORKFORCE BARRIERS

- » Relatively low educational attainment levels might indicate that a skilled workforce is lacking in the county, which can deter prospective businesses.
- » As the population ages, it is becoming increasingly difficult to find skilled workers in some industries.
- » Much of the business relies upon an immigrant workforce, and the current political environment makes the future of that workforce uncertain.
- » The county struggles with talent retention. Much of the younger workforce – with or without a college education – leaves the county to seek employment elsewhere.

STRUGGLING BUSINESS ENVIRONMENT

- » Commercial vacancy rates in downtown areas are high.
- » Owners of commercial buildings often set high lease prices, which can be a barrier for prospective tenants.
- » Some agriculture operations are struggling with water-related challenges; some of the local farmland can no longer be cultivated because of an inability to properly irrigate.

Industry Opportunities

After considering Sanpete County's greatest assets and acknowledging the challenges faced in developing the local economy, stakeholders were asked to identify industries perceived to have high potential in the county. The following industries were identified:

Agriculture	Tourism & Recreation	Other
• Crop production • Animal production • Value-added agriculture • Biosciences • Agricultural distribution • Meat processing	• Outdoor recreation • Hotel and accommodation • Retail • ATV and motorcycle servicing • Sports recreation	• Long-term storage • Light manufacturing



03

SWOT Analysis

SWOT

Strengths

Sense of Community

Sanpete County is composed of numerous small, close-knit communities that collectively shape the county's distinct identity. Each town boasts its own history, along with a variety of amenities, including restaurants, shops, museums, and recreational facilities, making it an attractive place to live or visit. The county's rich cultural heritage, developed over several generations, continues to serve as a draw for new residents and businesses. The unique qualities of these communities contribute to the county's enduring appeal and play a vital role in its economic and social fabric.

Growing Population

Unlike many rural communities that are experiencing population decline, Sanpete County is projected to see population growth in the coming years. This growth presents significant opportunities for various economic development initiatives. A growing population typically leads to an expanding workforce, which can enhance efforts to attract businesses and foster industry development. Furthermore, a larger population provides a broader base to support local businesses. The resulting increase in economic activity can bolster local tax revenues, generating additional funding for community developments that further benefit residents.

Established Agriculture and Manufacturing Industries

Sanpete County is home to well-established agriculture and manufacturing industries, both of which serve as a strong foundation for future industry diversification efforts. These sectors are highly concentrated within the county and contribute significantly to their overall economic output. Due to their stability and specialization, Sanpete County's agricultural and manufacturing businesses are well-positioned to meet demand from regional markets, thereby generating revenue from outside the county. This inflow of external capital can be leveraged to support broader economic development initiatives. As the county formulates strategies for industry growth, it will be essential to engage existing businesses and capitalize on their expertise, infrastructure, and resources to facilitate and sustain new economic opportunities. Education and Workforce Training Assets.

Sanpete County benefits from a strong network of educational institutions that actively support workforce development and job readiness across all age groups. Foundational efforts begin in the K–12 system, with both the North and South Sanpete School Districts providing high-quality primary and secondary education. The Wasatch Academy, a private preparatory boarding school for students in grades 8–12, offers expanded academic opportunities and early exposure to diverse career pathways.

At the post-secondary level, Snow College plays a critical role in preparing the county’s workforce to meet evolving industry demands. Offering a range of bachelor’s degrees, associate degrees, and certificate programs, the college has continually adapted its curriculum to align with local, regional, and national labor market needs. Program offerings now include construction management, agribusiness, industrial mechanics, machine tool technology, industrial manufacturing technology, machining technology, networking and cybersecurity, elementary education, and others—providing students with skills tailored to Sanpete County’s economic base in manufacturing, agriculture, healthcare, and education.

In addition to academic programming, Snow College has developed partnerships with local employers and expanded its pathways to bachelor’s degrees, enhancing flexibility and long-term career prospects for students. Career pathway integration across programs helps guide students from training to employment, ensuring alignment with workforce needs. The college recently introduced a software engineering degree in response to growing demand in Utah’s technology sector, further demonstrating its commitment to regional economic development. Through continued alignment with labor market trends, Snow College strengthens the county’s workforce capacity and enhances its appeal to prospective employers and investors.

Industry-Supportive Infrastructure

Several existing facilities can be used to support business attraction in the county. Industry parks in Gunnison and Mount Pleasant can provide the space and amenities needed to attract businesses in a variety of industries. In addition, there are two airports within the county that increase its regional connectivity and provide easier access to markets around the country. These existing assets, among others, indicate that Sanpete County has the capacity to support business growth.

