



## *City of Green River*

460 East Main Street, Green River, Utah

City Council Minutes

Work Session

Wednesday, October 1, 2025

**ATTENDING:** Mayor Ren Hatt, Council Members Bo Harrison, Larry Packer, Ben Lehnhoff and Guy Webster; Employees; David Wilson, Citizens; Dorothy Carter, Randy Erwin, Anne Elliott, Ben Coomer, Frank Vetere Jr., Conra Weber, Penney Riches, Duane Riches, Lance Erwin, Michael Silliman; Governor's Office of Economic Opportunity; August Granath; Better City; Ryan Englund.

**CONDUCTING:** Mayor Ren Hatt, the meeting began at 6:00 p.m.

### **ORDER OF BUSINESS:**

**ABSENT:** Kent Nelson asked to be excused.

1. Work session to discuss GOEO (Governor's Office of Economic Opportunity) Rural Economic Blueprint Program and Strategic Plan

The meeting began with Mayor Ren Hatt introducing August Granath from the Governor's Office of Economic Opportunity (GOEO). August Granath was present to discuss the Rural Economic Blueprint Program and strategic plan developed for Green River.

August Granath explained that he serves as a technical outreach manager with GOEO, based in Moab, where he previously worked as the economic development tourism director. He introduced the Rural Economic Blueprint Program, which was created in January 2025 to address gaps identified during rural stakeholder meetings. The program offers free strategic planning services to rural local governments that may lack the capacity to conduct economic development planning alongside their daily operations.

August Granath noted that Green River was part of the first cohort of participants, along with Fillmore City and Emery County. He outlined the process, which included an initial assessment of economic indicators, qualitative data from one-on-one interviews, and meetings with a steering committee. He identified the working team members as himself, his coworker Deborah, data specialist Olivia Midgley, City Manager Edward Bennett, and Ryan Englund from Better City.

The steering committee included the Mayor Ren Hatt, Councilmember Guy Webster, David Wilson and Robin Hunt from city staff, Maria Sykes from the Epicenter, and Bryce Hardy from the Wells organization. Additional interviews were conducted with Councilmembers Ben Lehnhoff and Kent Nelson, the public works director, and the travel director for Emery County.

August Granath presented the draft report, explaining that this meeting was the last opportunity for meaningful edits before finalizing the document for a potential vote at the October 14th meeting. He then provided an overview of the assessment findings:

### **Population Data:**

- Green River grew by 33 people (1% annualized) from April 2020 to July 2024
- This growth rate is slower than Utah's 1.8% but higher than the national 0.7%
- The city's growth has been uneven, with a population drop between 2010-2020
- The median age in Green River is 42 years, higher than the state (31) and national (38) averages

### **Employment and Income:**

- Employment rate is 66.5% (425 of 639 residents aged 16+ were employed)
- This is ahead of the national rate (60%) but slightly behind the state rate (67%)
- Median household income is \$46,000, about half of Utah's median (\$93,000) and well below the national median (\$78,000)

### **Education Levels:**

- 10% of residents age 25+ hold a bachelor's degree or higher (lower than state/national averages)
- The city has a higher percentage of residents with some college/associate degrees compared to state/national averages
- The percentage of residents with less than a high school diploma is higher than state/national averages

### **Industry Data:**

- Top employment sectors: Accommodation and food services (37.2%), construction (16%), and public administration (12%)
- The accommodation/food sector has 5.4 times the concentration compared to the national average
- Construction and public administration are 2.4 times the national average

August Granath presented the SWOT analysis conducted through stakeholder interviews:

### **Strengths:**

- Strategic geographic location with highway, rail, and air infrastructure
- Abundant natural capital, including water rights and recreational access

- Resilient community fabric with residents citing safety, quiet, and friendly atmosphere
- Strong civic leadership focused on growth initiatives

#### **Weaknesses:**

- Housing challenges including lack of availability, quality, and aging housing stock
- Lack of high-paying career opportunities, with employment concentrated in seasonal, low-wage sectors
- History of underinvestment and persistent blight, particularly in Main Street and Broadway commercial areas
- Resistance to change and concerns about losing community character

