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**AGENDA**  
**PLANNING COMMISSION WORK MEETING**  
Thursday, December 4, 2025  
South Salt Lake Council Chambers  
220 East Morris Avenue

**PLANNING COMMISSION WORK MEETING AT 6:00 P.M.**

1. Central Jordan River Reconnect Plan Update
2. Planning Commission Training

**Join Zoom Webinar**

<https://zoom.us/j/92209934084>

Webinar ID: 922 0993 4084

**Planning Commission Work Meeting Minutes**  
**Thursday, December 4, 2025**  
**South Salt Lake Council Chambers**  
**220 East Morris Avenue**  
**Time: 6:00 PM**

**Commission Members Present:**

Jeremy Carter, Chair  
Christy Dahlberg (via Zoom)  
Chad Ewell (via Zoom)  
George Pechmann  
Mary Anna Southey  
Kathy Self  
Suzanne Slifka

**Staff Members Present:**

Jonathan Weidenhamer, Community & Economic  
Development Director  
Brienne Brass, Deputy City Attorney  
Spencer Cawley, Senior City Planner  
Tereza Bagdasarova, City Planner  
Jed Shum, City Planner  
Anthony Biamont, Parks Project Manager  
Sharen Hauri, Neighborhoods Director

**Others:**

Clarissa Williams  
Angelo Calacino, Salt Lake County Parks & Rec  
Soren Simonsen, Jordan River Commission &  
Watershed Council  
Brandon Biederman, PORT Architecture & Urbanism  
Daniel Sonntag

Chair Jeremy Carter called the meeting to order at 6:00 PM.

**PLANNING COMMISSION WORK MEETING**

**1. Central Jordan River Reconnect Plan Update.**

South Salt Lake Park Planner, Anthony Biamont, reported that the City has been coordinating with Salt Lake County on its long-range planning for the Jordan River Regional Park. He introduced Salt Lake County Park Development Project Manager, Angelo Calacino, who reported that the Jordan River Recreation Area extends 250 yards to each side of the Jordan River from State Road 201 to 5400 South, as outlined in House Bill 173 passed in 2022.

Brandon Biederman of PORT Architecture and Urbanism presented the Central Jordan River Reconnect Plan. The project team includes staff members from Salt Lake County; affected municipalities, and various stakeholders; a hydrological consultant, Rio ASE; an operations, governance, and funding strategies consultant, PROS; and other advisory consultants.

The project was envisioned in four phases. Phase 2 began in October 2024 and focused on community engagement and site analysis. The Site Analysis and Community Engagement Reports were issued at the end of the phase. Phase 3 began in July 2025 and focused on plan development. The team had met with West Valley, Taylorsville, Millcreek, Murray, and the Jordan River Commission prior to the Salt South Lake City Planning Commission meeting. Phase 4, plan completion, was scheduled to begin in early 2026.

During the 2024 public engagement process, the team partnered with different events and held open houses to better understand how the community uses the Jordan River. They then created a report of their findings and created a series of themes that guided plan development.

The four project area themes are as follows:

1. Connected;
2. Ecological;
3. Active; and
4. Stewarded.

The next step of the process is to engage directly with municipal planning and parks and recreation departments in stakeholder workshops held in July and August 2025. This allowed them to collect existing plans and gain insight into each jurisdiction's priorities and challenges, and formed the basis for the overarching plan that was being presented.

Stakeholder priorities were identified as:

- Active transportation;
- River line and ecological function;
- Recreation planning; and
- Management and safety.

High priority goals include:

- Connected communities
  - Trail on both sides of the river
  - Improved public access points
  - Increased awareness
  - Healthy river corridor
- Improve water quality and habitat
  - Restore historic flood plain connections
  - Preserve natural habitats
- Active river
  - Increase water access (access docks, fishing piers, etc.)
  - Improve continuity
- Equitable and welcoming spaces
  - Enhance riverside amenities
  - Expanded passive recreation

- Operations and management
  - Coordinated management oversight
  - Phaseable funding approach
  - Cohesive programming opportunities

Mr. Biederman reported that the project was broken into seven segments based on the themes and priorities identified during the engagement process, as well as site characteristics and amenities.

Segment 1 includes Millrace Park and Germania Park along an artificially straightened section of the Jordan River. Opportunities include connections to the Jordan Canal Trail and Utah Power and Light Corridor Trail, potentially extending the trail to both sides of the river, and bank restoration to bring back its historic form without affecting existing infrastructure and amenities.

Segment 2 includes the Little Confluence Trailhead, Confluence Park, Arrowhead Park, and Kennecott Nature Center. Opportunities include unifying the three park systems, creating connections along Millcreek and Murray Taylorsville Road, and ecological expansion to create side channels to charge nearby ponds.

Segment 3 is an ecological spine that includes the Freedom Shrine. The trail in this area is on the west side of the Jordan River, but there is an opportunity to extend it to the east side. A benefit of having the trail on both sides is that it will create loops rather than the existing down-and-back routes.

Segment 4 is the Four Corners Commons area, where four jurisdictions meet and includes the Meadowbrook Expressway Trail, Millcreek Trailhead, and General Holm Park. This area presents an opportunity to create a core of active recreation within the existing amenities and extend it into a passive recreation zone with trail loops, pathways, habitat preservation, and neighborhood connections. Side channels can also be utilized to expand and improve the ecological area.

Segment 5 is a limited corridor along the Tracy Aviary. The trail is currently on the east side of the river, and the primary goal is to extend it to the west side and address safety concerns on the eastern trail by adding access points.

Segment 6 presents a large opportunity due to the large amount of County land within the Redwood Conservation Area. The wetland conservation area was formerly fed through the Brighton Canal, which had since been filled in, so one objective is to improve the ecology of the space by potentially bringing in water from the Chesterfield Canal and Jordan River. This area can become a destination park with active and passive recreation, as well as a confluence trailhead to help residents of South Salt Lake City gain access to the park and trail system. Hydrologically, ponds could be created to support migratory birds and provide the necessary wetness for wetland species to thrive in the area.

Segment 7 is a limited area within the levy system's federal jurisdictional boundary. The trail runs along the west side of the river, but an existing paved maintenance trail along the east bank could be formalized to extend the trail on that side. This is also an industrial area that could benefit from a landscape buffer to improve the trail experience and public water access. This area includes

Redwood Park, which has an underutilized space that could be improved to create a water-based recreation hub. A potential direct connection at 2320 South would create a direct trail connection between South Salt Lake and West Valley, and there is also a potential connection to the Millcreek Trail to provide more direct access for South Salt Lake residents.

Mr. Biederman reported that an online platform had been developed to host all project materials so members of the public can access and provide feedback on the information. The platform was anticipated to be available the following week.

Commissioner Pechmann is a frequent user of the Jordan River Trail system and was frustrated by both the connection between the Jordan River Trail and Parley's Trail and access through the Utah Transit Authority ("UTA") property. Mr. Biederman stated that they were investigating working with UTA on a connection at 900 West that would bring the trail to the existing bridge, as well as a potential confluence trailhead on the publicly controlled land. Improving the trail on the east side, it would allow movement to the north with a connection at the bridge near Redwood Park or south to the proposed new crossing. Parley's Trail would be accessed via the new trailhead at Redwood Park. The existing tracks do not provide enough room for a side connection, so their current thinking was that the best connection was through that trailhead.

Commissioner Southey stated that South Salt Lake City is the poorest and smallest part of the County, and it could be perceived as the County's dumping ground. She loves the idea of activating the trail and adding pedestrian bridges, but they need to consider who would manage and police it. Public safety and litter are important concerns, and the City's public safety system is already overburdened. She was concerned about who would pay for the project, as well as the inherent conflict between preserving habitats and opening them up to people. She thinks high school and college students should receive credit for adopting portions of the trail, and fencing and lighting could be added to make it safer. She appreciated the goals identified in the plan but was concerned about execution and maintenance.

Mr. Calacino stated that the plan will make recommendations and include a section on operation and management. The County is looking at ways to work with the five affected municipalities and the Jordan River Commission to raise funding and address many of Commissioner Southey's concerns. They would be adding access points along the entire study area to improve emergency response, in part because of issues pointed out by the South Salt Lake City Police Department. The plan included a potential access point at the new substation, as well as one at the former James Madison Park on 3300 South. The plan would take many years to realize, but their goal was to make sound recommendations for which funding can be secured.

Mr. Biederman reported that the Salt Lake County Sheriff attends their meetings and their input and reporting are very helpful in understanding safety and policing issues, as well as the importance of public access points for emergency vehicles. Trailheads can have specific lighting and designated parking for Americans with Disabilities Act ("ADA") compliance and emergency vehicles, as well as potential public parking. They also discussed increasing the number of mileage markers for more accurate reporting in emergency situations, as well as landscape management to ensure visibility. They had recently begun working on the management and costs portion of the plan and were looking at how to ensure a coordinated effort between county, state, federal, and

municipal entities. The plan will include an implementation matrix that identifies specific projects, their estimated budgets, the responsible and coordinating agencies, and potential funding sources.

Commissioner Dahlberg asked if strategies would be included to mitigate the safety impacts of e-bikes and scooters. Mr. Calacino stated that the County does not allow e-bikes on its trails because they are considered motorized vehicles. They were working to create a specific policy, but the problem was one of jurisdiction. Although the County maintains the trail, each municipality is responsible for enforcement. He hoped the plan would include recommendations on coordinated enforcement efforts.

Mr. Biederman added that the Jordan River Commission was working on the issue, and his team would ensure that it was incorporated in the plan. One reason for the proposed two-trail system was that they could potentially have different designated uses. One may be focused on commuting with a wider asphalt path and marked lanes that would allow for more streamlined movement, and the other may be more of a multi-use trail that is unmarked and geared more toward walkers. That approach would require ample signage and enforcement.

Chair Carter asked if locations had been identified for specific uses, as well as how the Jordan River Commission's efforts may affect South Salt Lake City.

Jordan River Commission Executive Director, Soren Simonsen, reported that South Salt Lake is one of its approximately 45 partners. A lot of problems have arisen with electric mobility devices like e-bikes, scooters, skateboards, gas-powered golf carts, and all-terrain vehicles. They organized a working group from their technical advisory committee which includes City Mobility Planner, Carl Osterberg, to consider issues like establishing speed limits. Three partner cities have already set speed limits ranging from 10 to 15 MPH, and the Commission would like them to be consistent across all jurisdictions. They will also explore the possibility of advocating a change in state law to define what a mobility device is versus an electric vehicle. Each jurisdiction establishes its own laws, but the working group will develop proposed common standards, definitions, best practices, and recommendations based on congestion, user type, etc. The Jordan River Trail came about because municipalities were all doing their own thing, and the Jordan River Commission was created to bring those entities together to address common challenges of the regional system. Their current focus was on developing those electric vehicle standards.

In response to a question raised by Chair Carter, Mr. Simonsen stated that rules must be established, and uniform rules are easier to enforce. They were working to develop a mobile app of the Jordan River and would use it to deploy information on things like trail etiquette. However, it can be challenging to enforce rules on a regional system with a decentralized local government structure.

Commissioner Slifka would prefer that the rules and signage be uniform. The appearance of the trail should be uniform across all municipalities as well. Mr. Simonsen stated that they are working toward that goal. The Legacy and Murdock Trails were developed as complete trail systems and are maintained through agencies that have full control over the corridors. The Jordan River Trail was established piecemeal; some portions are 50 years old, and other portions are new. The Commission was working to develop uniform standards that could be implemented over time, and

they believed the Central Jordan River Reconnect Plan project would aid in developing those standards. Mr. Calacino oversaw a signage project in 2018-2019, and they are currently seeking funding to deploy more uniform signage, pavement markings, etc.

In response to a follow-up question from Commissioner Slifka, Mr. Simonsen clarified that the Jordan Valley Commission does not have regulatory jurisdiction. As a cooperation agency, they encourage best practices and coordination across jurisdiction, but that requires local buy-in, which can be challenging due to the amount of turnover at the municipal level.

Commissioner Self stated that the aging population needs to be considered, and motorized wheelchairs were currently not allowed on the trail. She began riding an e-bike so she could continue to ride a bike as she ages, but she was in favor of speed limits.

Commissioner Slifka asked if the public would be involved in the process and have a say in how the trail is developed. She did not want to see the wilderness area landscaped, and she assumed residents of the area also had opinions. Community and Economic Development Director, Jonathan Weidenhamer, reported that the trail is zoned Open Space, and any projects would go through the City's typical process. There are also interactions on a higher level. As the City goes through its general planning process and Neighborhoods Director, Sharen Hauri, and her team interact with the County and other jurisdictions, they work on these issues continually. For example, the County donated land for the police substation after years of discussion and planning. The County planning process is also very detailed and involves workshops, meetings, surveys, etc. The public is provided with many opportunities to provide input on both the City and County levels, but it is often in a different format than Planning Commission public hearings.

## **2. Planning Commission Training.**

Deputy City Attorney, Brienne Brass, reported that all Planning Commissioners have completed the required data privacy training. Each Commissioner is required to complete four hours of training annually, one hour on general responsibilities and three hours on land use topics. Open and Public Meetings Act training is conducted yearly and counts toward that requirement. Ms. Brass then reviewed potential training topics.

An exaction occurs when a property owner is required to dedicate land for public use. The City is lawfully allowed to require a portion of the property if the criteria are met. The Nollan/Dolan tests establish nexus and proportionality requirements.