High Certificate Completion Rate

Sanpete County is home to a growing number of workers who have completed certificate programs—such as those offered through Snow College—that equip them with the technical skills necessary to succeed in a range of industries. As demand for skilled labor continues to rise, workers with specialized training are becoming increasingly valuable to the regional economy. Many of these individuals reside within the county and represent a critical asset in efforts to expand the local business base. Their expertise and readiness to meet industry needs position them as key contributors to Sanpete County’s ongoing economic development.

Natural Environment

Sanpete County’s natural environment is a defining feature of its identity and a vital driver of local economic development. The county is characterized by an abundance of natural assets, including the Wasatch Plateau, the Manti-La Sal National Forest, numerous rivers and reservoirs, and vast expanses of open land and fertile farmland. These features provide a strong foundation for several key sectors of the local economy.

Outdoor recreation is a growing contributor to the county's economic activity, with opportunities for hiking, fishing, hunting, camping, mountain biking, ATV riding, and snowmobiling drawing tourists from across the region. Seasonal events and access to public lands further enhance the area's appeal to visitors seeking authentic rural and nature-based experiences. Supporting infrastructure such as trail systems, campgrounds, and scenic byways can help position Sanpete County as a premier outdoor recreation destination.

The county's agricultural sector continues to benefit from its extensive farmland and natural resources, sustaining a diverse range of farming and ranching operations. In addition to supporting traditional agriculture, the county's land and climate conditions offer potential for innovation in agribusiness, value-added production, and agricultural tourism.

Furthermore, Sanpete County's wide-open landscapes and favorable solar and wind conditions present opportunities for renewable energy development. With growing demand for sustainable energy sources, the county is well-positioned to explore utility-scale solar or wind installations that could generate new revenue streams, attract clean energy investments, and create local jobs.



SWOT

Weaknesses

Large Out-Commuting Workforce

More than half of Sanpete County's resident workforce is employed outside of the county. Construction and mining jobs in Sevier County and sales, technology, and financial service jobs in Utah County represent a large portion of commuter employment. Commuters often spend substantial portions of their earnings on food and transportation, benefiting businesses outside of Sanpete County and reducing potential local business earnings and city tax revenue.

A significant portion of Sanpete County’s resident workforce—more than half—is employed outside the county, resulting in considerable economic leakage. Many residents commute to neighboring counties for employment, particularly to Sevier County for construction and mining jobs, and to Utah County for positions in sales, technology, and financial services. While these employment opportunities provide stable incomes for Sanpete County residents, the daily outflow of workers reduces the economic benefits retained within the county.

Commuters often spend a substantial share of their earnings on goods and services—such as fuel, meals, and retail purchases—outside the county, which diverts consumer spending away from local businesses. This pattern limits potential revenue growth for Sanpete County’s commercial sector and constrains municipal tax collections that could otherwise be reinvested into infrastructure, public services, and community development initiatives.

Addressing this issue through targeted business attraction, workforce development, and quality-of-life investments could create more in-county employment opportunities and reduce the need for long-distance commuting. Retaining more workers and their spending locally would strengthen the county’s economic base and enhance long-term fiscal sustainability.

Aging Housing Stock

Sanpete County’s residential housing inventory is notably aged, with over 20% of homes constructed prior to 1940. As this older housing stock continues to age, many structures will require significant repairs or upgrades to comply with contemporary safety, accessibility, and energy efficiency standards. The financial burden associated with these improvements can be substantial for homeowners, particularly those with limited incomes. Moreover, the condition of aging homes may discourage prospective residents from relocating to the county, especially those seeking modern or move-in-ready housing options.

Older homes are also more likely to have outdated insulation, heating systems, and plumbing, which contribute to higher utility costs for occupants and further compound the total cost of living. These challenges can affect both housing affordability and long-term livability for existing residents.

Housing Costs and Stock

While Sanpete County continues offering more affordable housing than neighboring counties, the demand for affordable, workforce, and transitional housing remains unmet. This persistent gap affects both current residents and prospective workers, especially as the county experiences modest population growth and industry expansion. Although several communities have made progress by leveraging public-private partnerships, acquiring land for future development, and utilizing a mix of state and federal funding mechanisms, housing accessibility challenges persist.

Community resistance to higher-density housing options has posed an additional barrier to meeting local demand. While such developments could alleviate housing cost burdens for many residents – particularly low- and moderate-income households – concerns about community character, infrastructure capacity, and property values have limited their acceptance. Furthermore, although several housing projects have received approval, many remain unbuilt due to delays in financing, permitting, or construction.

The introduction of industrial parks in Gunnison and Mount Pleasant, combined with sustained demand for temporary migrant workers, places further pressure on the housing market, particularly for rental and transitional units. A lack of sufficient housing options can hinder workforce retention and business attraction, ultimately constraining broader economic growth.