#### **Opportunities:**

- Industrial recruitment to diversify the economy, including the inland port development and interest from companies like Western Uranium and Vanadium, A1 Lithium, and Air Build
- Transitioning from a waypoint to a destination by leveraging assets like Melon Days and outdoor recreation
- Cultivating a vibrant community core through investments in Main Street and Broadway
- Developing new housing opportunities through projects like Canal Commons
- Strengthening relationships with partners like Emery County to leverage resources

#### **Threats:**

- Concerns about continuing boom-and-bust cycles rather than stable, sustainable growth
- Impending closure of the Crescent Junction UMTRA site, which provides 25-30 well-paying jobs
- Potential loss of unused water rights if a water utilization plan isn't submitted
- Railroad underpass height limitations that could constrain industrial development
- Private landowners unwilling to develop or sell parcels
- Risk of unmanaged growth that causes Green River to lose its identity

August Granath summarized the ideal economic future described by stakeholders:

1. A diversified economy with high-wage careers
2. Managed growth that preserves small-town character
3. Transition from waypoint to destination for living and visiting
4. A revitalized and appealing community core
5. A community of opportunity for all residents

He then presented the goals, strategies, and projects developed for the strategic plan:

#### **Goal 1: Diversify the economy with new industry to provide high-paying jobs**

- Strategy 1.1: Attract new businesses that are a good fit for Green River

- Strategy 1.2: Support new businesses as they grow and thrive
- Strategy 1.3: Facilitate private development that advances the goals of the general plan

## **Goal 2: Support the development of the workforce**

- Strategy 2.1: Explore and promote educational and occupational opportunities

## **Goal 3: Maintain and improve infrastructure necessary for economic development**

- Strategy 3.1: Maintain existing levels of service for residential and commercial users
- Strategy 3.2: Maintain existing resources to ensure future economic development
- Strategy 3.3: Improve infrastructure to alleviate capacity constraints
- Strategy 3.4: Beautify and improve downtown infrastructure to address persistent blight issues

## **Goal 4: Transition from a waypoint to a destination to live and visit**

- Strategy 4.1: Promote and grow community events, recreational opportunities, and amenities
- Strategy 4.2: Develop additional recreation event infrastructure

## **Goal 5: Create systems of accountability and support to ensure plan implementation**

- Strategy 5.1: Create or designate an implementation committee
- Strategy 5.2: Assign specific staff with implementation responsibility
- Strategy 5.3: Allocate sufficient funding to support implementation

During the discussion, Dorothy Carter expressed concerns about a separate but related Broadway Street improvement grant of approximately \$600,000 for engineering and design. She questioned the high cost compared to other engineering projects in the region and suggested the money would be better used directly helping downtown businesses with improvements.

Ben Coomer raised concerns about drainage issues throughout Green River, noting that the city has historically failed to develop and implement a comprehensive drainage plan. He explained that years of raising road levels without proper drainage planning has resulted in water flowing back onto properties, creating problems for many buildings in town.

Randy Erwin asked about the Tidwell Street sidewalk and curb project, which was mentioned in the strategic plan. He noted that while development was occurring on Tidwell, there was no drainage being addressed downstream.

The council members discussed the possibility of amending the Broadway grant to focus more on drainage or reduce its scope to make it more achievable. Lance Erwin questioned the probability of receiving CIB funding to implement the full project once

designed, expressing concern about spending taxpayer money on plans that might not be built.

Mayor Ren Hatt acknowledged the concerns but noted that reopening the grant application could risk losing the funding entirely. Councilman Guy Webster mentioned that the city manager was already working on trying to secure funding for a master drainage plan.

August Granath agreed to add a specific project related to developing a master drainage plan to Goal 3 of the strategic plan, as requested by the council.

2. Adjourn, the meeting adjourned at 7:21 p.m.

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Ren Hatt, Mayor

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Julie Spadafora, City Recorder

Approved: November 12, 2025