Chair Carter asked if the City could take part of the land if it would make the property undevelopable. Ms. Brass stated that the property must be able to comply with all City standards in order to move forward with an application.

Vested rights establish the right of a property owner to rely on regulations in effect at the time of application. For example, if it takes four years to finalize a project and City Code changed during that time, the property is vested in the code or use that was active at the time they applied.

Subdivision regulation and improvement guarantees include bonding requirements and other assurances that developers must provide to the City.

Chair Carter asked for training on the topic of drafting ordinances that comply with the Utah Code as it relates to restrictions on the City's ability to regulate its land. The State legislature changes land use regulations yearly, and it would be helpful to understand both what is done and why. Commissioner Southey recommended that the training be held after the end of the next legislative session. Mr. Weidenhamer indicated that Staff had discussed asking Wilf Sommerkorn from the Utah League of Cities and Towns to present on that topic. They had also discussed conducting training on how State affordable housing requirements are being implemented locally.

Ms. Brass asked if the Commission would prefer smaller training sessions across multiple meetings, two longer sessions, or to complete training through videos. After discussion, the consensus was that shorter, 30-minute training sessions immediately prior to business meetings would be preferable. Commissioner Slifka stated that it would be nice to watch a video on a topic beforehand and then discuss the topic and ask questions at the meeting. The Commissioners agreed that a 6:30 p.m. start time would be suitable for training sessions.

Ms. Brass indicated that the Planning Commission bylaws and rules of procedure are available on the City website. She then reviewed the member responsibilities, powers, and duties.

Each member shall be responsible to:

1. Read and study the agenda, Staff Reports, and all attached documents prepared by Staff so that they are fully informed about each application prior to the scheduled Commission meeting.
2. Act in a courteous and respectful manner towards other members, Staff, applicants, and the public during all meetings.
3. Attend Commission meetings and arrive on time.
4. Follow the Rules of Order and Procedure as outlined in Section V. Read and study the agenda, Staff Reports, and all attached documents prepared by Staff.

The Planning Commission shall:

1. Prepare and recommend a General Plan and amendments to the General Plan to the legislative body.
2. Recommend zoning ordinances and maps, and amendments to zoning ordinances and maps, to the legislative body.

As the recommending body, the Planning Commission holds public hearings and receives public comment on the above items. The City Council does not hold a public hearing on these items.

3. Administer provisions of the zoning and development ordinances, where specifically provided for in those ordinances.
4. Recommend action or take action on development applications.
5. Advise the legislative body on matters as the legislative body directs.

6. Hear or decide any matters that the legislative body designates, including the approval or denial of conditional use permits, subdivision plat approvals, and amendments to subdivision plats.
7. Exercise any other powers that are necessary to enable it to perform its function or are delegated to it by the legislative body.

Ms. Brass reminded the Planning Commission that they must elect a Chair and Vice-Chair at its first meeting in 2026. Commissioners also may not use their power to influence any application or obtain a special advantage.

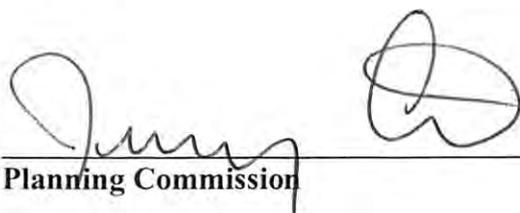
Mr. Weidenhamer asked about the rules regarding interactions with applicants. Ms. Brass reported that the bylaws do not prohibit the Planning Commission from interacting with applicants. However, she advised that they be very wary of such interactions. The Commission's power is administrative, not legislative, and it is obligated to follow City law regardless of its personal opinions on an application. In response to a question raised by Commissioner Slifka, Ms. Brass confirmed that Commissioners may abstain from voting. If they have a personal connection to an applicant, that could be a conflict of interest, and they are required to state on the record that they have a conflict and recuse themselves from participating in the agenda item.

**The Planning Commission Meeting adjourned at 7:22 PM.**



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Community Development



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Planning Commission



*Central Jordan River*  
**RECONNECT**

# SITE ANALYSIS

Final Report

[Updated June 2025] December 2024 | Prepared by PORT

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*Central Jordan River*  
**RECONNECT**

# OVERVIEW

Site Analysis

[Updated June 2025] December 2024 | Prepared by PORT

## Overview

# Introduction

The Central Jordan River Reconnect project aims to enhance the heart of Salt Lake County by restoring the Jordan River's ecological health and elevating its role as a vital public space. This study focuses on a seven-mile length of the Jordan River that spans five cities and is bounded by SR201 on the north and 5400 S on the south. This effort builds on decades of community advocacy, environmental research, and strategic planning, as well as renewed County focus on this stretch of the river over the past 5 years, positioning the river corridor as a symbol of both environmental stewardship and good urbanism. The goal of this planning work is to weave together recreation, community, and nature, creating a regional park system that strengthens the ties between neighborhoods, natural resources, and the region's rich history.



AERIAL VIEW LOOKING NORTHEAST TOWARDS SALT LAKE CITY, WITH TAYLORSVILLE TO THE LEFT AND GERMANIA PARK TO THE RIGHT.



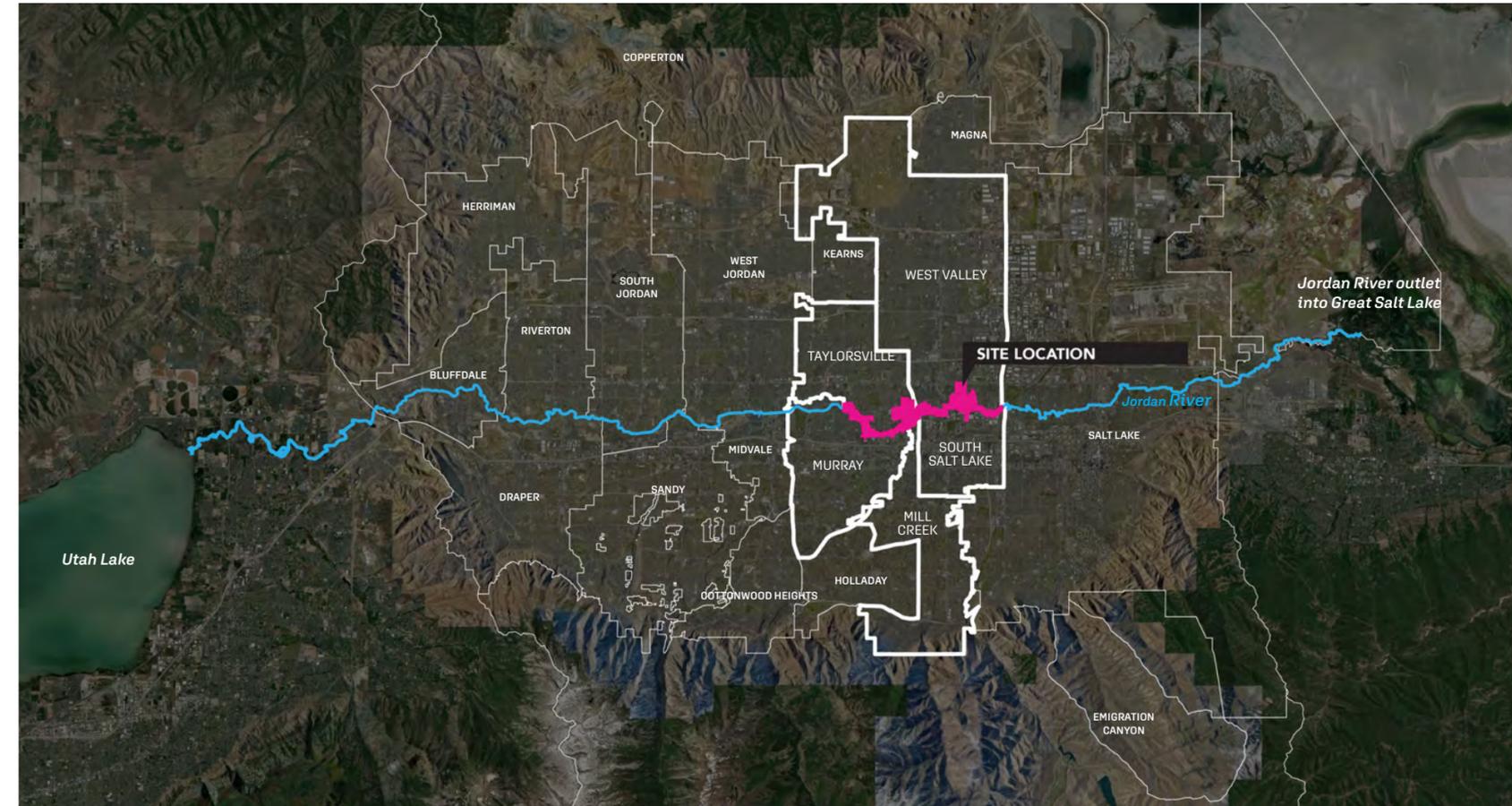
AERIAL VIEW LOOKING SOUTH TOWARDS MILL CREEK, WITH SOUTH SALT LAKE TO THE LEFT AND WEST VALLEY TO THE RIGHT.



AERIAL VIEW OF THE CHANNELIZED JORDAN RIVER IN SOUTH SALT LAKE, WHERE INDUSTRIAL LAND USES DOMINATE THE RIVER'S EDGE.

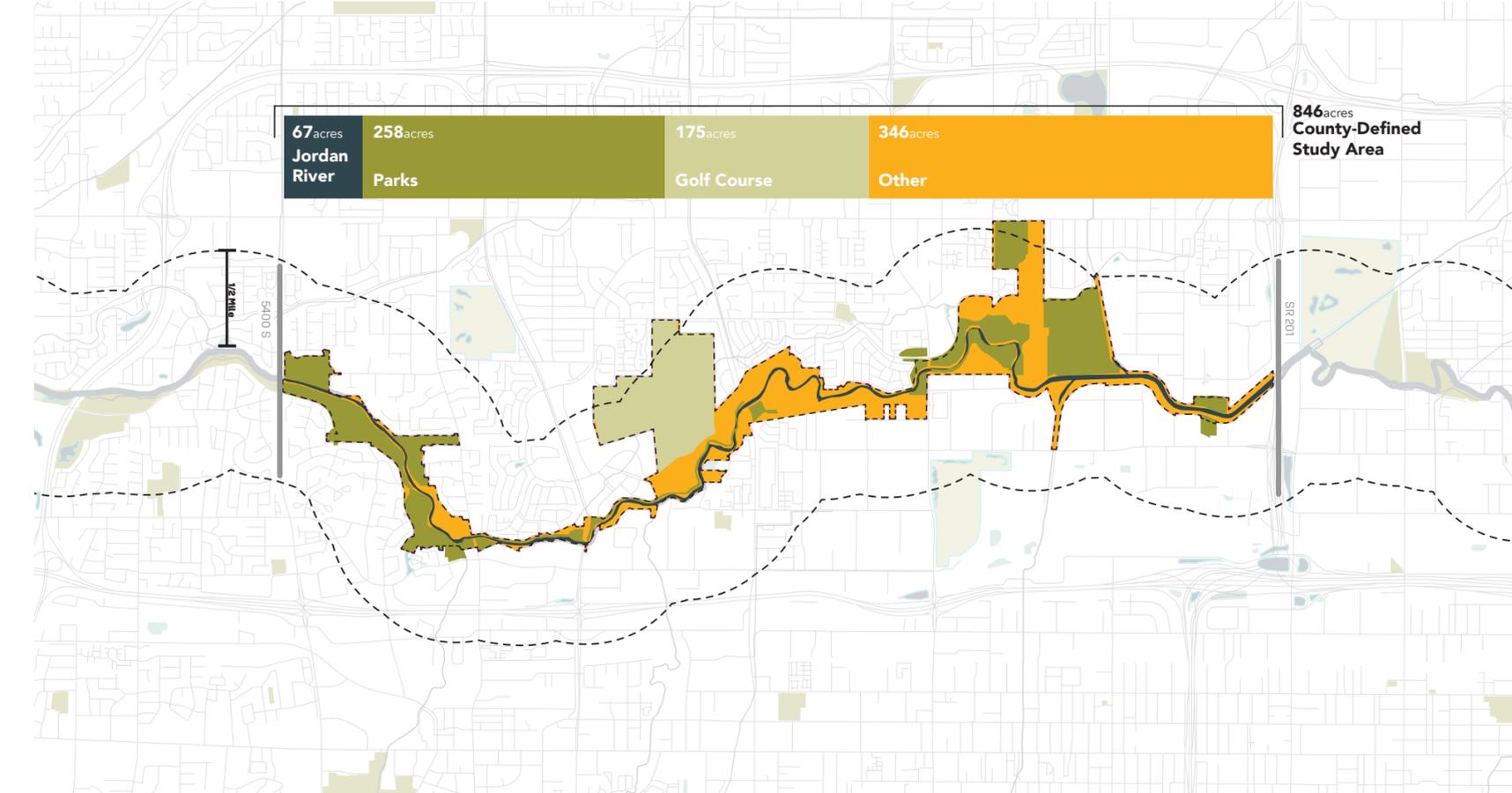
### Study Area Location + Extents

The Central Jordan River Reconnect looks at a 7-mile stretch of the river and its adjacent context. The study area begins at State Route 201, just south of Salt Lake City, and runs to 5400 S. This extent goes through five cities: South Salt Lake, West Valley City, Taylorsville, Millcreek, and Murray.