Workforce Challenges: Educational Attainment, Talent Retention, & an Aging Population

Sanpete County possesses a strong vocational heritage and a dedicated labor force; however, it faces several structural challenges common to rural communities, including lower rates of bachelor's and advanced degree attainment, the outmigration of skilled professionals, and a steadily aging population. These factors collectively pose a risk to the county's long-term economic competitiveness and workforce sustainability.

A relatively small percentage of residents hold four-year degrees, which can limit the county's ability to attract businesses requiring a highly educated workforce, particularly in sectors such as professional services, information technology, and advanced manufacturing. In addition, many residents who obtain formal education or technical training often pursue employment opportunities outside the county, leading to a "brain drain" that further reduces the availability of qualified local talent.

This issue is compounded by demographic shifts, including an increasing proportion of retirees within the population. The loss of experienced workers, particularly in labor-intensive sectors such as agriculture and manufacturing, has widened existing workforce gaps and heightened the urgency for strategic interventions.

SWOT

Opportunities

Growth Projected in High-Potential Industries

Over the next decade, several high-value industries—namely manufacturing, healthcare, and construction—are anticipated to experience significant growth within the county. These sectors possess the dual capacity to address local demand for goods and services while contributing to broader regional economic activity. Strategic support for the expansion of these industries will enable the county to enhance local employment opportunities, broaden its tax base, and strengthen the regional business ecosystem. This, in turn, will improve the county's competitiveness and attractiveness to prospective investors and enterprises.

Existing Commercial & Residential Space

Quantitative data and stakeholder input reveal a substantial inventory of underutilized residential and commercial properties within the county. According to the most recent American Community Survey (ACS) data, approximately 1,400 single-family homes are currently vacant. Stakeholders also noted a significant number of vacant commercial properties, particularly along main street corridors. In many instances, renovating or repurposing existing structures presents a more cost-effective alternative to new development, offering opportunities to support ongoing economic development initiatives. However, the viability of retail investment remains constrained by low traffic volumes, limited residential density, and insufficient foot traffic in key commercial areas—factors that currently hinder the attraction of sustainable retail tenants.

Regional & Statewide Initiatives

Sanpete County is currently included in several active statewide and regional economic development initiatives that have the potential to enhance its economic competitiveness. The Utah Inland Port Authority is working to strengthen connectivity across key economic hubs throughout the state, and Sanpete County stands to benefit from the implementation of these efforts. In addition, the jointly managed Salina-Gunnison Airport—overseen by Sanpete and Sevier Counties—presents an opportunity for collaborative expansion that could improve regional transportation infrastructure. Stakeholders have also identified the potential for future rail development within the county, which would significantly improve regional connectivity and reinforce a broader business attraction strategy.

New LDS Temple

A new LDS temple currently under construction in Ephraim, alongside the existing temple in Manti, reflects Sanpete County's deep cultural and religious heritage. Stakeholders anticipate that the new temple will attract both visitors and new residents, enhancing the county's appeal as a destination rooted in spiritual, historical, and community values. Once completed, the Ephraim temple is expected to draw tourists from across the region, creating opportunities to stimulate growth in hospitality-related sectors such as lodging, dining, recreation, and other small businesses. This increase in tourism-related economic activity may strengthen the broader local business network.

Beyond its impact on tourism, the presence of prominent religious institutions often serves as a foundation for community development and long-term population growth. The temples in Ephraim and Manti are likely to attract LDS families, retirees, and remote workers who value proximity to places of worship. As new residents relocate to the area, the county stands to benefit from increased consumer spending, expanded local revenues, and heightened demand for housing. This residential growth could, in turn, drive private development and investment, supported by the county's existing water, sewer, and power infrastructure.

Furthermore, the temples may serve as strategic partners in advancing county-wide initiatives. County and municipal officials can collaborate with LDS Church leadership to align efforts around tourism promotion, community engagement, and leveraging the county's educational institutions and natural assets for broader economic development objectives.

SWOT

Threats

Rising Housing Costs

Like many communities nationwide, Sanpete County has experienced a significant increase in housing costs in recent years. Population growth, coupled with the rising cost of building materials, has contributed to higher expenses associated with home construction, purchase, and rental. In addition, ancillary housing costs—including insurance and utilities—have also increased, further limiting access to stable and affordable housing for many residents. A substantial proportion of households in the county face housing cost burdens, where housing expenses consume a disproportionate share of income. This growing inaccessibility has broad economic implications, as housing instability can constrain workforce availability, reduce consumer spending, and hinder overall community well-being.

Aging Population

Sanpete County, like many communities nationwide, is experiencing a demographic shift as a growing portion of its population enters their 60s and 70s. This aging trend has broad implications across key sectors of the local economy, including housing, healthcare, and workforce participation. Without intervention, these changes may place additional pressure on public services and limit the availability of skilled labor. However, a proactive strategy can help the county address these challenges while positioning the aging population—and the broader community—to adapt effectively. By planning ahead, the county can support age-inclusive development, ensure access to essential services, and promote long-term economic resilience.

Transportation and Logistics Challenges

While Sanpete County's location offers several advantages, it also presents distinct challenges for industry development. The primary concern is the county's distance from major transportation corridors. The nearest interstate highways, I-15 and I-70 are both situated outside the county's borders, with US Route 89 being the largest highway traversing the area. As a result, industries that prioritize immediate access to expansive interstate networks or commercial airline services may find Sanpete County less appealing. Additionally, the county's rural character and relatively low traffic volumes limit its visibility, a factor that some businesses consider crucial when selecting a site for expansion or relocation.

Environmental Challenges

Shifting environmental conditions are increasingly influencing economic development, requiring local communities to adapt in order to maintain economic stability. While the effects of these changes are broad, they are particularly evident in two key areas. First, both residents and businesses are likely to face rising product costs and increased insurance premiums. Second, certain industries are encountering resource shortages that were less pronounced in the past. For instance, many farmers are struggling with water scarcity, forcing them to repurpose their facilities for alternative operations. As these challenges are expected to intensify over time, it is essential for the county to develop a proactive strategy to mitigate the effects of environmental changes and support long-term resilience.