### Study Area Breakdown

This area of the Jordan River became a state designated recreation zone in 2022. This area covers 250 yards on each side of the Jordan River from the edge of the river between SR-201 and 5400 South. For the purposes of this study, Salt Lake County identified approximately 846 acres of land adjacent to the Jordan River to be considered in this planning process. Since understanding the context around this 846 acres is crucial for having a full picture of the surroundings, this site analysis document typically uses a 0.5 mile buffer zone from the river between SR-201 and 5400 South as the extent of the analysis.



Overview  
**Project Communities**

The Central Jordan River Reconnect project spans a dynamic and diverse study area that includes five municipalities: Murray, South Salt Lake, Taylorsville, West Valley City, and Millcreek. Just north of the study area is Salt Lake City. Each city presents its own unique characteristics, needs, and challenges, creating a complex mosaic of communities along the river corridor. Our approach will focus on inclusive and tailored engagement efforts, coordinated analysis, and place-specific recommendations, ensuring that each city's specific needs are addressed, while also considering their shared challenges and collective goals.

- South Salt Lake**  
3.76 miles of river frontage
- West Valley City**  
3.76 miles of river frontage
- Taylorsville**  
3.26 miles of river frontage
- Millcreek**  
0.67 miles of river frontage
- Murray**  
2.59 miles of river frontage



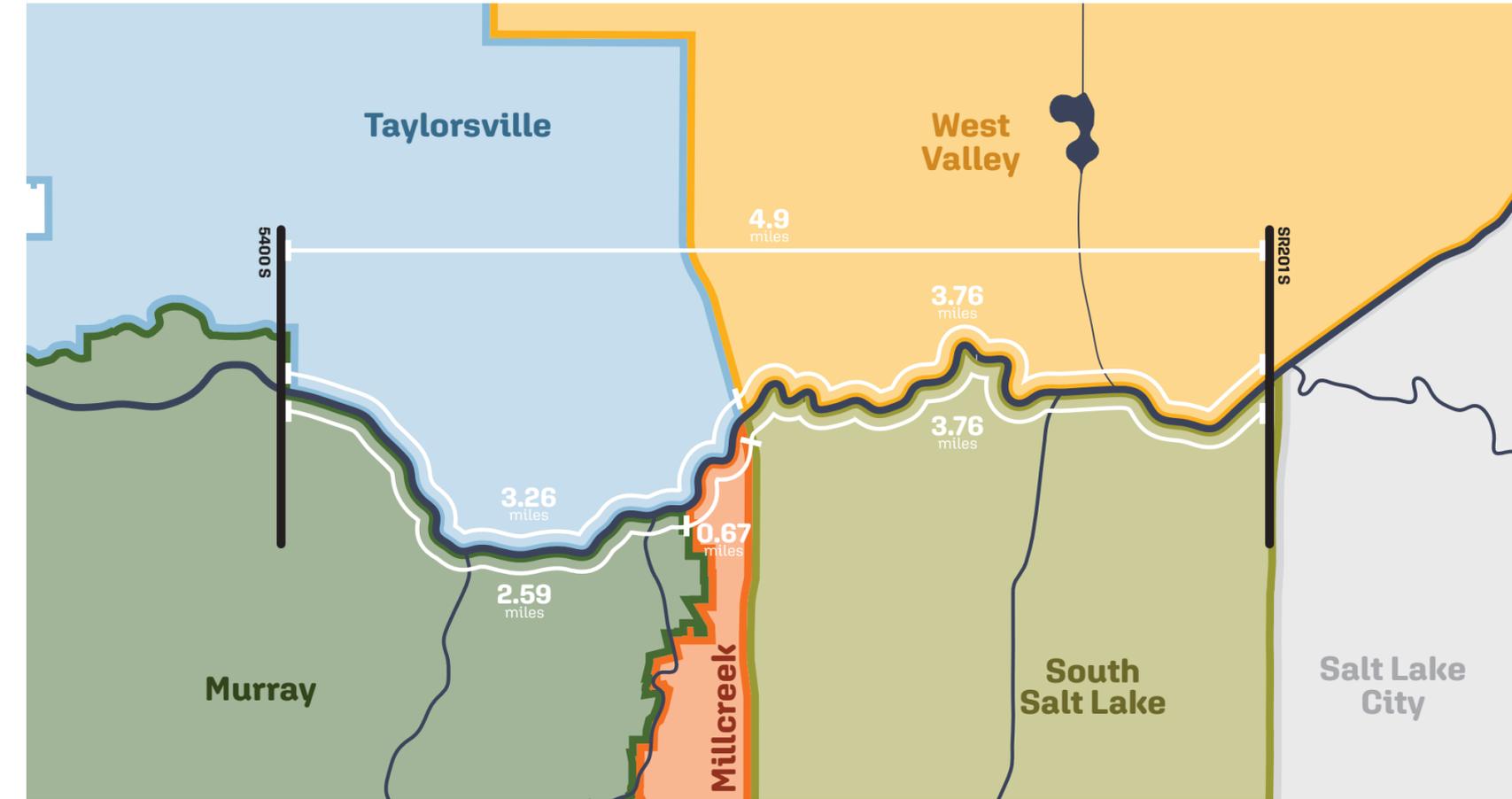
THE RIVER WITH DEVELOPMENT IN TAYLORSVILLE ON THE LEFT AND OPEN SPACE IN MURRAY ON THE RIGHT.



THE RIVER AND JORDAN RIVER TRAIL BETWEEN WEST VALLEY CITY (LEFT) AND SOUTH SALT LAKE (RIGHT).

**River Frontage**

Across the five cities, the way each city meets the river, connects to the trail network, and manages its riverfront is widely varied. While the river is viewed as an asset, coordinating uniform maintenance and management can be a struggle. This planning process endeavors to build a coalition of partners from each of the adjacent cities to develop a strategic and coordinated approach to the riverfront through the Central Jordan River area.



Overview

## County Identified Priorities

### **ACTIVE TRANSPORTATION**

Improving access to and along the river, diversifying modes of transit

### **RIVERINE + ECOLOGICAL FUNCTION**

Improving water quality and river health, improving the riparian ecosystem and provision of habitat

### **RECREATION PLANNING**

Improving opportunities for passive and active recreation

### **ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

Growing the capacity for smart development where appropriate

## Project Themes

**CONNECTED**

CENTRAL JORDAN RIVER

Access, Transportation, + Movement

**ECOLOGICAL**

CENTRAL JORDAN RIVER

Habitat + Hydrology

**ACTIVE**

CENTRAL JORDAN RIVER

Recreation + Programming

**STEWARDED**

CENTRAL JORDAN RIVER

Care, Management, + Maintenance

## Key Challenges

### Navigating Municipal Boundaries

A major challenge of this project is navigating the differing priorities, regulations, and community identity of each of the 5 cities, plus Salt Lake County. Achieving a shared vision for the Central Jordan River corridor requires navigating these political and logistical complexities, making collaboration not just important, but absolutely critical to the project's success.

### Access & Connectivity Challenges

Highways and industrial areas surrounding the Jordan River limit connectivity to the waterfront. While there is currently a network of public transit, bike infrastructure, and pedestrian walkways near the River, stronger east-west connections and more direct access points are needed to better connect surrounding communities to the river.

### Ecological Health & Restoration

The Jordan River is a highly developed and altered river system. Returning to pre-development conditions is infeasible given the amount of development that has occurred within the river's historic floodplain. Thus, efforts to improve the hydrologic and ecological function of the River should instead focus on enhancements to the river's form and function with the goals of protecting and expanding habitat for wildlife, improving erosion and flooding, and bolstering opportunities for the enjoyment of the river.

### Recreation Diversity & Amenity Enhancements

The Central Jordan River currently has numerous parks and open spaces which provide a variety of active and passive recreation opportunities. However, expanding the diversity of types of recreation, improving amenities, and increasing the programming of these spaces could draw more users to the riverfront. In addition, enhancing activation and opportunities for interaction with the river itself would amplify the regional park as a unique destination within the valley.

### Management & Safety

Effective park management, regular maintenance, and consistent safety measures are needed to enhance the visitor experience. Collaboration with municipalities and service providers is essential to ensure cohesive land use and community well-being.



LOOKING SOUTHEAST TOWARDS THE WASATCH RANGE, WITH PIONEER CROSSING REGIONAL PARK IN THE FOREGROUND.

# Overview Schedule

This project will evolve through a collaborative, phased approach:

- PART 1: PROJECT DISCOVERY
- PART 2: CIVIC ENGAGEMENT (VISIONING)
- PART 3: PLAN DEVELOPMENT
- PART 4: PLAN COMPLETION

Inclusive and multilingual engagement is at the heart of the Central Jordan River Reconnect project. Given the diverse populations across the five municipalities, our engagement strategy will:

- Prioritize multilingual communication, ensuring that all materials and outreach efforts are available in English and Spanish.
- Consider the collective challenges and shared goals of the region. These include environmental restoration, flood control, and ensuring that the Jordan River becomes a unifying space for all communities along its course.

By fostering collaboration among local governments, community organizations, and residents, the Central Jordan River Reconnect project aims to not only restore the river's ecological function but also strengthen social and cultural connections between the diverse populations that call this region home.

## Public Outreach Approach and Schedule

### Part 2 Visioning 2024

- ### 1 Connecting

EARLY OCT 2024

**GOALS:**  
Raising awareness, getting to know the study area and the communities around it
- ### 2 Imagining

LATE OCT/NOV/DEC 2024

**GOALS:**  
Verifying goals and guiding principles and understanding community priorities

### Part 3 Plan Development Late 2025 - Early 2026

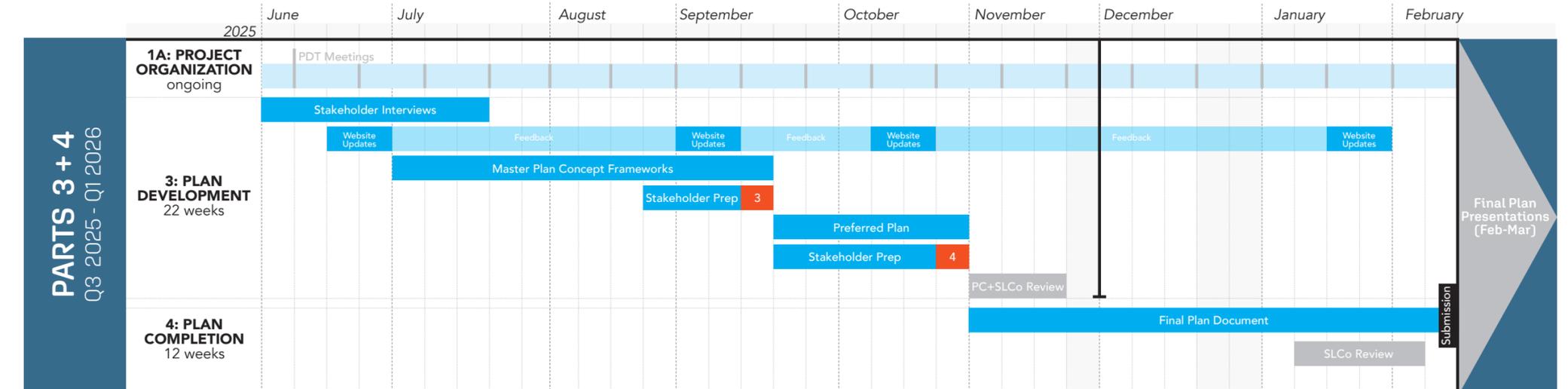
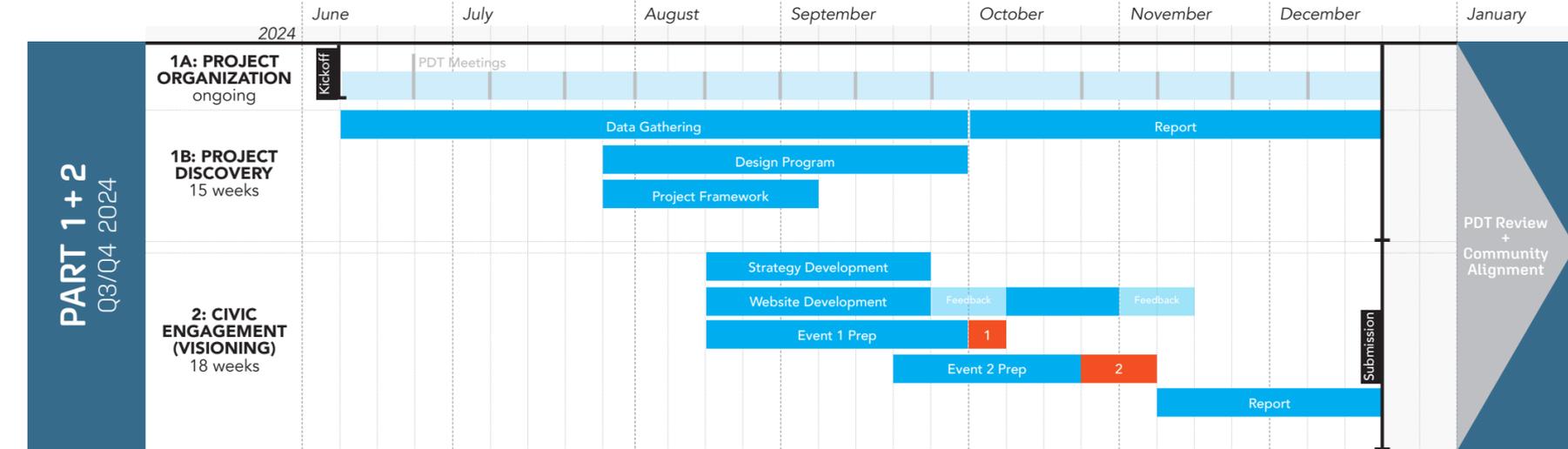
- ### 3 Alternatives

SEP 2025

**GOALS:**  
Gathering feedback + impressions from the alternative plans presented
- ### 4 Culminating

FEB 2026

**GOALS:**  
Presenting final plan for comments, building enthusiasm and momentum for next steps



## Overview

# Team

The Central Jordan River Reconnect project is guided by a collaborative and multi-disciplinary approach, with the Salt Lake County Parks and Recreation Division serving as the project's client. The Jordan River Commission (JRC) also serves a central role in the development of this work. In addition to the JRC, the County has brought together a range of stakeholders, technical experts, and government agencies to ensure the successful planning, design, and implementation of this important river restoration initiative.