04

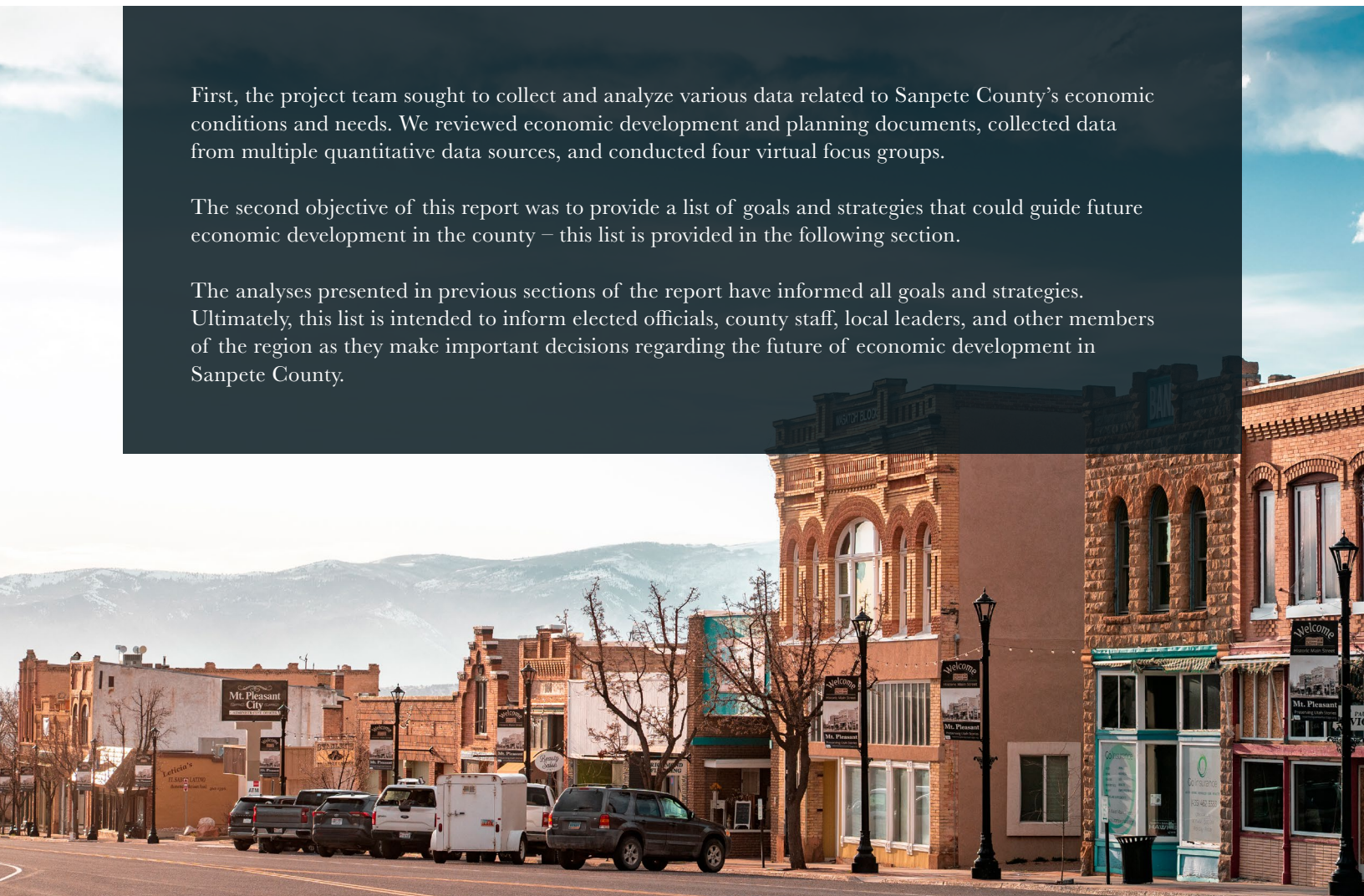
Goals & Strategies

Developing effective economic development goals and strategies depends upon collecting and analyzing the best possible community and economic data. To achieve this, our methodology relied on both quantitative and qualitative analysis. These two data methods guided the work presented in this report.

First, the project team sought to collect and analyze various data related to Sanpete County's economic conditions and needs. We reviewed economic development and planning documents, collected data from multiple quantitative data sources, and conducted four virtual focus groups.

The second objective of this report was to provide a list of goals and strategies that could guide future economic development in the county – this list is provided in the following section.

The analyses presented in previous sections of the report have informed all goals and strategies. Ultimately, this list is intended to inform elected officials, county staff, local leaders, and other members of the region as they make important decisions regarding the future of economic development in Sanpete County.



Focus: Business Retention and Expansion

A business retention and expansion program is vital for fostering economic stability and growth within a community. It provides the following benefits:

- **Job Creation and Stability:** Supporting existing businesses helps retain jobs and create new ones, ensuring a steady income stream for local residents.
- **Cost-Effectiveness:** Retaining businesses is often more economical than attracting new ones, as it focuses on nurturing established enterprises.
- **Economic Resilience:** Strengthening local businesses diversifies the economy, making it more resilient to downturns.
- **Community Engagement:** Businesses rooted in the community are more likely to contribute to local initiatives and foster a sense of belonging.
- **Innovation and Growth:** Retained businesses can innovate and expand, driving economic progress.

Short-Term Goals: 1 year

Goal 1: Expand the role of the existing county Business Retention and Expansion (BRE) program.

It is estimated that 80% of job creation and economic growth comes from existing businesses.

STRATEGY 1.1 Conduct an existing industrial/commercial business survey that would identify:	» Operational support needs including local supply chain connections » Future growth/downsizing plans » Workforce/labor shortages a skill set gaps » Transportation/infrastructure issues » Ways to improve the local business climate
STRATEGY 1.2 Conduct a Retail/Main Street businesses survey that would identify:	» Retail business's needs, including future space needs - expansions or downsizing » Mainstreet and retail corridor trade area challenges » Collaborative marketing opportunities » Retail revenue gaps, especially in main street corridors. » Supply chain issues
STRATEGY 1.3	Report on both industrial/commercial and retail/Mainstreet survey data with suggested recommendations and implementation.

Goal 2: Prioritize intentional collaboration with city, county, and state economic development organizations.

STRATEGY 2.1	Develop a countywide housing task force to identify and help mitigate housing shortages and affordability.
STRATEGY 2.2	Include County commissioners/officials in marketing and outreach visits; promote these on social media and other marketing channels.
STRATEGY 2.3	Create an economic development bi-annual report for city/county staff, elected officials, and residents of Sanpete County.
STRATEGY 2.4	Present the economic development bi-annual report to elected officials every six months.

Long-Term Goals: 1-2 years

Goal 3: Develop existing industry cohorts.

STRATEGY 3.1	Specifically: » Hospitality and Tourism » Advanced Agriculture » Logistics » Metal Fabrication/Manufacturing
STRATEGY 3.2	Develop supply chain maps to help connect local suppliers with firms looking to re-shore manufacturing/other operations. Supply chain knowledge assists with business retention and recruitment efforts by helping businesses identify where gaps or challenges in the chain might exist.



Focus: Business Attraction

A business attraction program is often seen as the cornerstone of economic development. If designed with target industry intelligence, it can be extremely successful in delivering the following:

- **Economic Diversification:** Attracting new businesses, especially in different industries, helps diversify the local economy, reducing reliance on a single sector.
- **Job Creation:** New businesses bring employment opportunities, boosting the local job market and improving residents' quality of life.
- **Increased Revenue:** Expanding the business base generates additional tax revenue, which can be reinvested into community services and infrastructure.
- **Enhanced Competitiveness:** A well-executed program positions a community as an attractive destination for businesses, fostering a competitive edge in the global market.
- **Community Growth:** New businesses often bring innovation, services, and amenities that enhance a community's overall appeal and functionality.

Short-Term Goals: 1-year

Goal 4: Develop a county marketing and branding strategy.

STRATEGY 4.1	Purchase a CRM to track business retention, expansion, and attraction activities.
STRATEGY 4.2	Create a countywide site and building inventory to market underutilized residential and commercial properties.
STRATEGY 4.3	Purchase a countywide data feed specific to economic development requirements.
STRATEGY 4.4	Redesign the county economic development website landing page to include site selection criteria.
STRATEGY 4.5	Create an RFI/RFP sites and building readiness template to respond to state RFI/RFPs for location projects.
STRATEGY 4.6	Hire a branding consultant to weave the heritage, outdoor tourism, and cultural events in Sanpete County into economic development strategies to attract visitors and retain residents.

Long-term Goals: 1-2 years

Goal 5: Create a business attraction program for emerging industries.

STRATEGY 5.1 Develop a reverse site selection strategy for target and emerging industries with market intelligence, specifically for:	» Value-added agriculture » Metal fabrication » Logistics
STRATEGY 5.2	Develop shovel-ready sites at the industrial parks and airport and create a marketing strategy specific to this infrastructure.
STRATEGY 5.3	Develop an RFI readiness program for possible reshoring of industry.
STRATEGY 5.4	Address water shortages in the agriculture industry.
STRATEGY 5.5	Collaborate with utility, county, and communities to upgrade power access.
STRATEGY 5.6	Support the tourism industry with growing revenue and visitor demand by collaborating with Sanpete County Travel and Tourism.

Focus: Workforce Development

One of a community's greatest assets is its workforce. However, as noted earlier, a significant number of Sanpete County residents leave to work elsewhere. Additionally, the number of Snow College graduates who leave the county is high, resulting in further talent outmigration. These two populations can be a future supply of labor if effective programming is in place to keep them working and living in the county.

Data collected during the focus groups indicated that the declining labor force was one of the most significant impediments to future business growth.

Goal 6: Retain the local workforce.

STRATEGY 6.1 Develop a "Work local, Live local, Play local" program to retain the resident workforce and community college graduates.	» The "Work Local" program would incentivize existing businesses to hire local talent and/or provide apprenticeships for guaranteed employment after graduation. » The "Live Local" would offer housing assistance if the employee chooses to live in Sanpete County after hiring/graduation. » The "Play Local" program would offer discounts or credits for outdoor recreation and events to workers who have entered the "Work Local" and "Live Local" program.
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STRATEGY 6.2	Upskill workers by creating programs to train people for the jobs that already exist in your community. (Develop a Bootcamp for immediate business needs.)
STRATEGY 6.3	Engage the Sanpete County Economic Development Opportunity Board to conduct workforce listening sessions with key business leaders, Snow College, and Workforce Development (WIOA).

Focus: Small Business Development

Small businesses are often the backbone of the community, representing resilience, creativity, and a deep connection to their communities. When communities champion small businesses, they are investing in their own future. Here are some of the benefits of focusing on small businesses:

- **Strengthen the local economy:** Money spent at local businesses tends to stay in the community, circulating and boosting economic growth. These businesses often source from other local suppliers, amplifying the impact.
- **Job Creation:** Small businesses are significant job providers. Supporting them helps sustain existing jobs and creates new opportunities for community members.
- **Fostering a Unique Community Identity:** Small businesses contribute to the charm and character of a community. From independent bookstores to artisan bakeries, they make neighborhoods distinct and vibrant.
- **Encouraging Innovation and Diversity:** Local businesses often bring fresh ideas, products, and services, catering to community-specific needs and interests. They also reflect the diverse passions and backgrounds of their owners.
- **Building Relationships:** Unlike large corporations, small business owners often form personal connections with their customers. These relationships foster trust, loyalty, and a stronger sense of community.
- **Resilience in Times of Crisis:** During challenging times, communities with thriving small businesses are often more resilient. Supporting these enterprises helps maintain a balanced and self-reliant local economy.
- **Environmental Benefits:** Local businesses often operate on a smaller scale, reducing the need for extensive transportation and logistics. This can lower environmental impact compared to larger, global companies.

Goal 7: Strengthen the small business community.