### Project Development Team (Client Group)

The Salt Lake County Parks and Recreation Division leads this initiative, working closely with various county departments and local municipalities. The County's leadership ensures that the project aligns with broader regional goals, including ecological restoration, flood management, and enhanced public access along the Jordan River corridor.

Key departments from the County include:

- **Parks Planning and Development:** Overseeing the strategic vision and day-to-day management of the project.
- **Parks Operations and Maintenance:** Consulting on the needs and goals of the operations and maintenance team.
- **Flood Control:** Mandated with protecting life, property, and watershed from damage or destruction from flood and storm waters

### Consultant Team

Salt Lake County has contracted a team of design and technical experts to supplement its in-house expertise and bring innovative solutions to the project. The consultant team is led by **PORT**, a firm specializing in landscape architecture and urban design.

Collaborating with *PORT* are:

- **Horrocks Engineers**, providing civil engineering services with a focus on floodplain analysis, stormwater management, and trail planning.
- **Rio ASE**, specializing in hydrology and river restoration, ensuring the project's alignment with water management and river health goals. **Ecosystem Sciences**, offering expertise in ecological restoration and habitat management.
- **Psomas**, contributing land use planning expertise, focusing on zoning, urban development impacts, and integrating land use with environmental preservation.
- **Horrocks Engineers**, providing civil engineering services with a focus on floodplain analysis, stormwater management, and trail planning.
- **Zions Public Finance**, focusing on economic impact analysis and financial strategies to ensure long-term viability.

Together, this consultant team brings a diverse range of skills and experience to the project, ensuring that it meets both environmental goals and community needs.

### Key Stakeholders and Collaborative Efforts

The Central Jordan River Reconnect brings together a wide variety of stakeholders—local residents, environmental groups, community organizations, and public agencies—all working together to revitalize the river corridor. These collaborative efforts are crucial in tackling the complex challenges faced by the river.

Stakeholders and Advisory Committees include:

- **Jordan River Commission:** As an advisory body, the Commission comprises representatives from municipalities, counties, and special districts, fostering regional consensus. While it does not have regulatory authority, it plays a crucial role in coordinating efforts among local governments.
- **Technical Advisory Committee (TAC):** A diverse group of experts and stakeholders assembled for this project that ensures that technical aspects related to environmental health, flood management, and water resources are thoroughly evaluated throughout the project, including:
  - **Utah Division of Water Quality**
  - **Utah Division of Wildlife Resources**
  - **U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service**
- **Local Municipalities:** Cities along the river, including *Murray, South Salt Lake, Taylorsville, West Valley City, and Millcreek*, as well as Salt Lake City, are active participants, offering input on recreational needs, safety, and community access.
- **Nonprofit Partners:** Organizations such as Jordan River Foundation and Seven Canyons Trust play important roles in community engagement, ecological advocacy, and long-term sustainability of the river.

### Governmental Involvement

Several governmental agencies are critical to the success of the Central Jordan River Reconnect project, each contributing their unique expertise and resources:

- **State of Utah Division of Forestry, Fire, and State Lands:** Oversees riverbed management and ensures the ecological health of the river.
- **U.S. Army Corps of Engineers:** Provides oversight on any activities that could affect the river's flow and environmental integrity, including flood management projects.
- **Salt Lake County Public Works:** Responsible for flood control, stormwater management, and the maintenance of public infrastructure along the river corridor.
- **Local Public Works and Planning Departments:** Cities involved in the project manage trails, parks, and zoning issues, coordinating closely with the county and other stakeholders to ensure the river remains a valuable community resource.

The active involvement of these agencies ensures a cohesive and comprehensive approach to managing the river's diverse needs, from flood mitigation to enhancing public safety and recreation.

## Overview History

The Jordan River has shaped the Salt Lake Valley for thousands of years, serving as a critical natural resource and cultural landmark for the region. Its story is one of transformation, shaped by both natural forces and human intervention.

- Agricultural practices dramatically altered the river's natural landscape, transforming wetlands and floodplains into farmlands.
- Colonization altered how Indigenous peoples, such as the Ute tribe, and later settlers, interacted with the river, changing its cultural significance and ecological function.
- Urban development introduced new challenges, further disconnecting the river from its natural state and communities.

### Pre-Settlement: Geology and Ecology

Around 20,000 BCE, Lake Bonneville covered much of modern-day Utah, including what is now the Jordan River corridor. As the climate changed and the lake drained around 16,800 BCE, it left behind the Great Salt Lake, fed by the Bear, Weber, and Jordan Rivers. Over time, the Jordan River evolved into a vital riparian habitat, supporting 12,500 acres of wetlands, oxbows, and ponds.

Before European settlement, the river fluctuated seasonally, fed by mountain streams and melting snow from the Uinta and Wasatch Mountains. In spring, its waters swelled, flooding adjacent plains and creating rich ecosystems of marshes and wetlands. These wetlands slowed the river's flow, reducing erosion and supporting diverse plant and animal species.

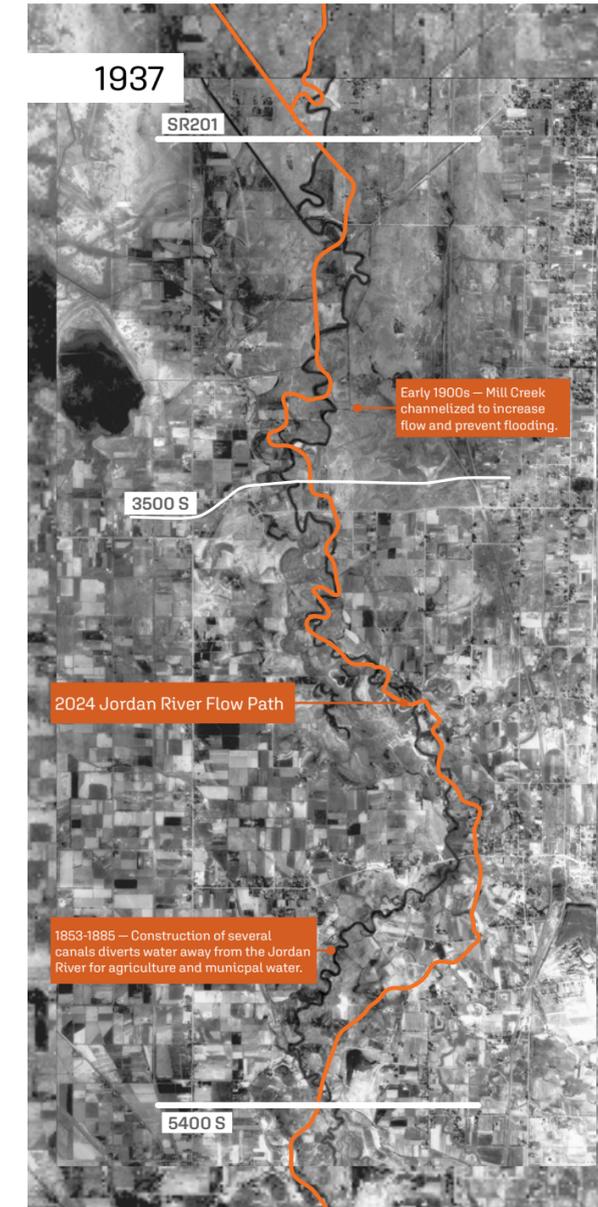
### First Inhabitants and Early Settlement

Humans have lived along the Jordan River for over 10,000 years. The first known inhabitants were nomadic hunter-gatherers, followed by the Fremont people around 400 CE, who farmed and hunted in the area. By the 1350s, ancestors of the Ute, Goshute, Paiute, and Shoshone Tribes began to inhabit the region, utilizing the river as a source of food and materials.

European settlers, particularly members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, arrived in 1847, marking a profound shift in the river's history. The settlers, inspired by the biblical Jordan River, named it after the river in the Middle East. By 1850, they had established communities along the river and its tributaries. These settlers began diverting water for agriculture and flood prevention, transforming the river into a key resource for sustaining the valley's growing population.

### 19th and 20th Century: Transformation and Industrial Use

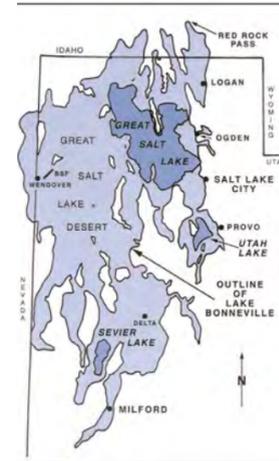
As settlement expanded, so did human impacts on the Jordan River. In the mid-1800s, the natural flow of the river was altered by the construction of major canals, including the Surplus Canal in 1885, which diverted water to support agricultural development. By 1892, the river's role as a natural outlet for Utah Lake was further controlled by dams and reservoirs, which drastically reduced flooding and altered the natural flow cycles of the river.



Throughout the 19th and 20th centuries, the Jordan River became increasingly industrialized. The river served as a dumping ground for agricultural and industrial waste, leading to significant pollution. By the 1950s, the Army Corps of Engineers constructed levees to control flooding, straightening sections of the river and accelerating erosion.

**Agriculture + development have fundamentally changed the river landscape.**

## History—PRE-SETTLEMENT HYDROLOGIC AND GEOLOGIC HISTORY



Outline of ancient Lake Bonneville  
<https://geology.utah.gov/popular/great-salt-lake/>



The Bonneville Salt Flats. Although Lake Bonneville was freshwater, it contained salts that concentrated as the lake contracted. Much of the salt now in the Great Salt Lake is originally from Lake Bonneville.  
<https://geology.utah.gov/popular/great-salt-lake/>



Due to the changing climate, the Great Salt Lake continues to decline in size today. Left: July 1986, Right: July 2022.  
<https://greatsaltlakenews.org/latest-news/ksl-com/why-utah-is-updating-its-answers-to-common-questions-about-the-great-salt-lake>



## History—EARLY HUMAN HISTORY + COLONIZATION



The Galena - Soóñkahni Preserve is a 250-acre preserve along the Jordan River Parkway trail containing a 3,000 year old archaeological site and monument to Utah's Native American tribes.  
<https://archive.slttrib.com/article.php?id=2339781&itype=CMSID>



A fur-trapping rendezvous of early European colonials  
<https://community.utah.gov/pre-european-settlement-crossroads-and-the-idea-of-home/>



Natural Jordan river corridor, 1901  
<https://www.loc.gov/resource/det.4a09208/>

### 20,000 BCE

Lake Bonneville covered much of what is now Western Utah; at its largest, was 325 miles long and 135 miles wide<sup>1</sup>

### 16,800 BCE

Drier climate caused the water levels in Lake Bonneville to drop significantly over about 2,000 years. This reduced the lake to what exists today- the Great Salt Lake, fed by the Bear, Weber, and Jordan Rivers, and Utah Lake<sup>1</sup>

### 16,800 BCE - 10,000 BCE

The newly formed Jordan River became important riparian habitat with oxbows, wetlands, ponds with approximately 12,500 acres of wetland habitat.<sup>2</sup>

The water levels of the Jordan River fluctuated greatly in different seasons and cyclically depending on water flowing into Utah Lake and its tributaries (specifically, snowfall and rainfall that drains from the Uinta and Wasatch Mountains).

River flooded in the spring due to snow melt and flowed into adjacent floodplain for a few month of the year, flow diminished in winter.

Natural meander corridor that included oxbows, marshes, sloughs, porthole ponds would slow the flow rate of the river, allowing for minimized scouring, entrenchment, and low velocities.

#### References

1. Tracy Aviary Nature Center: <https://tracyaviary.org/nature-center/about-pia-okwai/history-of-pia-okwai/history-of-the-jordan-river/>
2. Utah History Encyclopedia: [https://www.uen.org/utah\\_history\\_encyclopedia/j/JORDAN\\_RIVER.shtml](https://www.uen.org/utah_history_encyclopedia/j/JORDAN_RIVER.shtml)
3. Jordan River Natural Conservation Corridor Report 2001
4. Blueprint Jordan River 2008
5. Brigham Young University. (1996). UTAH HISTORY ENCYCLOPEDIA - POWELL,AK, EDITOR. Brigham Young University Studies., 35(3), 170-172.

### 10,000 BCE

First known inhabitants along the Jordan were members of the Desert Archaic Culture, a group of nomadic hunter-gatherers.

### 400 - 1350 A.D.

Next known inhabitants were the Fremont people (400 A.D. to around 1350 A.D.) These people were composed of bands of hunters and farmers. Eventually, changing climate made farming unfavorable, leading to the disappearance of the Fremont.

Ancestors of the present-day Ute, Paiute, and Northwestern Shoshone begin to arrive in the area in the 1300's.

### 1350 - 19th Century

Goshute and Eastern Shoshone Tribes, as well as the Ute (south) used this area of the river as a source of food and materials

At the time of arrival of European settlers, the area bordered land occupied by several tribes, such as the Timpanogos band of the Utes in Utah Valley, the Goshutes on the western side of the Oquirrh Mountain Range, and the Northwestern Shoshone north of the Salt Lake Valley.

### 1776

Franciscan missionary Silvestre Velez de Escalante and a party of Spanish colonials entered the valley and explored Utah Lake

### 1824

The next group of Europeans to see the Jordan river was a party led by Etienne Provost, a French Canadian trapper. The party was attacked at a Shoshone camp along the Jordan in retaliation for the murder of a local chief.

#### References

1. Tracy Aviary Nature Center: <https://tracyaviary.org/nature-center/about-pia-okwai/history-of-pia-okwai/history-of-the-jordan-river/>
2. Utah History Encyclopedia: [https://www.uen.org/utah\\_history\\_encyclopedia/j/JORDAN\\_RIVER.shtml](https://www.uen.org/utah_history_encyclopedia/j/JORDAN_RIVER.shtml)
3. Jordan River Natural Conservation Corridor Report 2001
4. Blueprint Jordan River 2008
5. Brigham Young University. (1996). UTAH HISTORY ENCYCLOPEDIA - POWELL,AK, EDITOR. Brigham Young University Studies., 35(3), 170-172.

## History—MORMON SETTLEMENT, INDUSTRY, + THE POLLUTION OF THE JORDAN



Painting of Mormon pioneers entering the Great Salt Lake Valley by C.C.A. Christensen, Brigham Young University Museum of Art



Early photo of the Jordan River near Salt Lake  
[https://www.uen.org/utah\\_history\\_encyclopedia/j/JORDAN\\_RIVER.shtml](https://www.uen.org/utah_history_encyclopedia/j/JORDAN_RIVER.shtml)



1891 Oblique drawing of Salt Lake City showing development and farming near the banks of the Jordan River  
<https://slco.org/surveyor/mapping-gis/free-historical-maps/>

## History—RIVER MODIFICATIONS



Dam at the Jordan River narrows in 1901  
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jordan\\_River\\_%28Utah%29](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jordan_River_%28Utah%29)



Dam and pumping house at the Jordan River Narrows



Salt Lake City has dealt with periods of severe flooding and drought throughout history, including this 1983 flood that turned downtown streets into rivers due to record high precipitation.  
<https://www.ksl.com/article/41402975/looking-back-at-the-1983-flood-that-sent-a-river-through-downtown>

1847

The first members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, led by Brigham Young, arrive in the valley and begin establishing farms and settlements along the river and its tributaries. These settlers began altering the river by digging ditches and canals, building dams, and installing pumps to divert water for drinking, irrigation, and industrial use

1848

Pioneers cross the Jordan River to settle the west side of the valley

Pollution of the Jordan

Since the settling of the valley, the Jordan became heavily polluted, acting as a conduit for raw sewage, agricultural runoff, and mining waste traveling to the Great Salt Lake. 40 smelters contaminated the river with heavy metals, mostly arsenic and lead.

Late 1800's

The river was used to transport construction materials. This included floating granite blocks down to the city during construction of the Salt Lake Temple, and for logs and ties used on the Central Utah Railroad.<sup>3</sup>

1887

Cooper deposits were discovered at Bingham Canyon in the Oquirrh Mountains, and copper mining began, including an open pit mine at Kennecott.

Early 1900's

Mills were established near the Jordan River in Midvale and West Jordan to process ore

References

1. Tracy Aviary Nature Center: <https://tracyaviary.org/nature-center/about-pia-okwai/history-of-pia-okwai/history-of-the-jordan-river/>
2. Utah History Encyclopedia: [https://www.uen.org/utah\\_history\\_encyclopedia/j/JORDAN\\_RIVER.shtml](https://www.uen.org/utah_history_encyclopedia/j/JORDAN_RIVER.shtml)
3. Jordan River Natural Conservation Corridor Report 2001
4. Blueprint Jordan River 2008
5. Brigham Young University. (1996). UTAH HISTORY ENCYCLOPEDIA - POWELL, AK, EDITOR. Brigham Young University Studies., 35(3), 170-172.

1800's - 1950

Water from the Jordan river sustained agriculture in the Salt Lake Valley- by 1950, Salt Lake County had 489,000 acres devoted to farming.

1847

Early settlers began altering the natural meander corridor river by digging ditches and canals, building dams, and installing pumps to divert water for drinking, irrigation, and industrial use.

1849

The earliest dam and ditch along the Jordan was constructed to irrigate land on the west side of the river near present-day Taylorsville

1853 - 1885

A total of 5 canals were constructed to divert water for farming, including the construction of the Surplus Canal in 1885.

1872

The first dam in the Narrows was constructed, sparking controversy among residents who thought it raised the level of the lake

1885

A compromise was reached about the acceptable elevation of Utah Lake, resulting in new regulations to control when the river would be impeded by dams and flood gates.

1892

Utah Lake is established as a storage reservoir under the Morse Decree

1901

A major drought caused the Jordan River to periodically stop flowing

1902 - 1911

Dams and pumps were added to regulate water flow from the original cyclical flooding cycle to eliminate peak flows

1934

Another drought caused Utah Lake levels to drop so low that the pumps were rendered useless and the Jordan River ran dry. This happened again in 1992.

1952

After a major flood in 1952, a Diversion Dam is built by the Army Corps of Engineers. After this followed a program of dredging and straightening the river channel in Salt Lake County to increase river velocity and reduce the damage caused by periodic spring floods. This accelerated erosion and led to the loss of riparian vegetation in the corridor. The river was shifted to opposite sides of the floodplain in Midvale and Murray as part of local smelter operations

1961

Flood control project constructed levees from Mill Creek to head of Surplus Canal



A trash boom in Jordan River traps floating garbage in an effort to protect Great Salt Lake wetlands and waterfowl. <https://www.ksl.com/article/46288298/jordan-river-trash-boom-targets-floating-garbage-protects-great-salt-lake-wetlands>



Three Creeks Confluence Park; where Emigration, Red Butte, and Parleys creeks meet the Jordan River. New projects like this one aim to reimagine the ecological and recreational potential of the Jordan River. <https://www.sltrib.com/news/2021/07/03/projects-set-improve/>



The Jordan River Parkway trail increases public awareness and advocacy for a cleaner, safer recreation corridor in the heart of the city. <https://www.sltrib.com/news/2020/10/05/utahns-want-cleaner-more/>



Rendering from "Jordan Rising," an entry for the On the River's Edge ideas competition in 2019. <https://www.migcom.com/news/%E2%80%9Cjordan-rising%E2%80%9D-wins-two-utah-awards>

## Overview Conservation + Renewal

In response to growing environmental concerns, efforts to restore and protect the Jordan River gained momentum. The Jordan River Commission, established in 2010, brought together government and community groups to address the river's ecological health. Today, the river spans over 50 miles and flows through three counties and 15 cities, playing a vital role in connecting Utah Lake to the Great Salt Lake.

Efforts are underway to restore the Jordan River to a more natural state, preserving its ecological value while also enhancing recreational opportunities for the surrounding communities. These ongoing conservation efforts reflect a renewed commitment to balancing human needs with the protection of the river's natural environment.



RESTORATION EFFORTS AT MILL CREEK CONFLUENCE, FEBRUARY 2018. SOURCE: SOURCE CANYONS TRUST

### 1960's

In the 1960's, the Jordan continued to be used as a waste disposal canal for slaughterhouses, packing plants, mineral reduction mills, and laundries. However, this decade marks a turning point in acknowledgment and action towards cleaning up the polluted river, and some sewage treatment efforts began.

### 1970

Jordan River Parkway is proposed as a flood control measure, with plans for trails, recreation opportunities, floodplain restoration, pollution cleanup

### 1972

Clean Water Act is passed. New effluent standards for industrial discharges further limited pollution into the 21st century.

### 1973

Utah State Legislature created the Provo-Jordan River Parkway Authority to head flood control measures, recreational facilities and conservation projects

### 1980

By this decade, industrial pollution began to decrease and Jordan River started to be reimaged as an urban oasis and recreational space

### 1986

\$18 million used to purchase lands around the Jordan River and construct the Murray Golf course, several smaller parks, and about 4 miles of canoe runs and trails

### 2008

Blueprint Jordan River was published and represented the first comprehensive effort to develop a public vision for the future of the whole Jordan River corridor.

### 2010

The majority of the 40-mile Jordan Parkway trail is finished from Utah Lake to the Davis County Border

The Jordan River Commission is formed as a group of governmental and non-governmental entities invested in the Jordan River

### 2019

"On the River's Edge" competition generates community interest and design ideas for a 3.5-mile stretch of the Jordan River Parkway.

#### References

1. Tracy Aviary Nature Center: <https://tracyaviary.org/nature-center/about-pia-okwai/history-of-pia-okwai/history-of-the-jordan-river/>
2. Utah History Encyclopedia: [https://www.uen.org/utah\\_history\\_encyclopedia/j/JORDAN\\_RIVER.shtml](https://www.uen.org/utah_history_encyclopedia/j/JORDAN_RIVER.shtml)
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5. Brigham Young University. (1996). UTAH HISTORY ENCYCLOPEDIA - POWELL,AK, EDITOR. Brigham Young University Studies., 35(3), 170-172.

## Overview Past Plans

The Central Jordan River Reconnect project builds on more than a decade of collaborative efforts aimed at revitalizing the Jordan River. From the 2008 Blueprint Jordan River plan to the more recent 2022 Blueprint Refresh, stakeholders across multiple municipalities, environmental organizations, and government agencies have come together to restore the river's ecological health, enhance recreation, and create a connected regional asset. These cooperative initiatives have established the river as a critical resource for urban communities, fostering new recreational opportunities while protecting vital habitats. This project builds upon that legacy, uniting diverse partners to ensure the Jordan River is sustained as a thriving, resilient ecosystem.

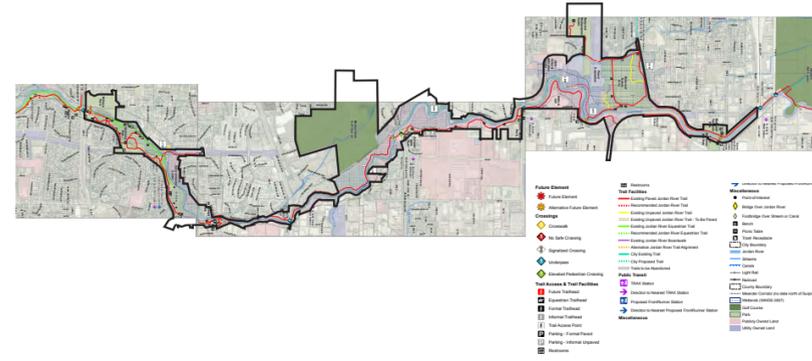


### BLUEPRINT RIVER JORDAN 2008

Prepared For: Jordan River Commission

#### OVERALL GOALS + VISION

- Habitat + natural systems
- Water and River
- Recreation + access
- Transportation
- Riverside development standards
- Communications, education, art

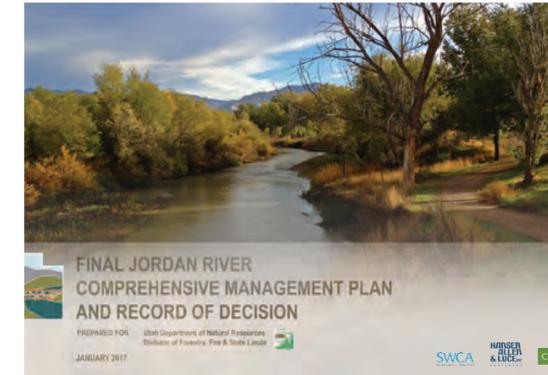


### JORDAN RIVER TRAIL MASTER PLAN 2008

Prepared For: Salt Lake County

#### TRAIL DEVELOPMENT

- Trail development standards
- Trail maintenance
- Environmental guidelines
- Trail recommendations

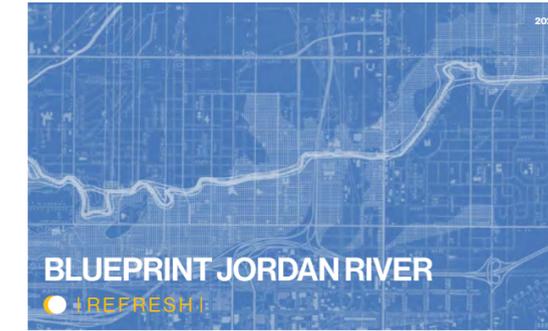


### COMPREHENSIVE MANAGEMENT PLAN 2017

Prepared For: Utah Department of Natural Resources (FFSL)

#### MANAGEMENT + PRIORITY AREAS

- Management stakeholders
- River use class system
- Existing condition and management strategies for:
  - Ecosystem resources
  - Wildlife and habitat
  - Water and Hydrology
  - Community



### BLUEPRINT RIVER JORDAN REFRESH 2022

Prepared For: Jordan River Commission

#### OVERALL GOALS + VISION (UPDATED)

- Habitat + natural systems
- Water and River
- Comfort and Inclusivity
- Recreation
- Safety and wellbeing
- Transportation + Development
- Communications, education, art



### CENTRAL JORDAN RIVER RECONNECT 2025

Prepared For: Salt Lake County

#### IN PROGRESS

Overview  
**Past Plans**

The 2022 Blueprint Jordan River Refresh gathered extensive community input to identify key priorities for the future of the entire Jordan River corridor. Residents emphasize the importance of improving water quality, expanding recreational opportunities, preserving natural habitats, and enhancing safety along the river. Preserving natural open spaces was a key concern. Perceptions of the river acknowledged that it was an important space, but many people also ranked it as dirty and unsafe.