STRATEGY 7.1	Launch a private-sector-led small business committee to inform elected officials and key economic development leaders as to the needs of the small business community.
STRATEGY 7.2 Establish a collaborative Small Business Support Program between Snow College and Sanpete County to provide assistance to the small business community throughout the year. Including:	» Business planning » Product design » Marketing/branding assistance » Gap financing » Pitch competitions » County grants and incentives, including revolving loan fund » Establish connections between Snow College faculty and staff with existing businesses through practical research, capstone projects, and internships.
STRATEGY 7.3	Assist Main Street and other small businesses with a store-front facade improvement program.
STRATEGY 7.4	Create a Sanpete County revolving loan fund and use the interest to capitalize needed investments.



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Implementation Matrix

Focus: Business Retention & Expansion

GOAL 1

Expand the role of the existing county Business Retention and Expansion (BRE) program.

TIMELINE

Establish in short-term – 6 months

STRATEGIES

- » Conduct an existing industrial/commercial business survey.
- » Conduct a Retail/Main Street businesses survey.
- » Report on both industrial/commercial and retail/Mainstreet survey data with suggested recommendations and implementation.

OUTCOMES

- » Quantitative data identifying existing industrial, commercial and retail business needs
- » Analysis of surveys, including recommendations and action steps to address existing business needs

METRICS

- » 20% or greater of existing businesses surveyed
- » 30% of short-term, long-term action steps implemented within one year.

GOAL 2

Prioritize intentional collaboration with city, county, and state economic development organizations.

TIMELINE

Long-term and on-going

STRATEGIES

- » Strategies:
- » Develop a countywide housing task force to identify and help mitigate housing shortages and affordability.
- » Include county commissioners/officials in marketing and outreach visits; promote these on social media and other marketing channels.
- » Create an economic development bi-annual report for city/county staff, elected officials, and residents of Sanpete County.
- » Present the economic development bi-annual report to elected officials every six months.

OUTCOMES

- » County Housing Task Force
- » Bi-annual County ED report developed

METRICS

- » Four to six County Housing Task Force meetings held to identify key housing shortages and affordability issues by end of 2026
- » Bi-annual Economic Development 2026 report delivered by June 2026

GOAL 3

Develop existing industry cohorts.

TIMELINE

Establish in short-term 6-months, long-term on-going

STRATEGIES

- » Create regional target industry cohorts that would champion industry growth and development in the county.
- » Develop supply chain maps to help connect local suppliers with firms looking to re-shore manufacturing/other operations

OUTCOMES

- » Regional target industry cohorts established
- » Target and emerging industry supply chains mapped

METRICS

- » Successfully hosted target industry cohorts meeting once a month through 2025
- » 1-2 target industries mapped by June 2026

Focus: Business Attraction

GOAL 4

Develop a county marketing and branding strategy.

TIMELINE

Short-term – 6-12 months

STRATEGIES

- » Purchase a CRM to track business retention, expansion, and attraction activities.
- » Create a countywide site and building inventory to market underutilized residential and commercial properties.
- » Purchase a countywide data feed specific to economic development requirements.
- » Redesign the county economic development website landing page to include site selection criteria.
- » Create an RFI/RFP sites and building readiness template to respond to state RFI/RFPs for location projects.
- » Hire a branding consultant to weave the heritage, outdoor tourism, and cultural events in Sanpete County into economic development strategies to attract visitors and retain residents.

OUTCOMES

- » CRM purchased
- » Sites and Buildings inventory created
- » Redesigned website and landing page
- » New marketing/branding program established

METRICS

- » All county and city sites and buildings entered into CRM by the end of 2025
- » Website consultant hired by the end of 2025
- » Branding consultant hired by the end of 2025

GOAL 5

Create a business attraction program for emerging industries.

TIMELINE

Long-term – 1-2 years

STRATEGIES

- » Develop a reverse site selection strategy for target and emerging industries with market intelligence.
- » Develop shovel-ready sites at the industrial parks and airport and create a marketing strategy specific to this infrastructure.
- » Develop an RFI readiness program for possible reshoring of industry.
- » Address water shortages in the agriculture industry.
- » Collaborate with utility, county, and communities to upgrade power access.
- » Support the tourism industry with growing revenue and visitor demand by collaborating with Sanpete County Travel and Tourism.

OUTCOMES

- » A reverse site selection process by target industry
- » A shovel-ready site program
- » A utility availability and capacity report
- » A tourism roundtable with Sanpete County Travel and Tourism and Sanpete County ED stakeholders to develop collaborative actions for growing the tourism industry

METRICS

- » By June 2026, hold four meetings to identify reverse site process and shovel ready site program
- » Implement three to four action items from the tourism roundtable by June 2026
- »

Focus: Workforce Development

GOAL 6

Retain the local workforce.