The Central Jordan River Reconnect project builds directly on these themes by seeking to implement improvements within the 7-mile study area that focuses on creating an ecological, active, connected, and well stewarded Jordan River.

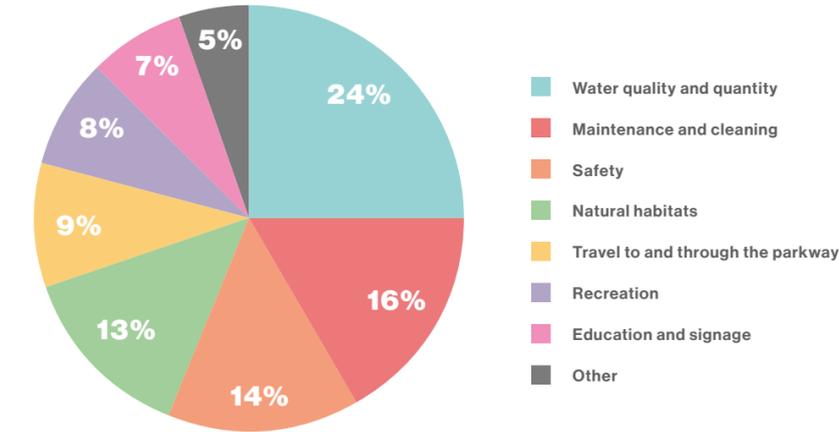
The main takeaways from the 2022 Blueprint Jordan River Refresh community survey reflect the community's priorities for the Jordan River corridor. *Key concerns included:*

1. **Water Quality and Quantity:** The top priority for respondents was ensuring the river's water quality and managing flows to improve its ecological health and functionality.
2. **Maintenance and Cleaning:** Regular upkeep of the parkway, including litter removal and landscaping, was highlighted as a critical need.
3. **Safety:** Improving safety along the river and its trail systems was a key concern, with recommendations for better lighting and patrols.
4. **Habitat Preservation:** Protecting and restoring natural habitats along the river to support local wildlife ranked high on the list of priorities.
5. **Recreation:** Expanding recreational opportunities, particularly those that connect people with the river, was also a significant community desire.

These insights directly inform the Central Jordan River Reconnect Project, which aims to address these community-identified needs by enhancing water management, expanding recreation, improving safety, and restoring habitats.

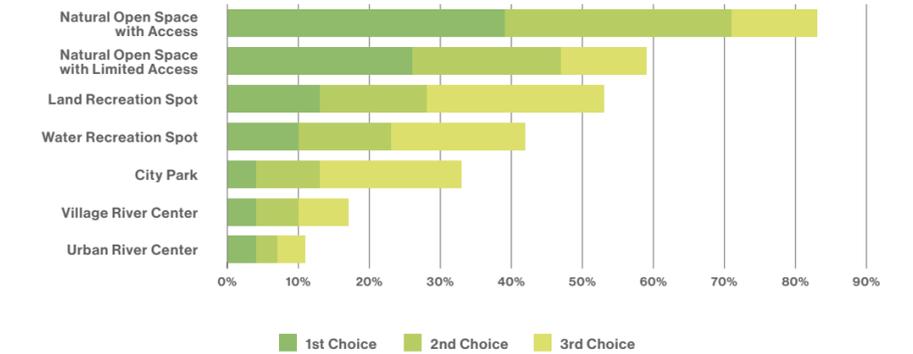
**Blueprint Jordan River Refresh—COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT TAKEAWAYS**

PRIORITIES FOR IMPROVING THE JORDAN RIVER PARKWAY



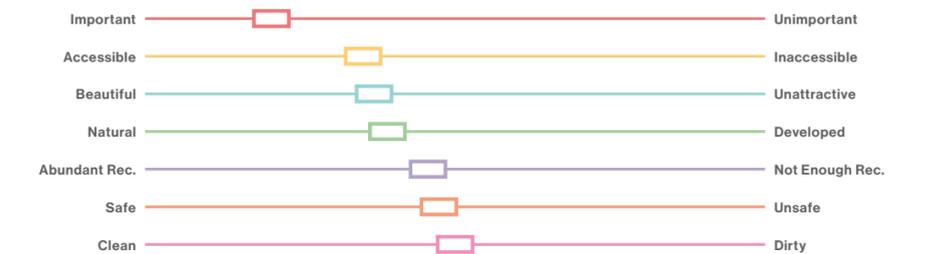
**“Over 8,000 people contributed their thoughts and ideas to the refreshed vision for the Jordan River Parkway in focus groups, online meetings, and an online survey.”**

IMPORTANT PLACES TO CREATE AND PRESERVE IN THE JORDAN RIVER PARKWAY



The survey identified natural open spaces with or without public access as the most important places in the parkway, followed by recreational spaces.

PERCEPTIONS OF THE JORDAN RIVER PARKWAY



Survey respondents rated the Jordan River Parkway highly on importance, accessibility, beauty, and nature. Perceptions about recreation opportunities, safety, and cleanliness were mixed.

## Overview Communities

The Central Jordan River Reconnect project spans a dynamic and diverse study area that includes five municipalities: Murray, South Salt Lake, Taylorsville, West Valley City, and Millcreek. Each city presents its own unique characteristics, needs, and challenges, creating a complex mosaic of communities along the river corridor. Our approach will focus on inclusive and tailored engagement efforts, ensuring that each city's specific needs are addressed, while also considering their shared challenges and collective goals.

### Murray

Murray, with a population of 50,637, is characterized by a relatively high homeownership rate and a median household income of over \$81,000. However, 14.2% of residents speak a language other than English at home, making multilingual communication essential. Murray's location along the river also makes it a key ecological hub, home to the Kennecott Nature Center.

### South Salt Lake

South Salt Lake is the most ethnically diverse municipality in the study area, with 32.5% of residents speaking a language other than English and 24.7% identifying as Hispanic/Latino. The city also faces significant economic challenges, with a 14.6% poverty rate and lower homeownership. South Salt Lake is the smallest (by area and population) city in the valley.

### Taylorsville

Taylorsville, with its population of over 60,000, is a relatively young and diverse city, where 23.7% of residents are Hispanic/Latino and 27.6% speak a language other than English at home. The city has a higher-than-average percentage of youth under 18 (27.2%) and relatively high homeownership.

### West Valley City

West Valley City, the largest city in the study area, is home to 140,230 residents, with 39.4% identifying as Hispanic/Latino. Nearly half the population (46.4%) speaks a language other than English at home. Addressing the needs of West Valley's diverse and multilingual population will be essential, particularly in terms of creating accessible recreation spaces and supporting community cohesion. Given the higher poverty and unemployment rates in some areas, efforts must prioritize economic inclusivity and opportunities for all residents.

### Millcreek

Millcreek's residents are on average more affluent than the other cities and 51.3% of residents hold a bachelor's degree or higher. Millcreek was incorporated in 2016 making it the youngest of the five municipalities. The population of Millcreek has a large percentage of seniors.

## Population Statistics

The cities along the river vary in size, density, demographics, socioeconomic status, and community priorities, resulting in a diverse array of planning needs. Understanding the existing communities, their opportunities and challenges, and priorities for interacting with the river will be essential to crafting a plan that is mutually beneficial.

### TAYLORSVILLE

Population: 60,448



- Highest population density
- Second highest % Hispanic/Latinx residents

### MURRAY

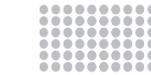
Population: 50,637



- Highest % White residents
- Lowest poverty rate
- Highest % of seniors

### MILLCREEK

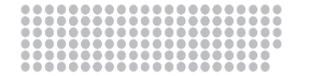
Population: 63,380



- Highest median household income
- Highest rate of higher education
- Second highest % seniors

### WEST VALLEY

Population: 140,230



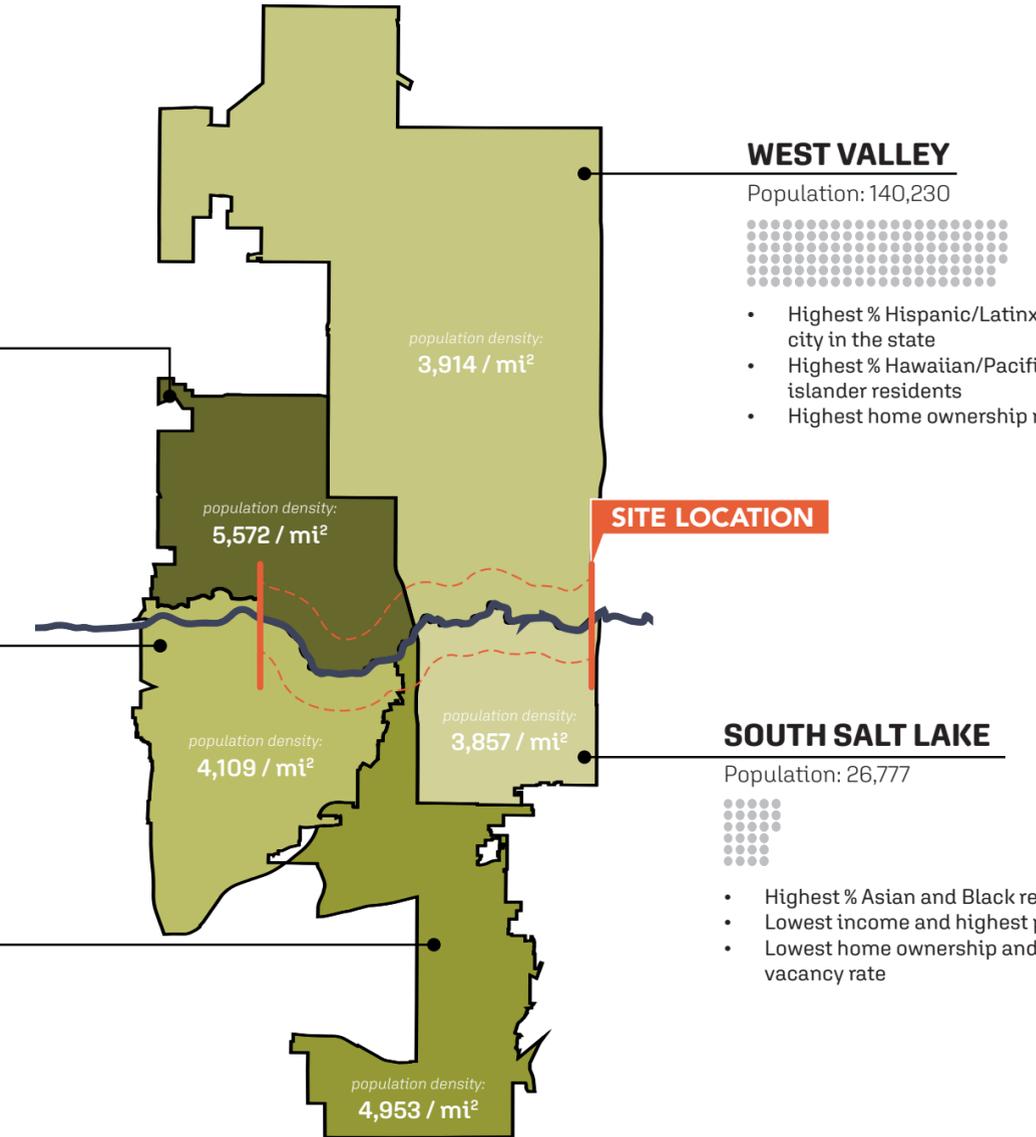
- Highest % Hispanic/Latinx of any city in the state
- Highest % Hawaiian/Pacific islander residents
- Highest home ownership rate

### SOUTH SALT LAKE

Population: 26,777



- Highest % Asian and Black residents
- Lowest income and highest poverty rate
- Lowest home ownership and highest vacancy rate



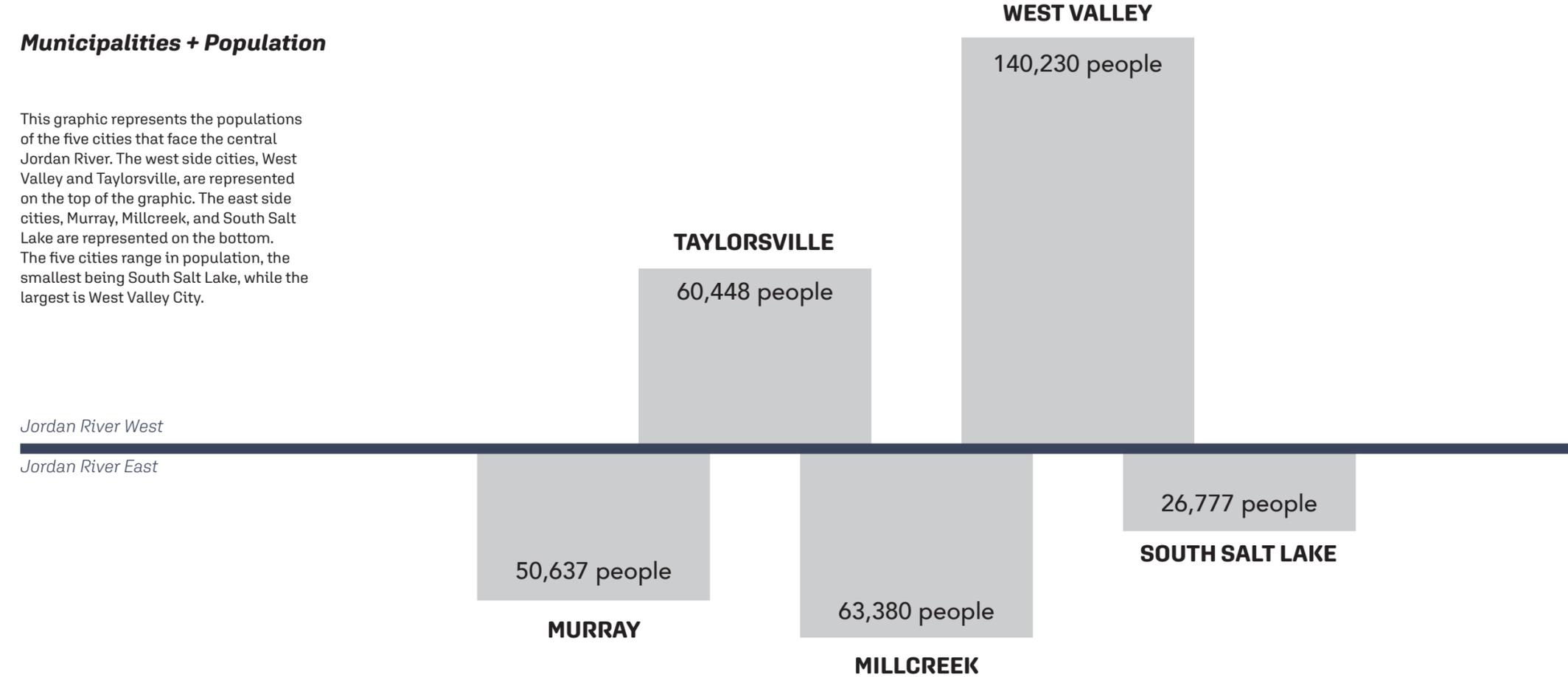
SOURCE: 2020 U.S. CENSUS AND 2020 AMERICAN COMMUNITY SURVEY

## Municipalities + Population

This graphic represents the populations of the five cities that face the central Jordan River. The west side cities, West Valley and Taylorsville, are represented on the top of the graphic. The east side cities, Murray, Millcreek, and South Salt Lake are represented on the bottom. The five cities range in population, the smallest being South Salt Lake, while the largest is West Valley City.

Jordan River West

Jordan River East



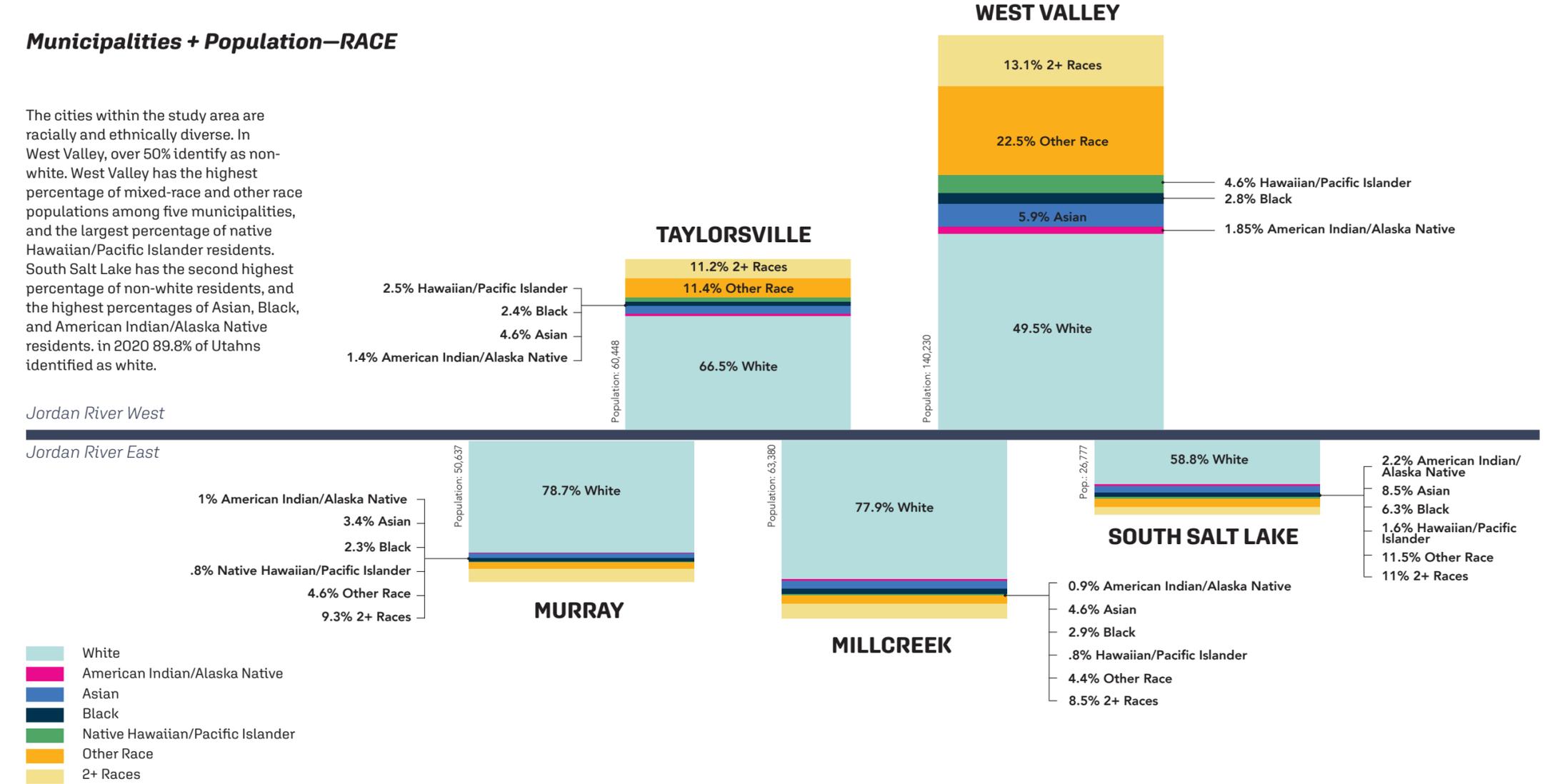
SOURCE: 2020 U.S. CENSUS AND 2020 AMERICAN COMMUNITY SURVEY

## Municipalities + Population—RACE

The cities within the study area are racially and ethnically diverse. In West Valley, over 50% identify as non-white. West Valley has the highest percentage of mixed-race and other race populations among five municipalities, and the largest percentage of native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander residents. South Salt Lake has the second highest percentage of non-white residents, and the highest percentages of Asian, Black, and American Indian/Alaska Native residents. In 2020 89.8% of Utahns identified as white.

Jordan River West

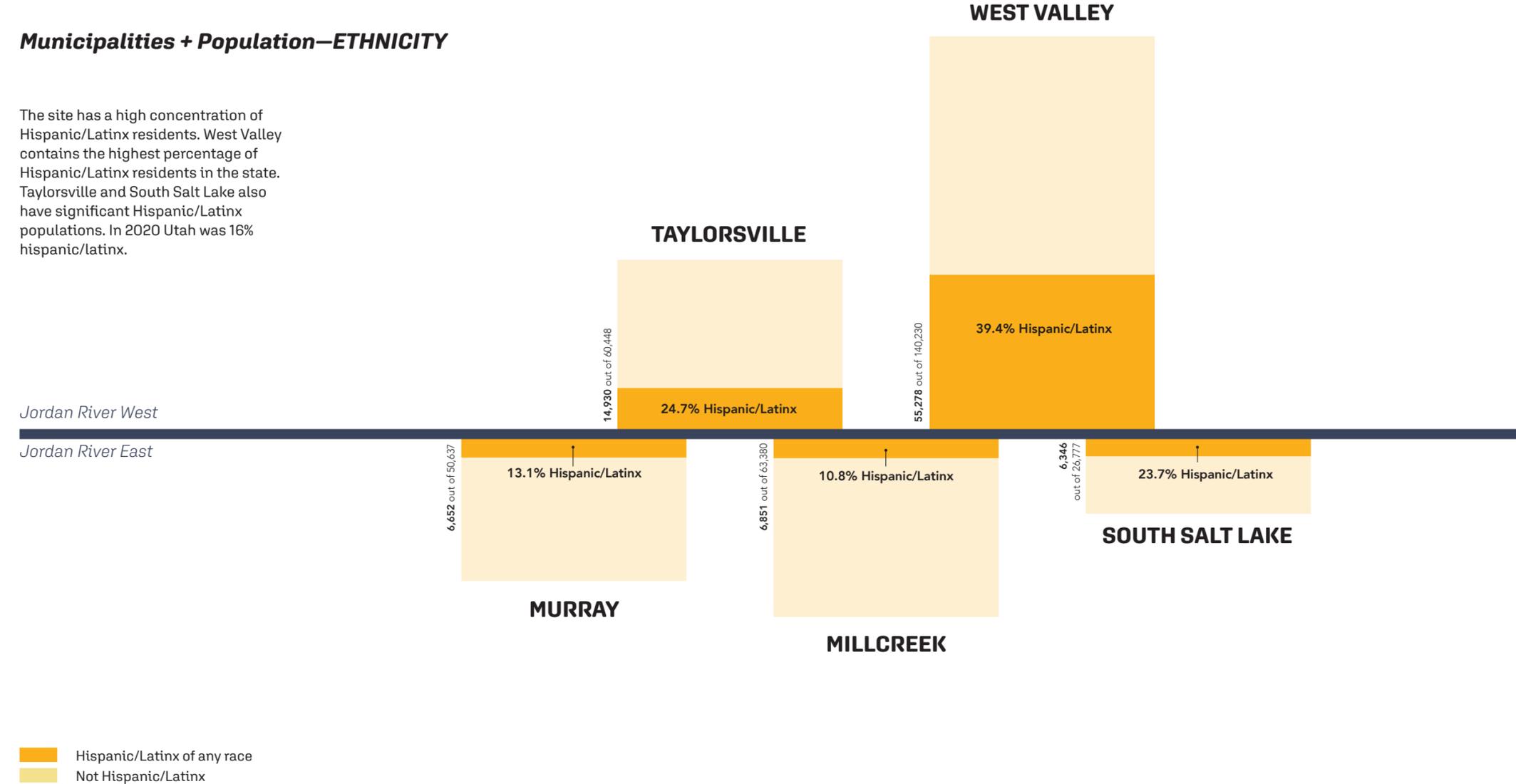
Jordan River East



SOURCE: 2020 U.S. CENSUS AND 2020 AMERICAN COMMUNITY SURVEY

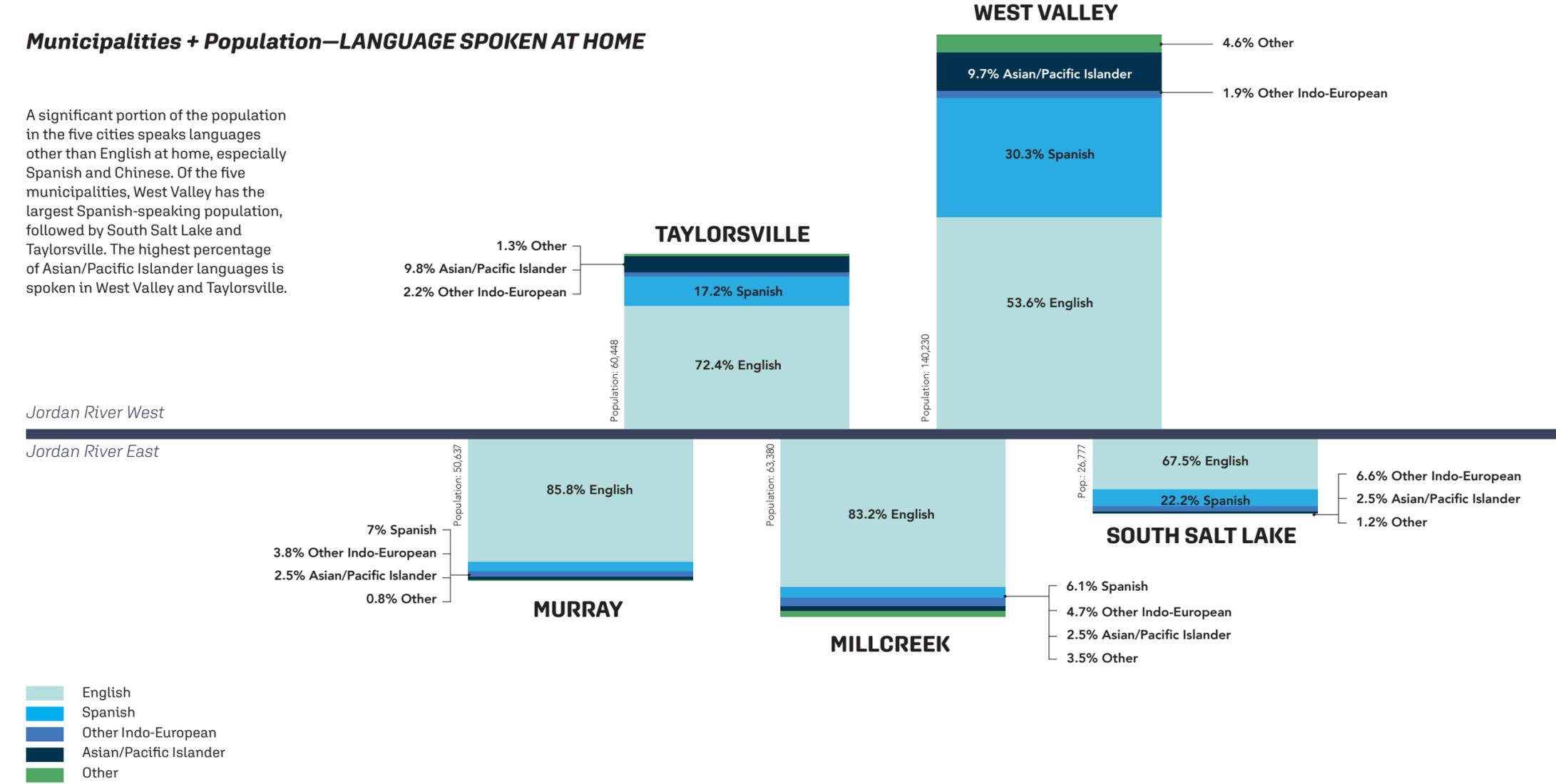
### Municipalities + Population—ETHNICITY

The site has a high concentration of Hispanic/Latinx residents. West Valley contains the highest percentage of Hispanic/Latinx residents in the state. Taylorsville and South Salt Lake also have significant Hispanic/Latinx populations. In 2020 Utah was 16% hispanic/latinx.