TIMELINE

Long-term – 1-2 years and on-going

STRATEGIES

- » Develop a “Work local, Live local, Play local” (WLP) program to retain the resident workforce and community college graduates.
- » Upskill workers by creating programs to train people for the jobs that already exist in your community. (Develop a Bootcamp for immediate business needs.)
- » Engage the Sanpete County Economic Development Opportunity Board to conduct workforce listening sessions with key business leaders, Snow College, and Workforce Development (WIOA).

OUTCOMES

- » “Work local, Live local, Play Local” program established
- » Upskill program with Snow College established
- » Workforce listening sessions created

METRICS

- » Two workforce listening sessions held by end of 2025
- » Two to Three WLP program development meetings held by end of 2025
- » Two to three Upskill meetings held with Snow College by end of 2025

Focus: Small Business Development

GOAL 7

Strengthen the small business community.

TIMELINE

Long-term – 1-2 years and on-going

STRATEGIES

- » Launch a private-sector-led small business committee to inform elected officials and key economic development leaders as to the needs of the small business community.
- » Establish a collaborative Small Business Support Program between Snow College and Sanpete County to provide assistance to the small business community throughout the year.
- » Assist Main Street and other small businesses with a store-front facade improvement program.
- » Create a Sanpete County revolving loan fund and use the interest to capitalize needed investments.

OUTCOMES

- » Private-sector-led Small Business Committee (SBC) established in collaboration with the Chamber of Commerce
- » Small Business Support Program (SBSP) between Snow College and Sanpete County established
- » Mainstreet Façade Improvement Program established
- » Revolving loan fund established

METRICS

- » SBC to hold three to four meetings by June 2026
- » SBSP to hold three to four meetings by June 2026
- » Ephraim, Gunnison, Manti, and Mt. Pleasant with assistance from establish Façade Improvement program
- » Sanpete County revolving established by end of 2026



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Appendix

Competitive Analysis

General County Comparisons

	Uintah County, UT	Sanpete County, UT	Sevier County, UT	Carbon County UT
Gross Regional Product (GRP)	\$2,496,565,719	\$1,202,703,774	\$1,380,616,176	\$1,302,503,049
Projected Population (2028)	40,844	29,094	23,197	21,349
Labor Force (June 2024)	15,902	13,790	10,709	8,475
Participation Rate (June 2024)	56.40%	62.40%	62.20%	52.80%
Unemployment Rate % (June 2024)	4.40%	4.50%	4.20%	5.10%
Mean Commute Time (2022)	19.8 minutes	22.0 minutes	17.1 minutes	17.4 minutes

Source: Lightcast 2025.1

Cost of Living and Household Income

	Uintah County, UT	Sanpete County, UT	Sevier County, UT	Carbon County UT
COL Index	94.6	97.1	100.6	100.1
COL Adjusted Current Average Earnings	\$68,476	\$53,649	\$54,669	\$58,255
Current Average Earnings	\$64,778	\$52,093	\$54,997	\$58,313
Median Household Income (2022)	\$61,293	\$60,186	\$60,262	\$51,725

Source: Lightcast 2025.1

Educational Attainment

	Uintah County, UT	Sanpete County, UT	Sevier County, UT	Carbon County UT
Bachelor's Degree or Higher	4,155	4,122	3,393	2,304
Bachelor's Degree or Higher %	18.10%	22.40%	23.90%	16.80%
Current Average Earnings	\$64,778	\$52,093	\$54,997	\$58,313
Median Household Income (2022)	\$61,293	\$60,186	\$60,262	\$51,725

Source: Lightcast 2025.1

Industry Employment Trends 2019-2024

	Uintah County, UT	Sanpete County, UT	Sevier County, UT	Carbon County UT
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing, and Hunting (NAICS 11)				
Job Change %	-9%	17%	-16%	18%
Jobs (2019)	126	333	219	22
Jobs (2024)	115	390	185	26
Construction (NAICS 23)				
Job Change %	96%	29%	30%	-2%
Jobs (2019)	900	647	474	418
Jobs (2024)	1,767	836	615	411
Manufacturing (NAICS 31-33)				
Job Change %	100%	12%	6%	33%
Jobs (2019)	195	1,272	520	406
Jobs (2024)	390	1,427	550 539	411
Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation (NAICS 71)				
Job Change %	88%	-9%	59%	13%
Jobs (2019)	56	69	44	86
Jobs (2024)	105	63	70	97
Accommodation and Food Services (NAICS 72)				
Job Change %	7%	11%	19%	5%
Jobs (2019)	1,215	533	915	705
Jobs (2024)	1,295	590	1,092	741

Source: Lightcast 2025.1

City Profiles



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