### Municipalities + Population—LANGUAGE SPOKEN AT HOME

A significant portion of the population in the five cities speaks languages other than English at home, especially Spanish and Chinese. Of the five municipalities, West Valley has the largest Spanish-speaking population, followed by South Salt Lake and Taylorsville. The highest percentage of Asian/Pacific Islander languages is spoken in West Valley and Taylorsville.

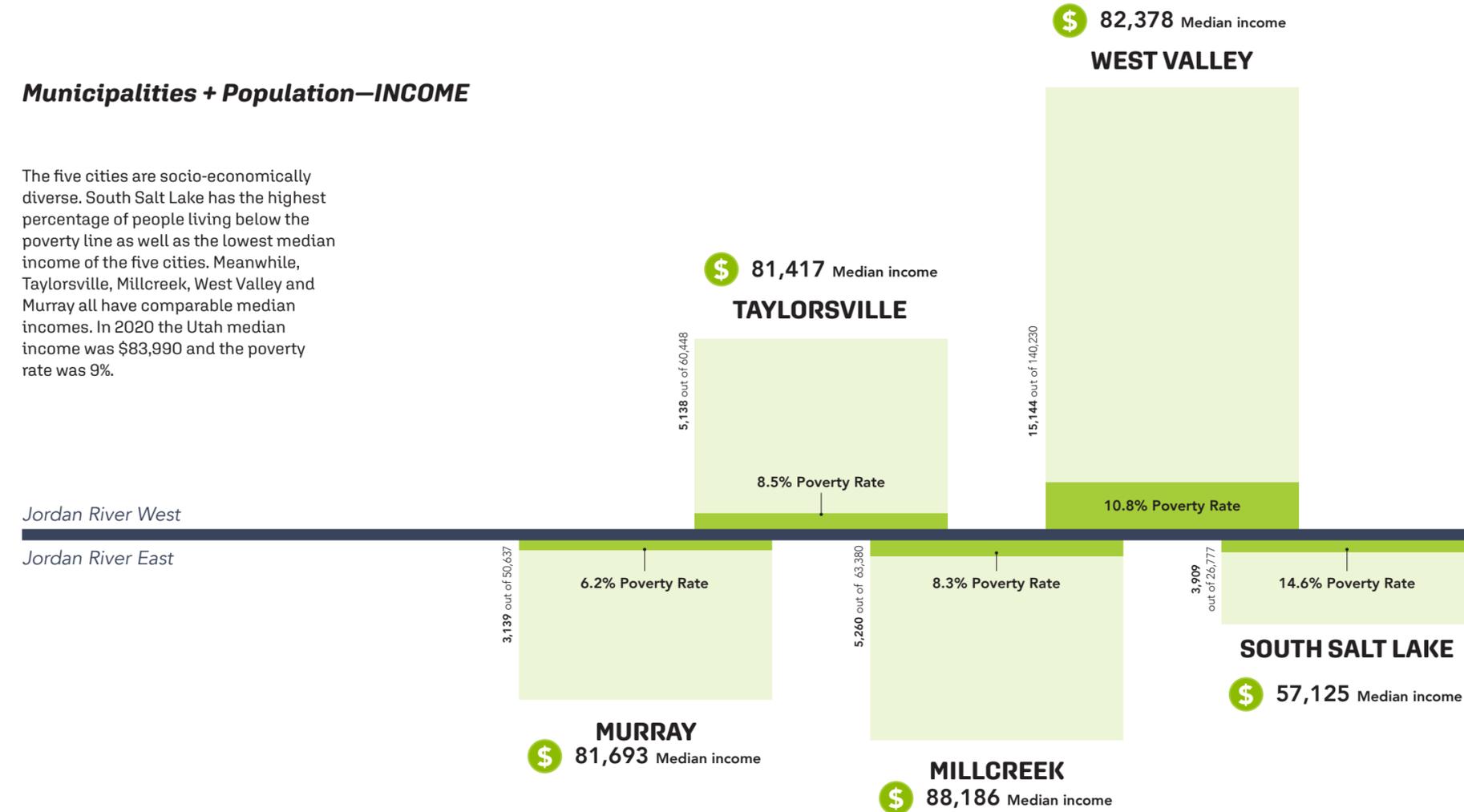


SOURCE: 2020 U.S. CENSUS AND 2020 AMERICAN COMMUNITY SURVEY

SOURCE: 2020 U.S. CENSUS AND 2020 AMERICAN COMMUNITY SURVEY

### Municipalities + Population—INCOME

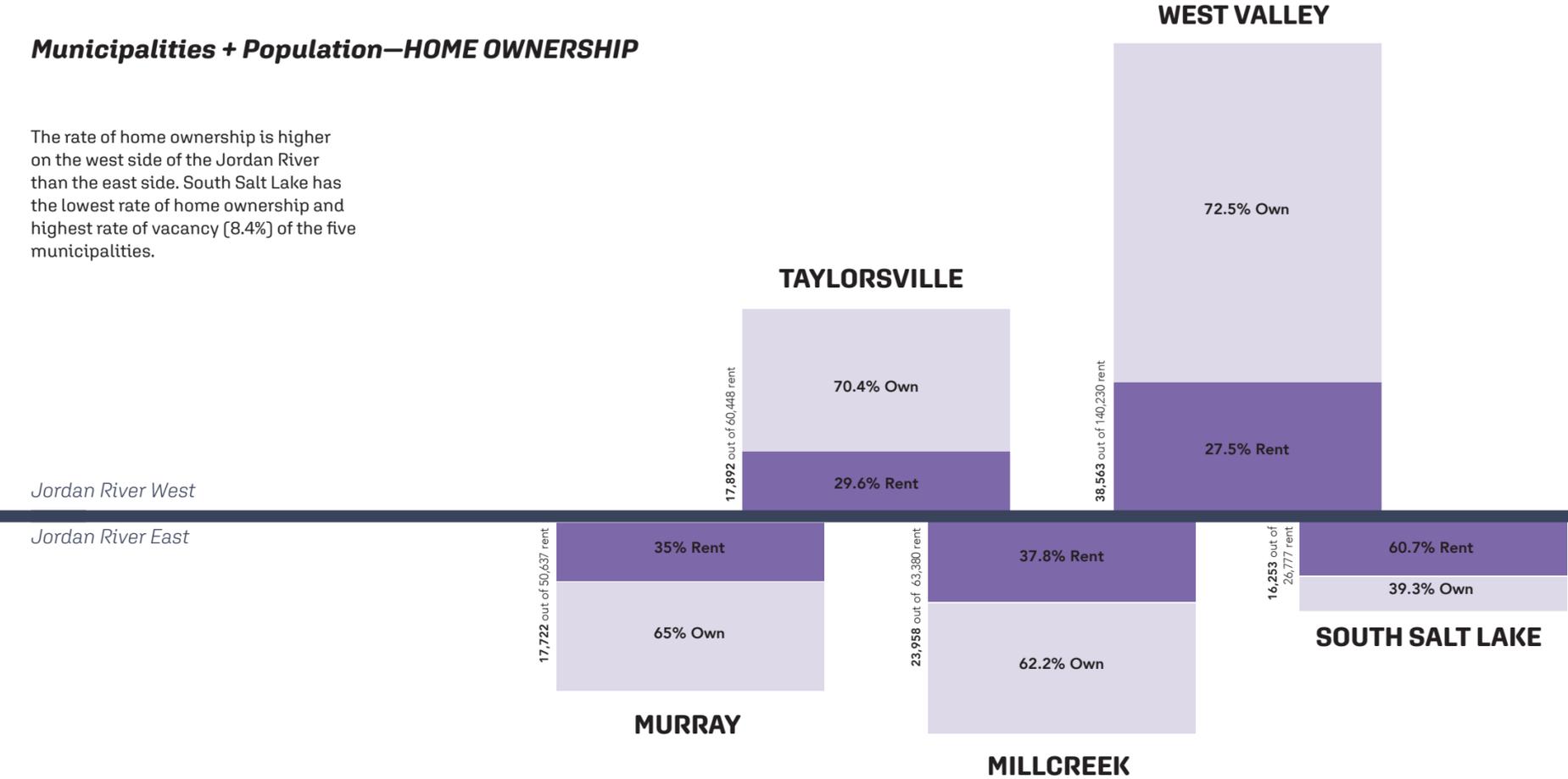
The five cities are socio-economically diverse. South Salt Lake has the highest percentage of people living below the poverty line as well as the lowest median income of the five cities. Meanwhile, Taylorsville, Millcreek, West Valley and Murray all have comparable median incomes. In 2020 the Utah median income was \$83,990 and the poverty rate was 9%.



Population below poverty line  
Population above poverty line

### Municipalities + Population—HOME OWNERSHIP

The rate of home ownership is higher on the west side of the Jordan River than the east side. South Salt Lake has the lowest rate of home ownership and highest rate of vacancy (8.4%) of the five municipalities.



Renters  
Home owners

SOURCE: 2020 U.S. CENSUS AND 2020 AMERICAN COMMUNITY SURVEY

SOURCE: 2020 U.S. CENSUS AND 2020 AMERICAN COMMUNITY SURVEY

## Overview

# Conclusion

The Central Jordan River Reconnect represents a critical step towards restoring both the ecological health and community value of the river corridor. This dynamic area spans several municipalities, each with its own unique challenges and opportunities, which necessitates a collaborative and tailored approach to ensure the project meets local needs while addressing shared regional priorities. By emphasizing ecological restoration, enhancing public access, and improving park amenities, this project aims to create a river system that benefits both people and wildlife.

A renewed focus on the river's natural habitats, particularly riparian zones, will improve water quality, support biodiversity, and offer recreational opportunities for residents. Ultimately, the project strives to weave together the region's natural, cultural, and recreational resources, ensuring that the Jordan River remains a vital and accessible resource for future generations. The Central Jordan River Reconnect project embodies a vision for a more resilient, connected, and thriving river corridor that strengthens the bond between the community and its environment.

Community engagement across the five municipalities and involving local stakeholders is vital to the planning process. Listening to residents' needs and incorporating their perspectives ensures that the project reflects the unique identities and priorities of each community. Collaborative involvement will foster a sense of ownership and ensure that solutions are not only effective but also widely supported, leading to a more successful and sustainable outcome for the river corridor.



A BEND IN THE RIVER AT LITTLE COTTONWOOD CONFLUENCE CREATES A GRAVEL SANDBAR WHERE VISITORS CAN GET DOWN TO THE WATERS EDGE .



VEGETATION ALONG THE BANKS OF THE JORDAN RIVER PROVIDE VITAL HABITAT AND HELPS TO STABILIZE THE BANKS.



VIEW OF PIONEER CROSSING PARK, OXBOW JAIL, AND 3300 S

*Central Jordan River*  
**RECONNECT**

# CONNECTED

Site Analysis

[Updated June 2025] December 2024 | Prepared by PORT

The Central Jordan River should be  
**CONNECTED**

A well-connected Jordan River is vital for ensuring that surrounding communities can easily access and enjoy the park and its amenities. Our site analysis reveals a mix of transit and infrastructure conditions that impact connectivity to the river throughout the study area, particularly in the east-west direction. Movement along the river using the continuous Jordan River Trail provides great north-south access for pedestrians and cyclists, however, the lack of trail on both sides of the river and limited opportunities for crossing impacts its accessibility from nearby neighborhoods. The north and east sides of the river are relatively well-served by public transit, however walk times from transit stations are typically over 15 minutes. Access to the river by bike is disconnected and impacted by high traffic volumes and speeds on roadways. Other physical barriers like industrial areas, highways, rail yards, and large privately held land create physical barriers between communities and the river, particularly in South Salt Lake, West Valley, and Millcreek.

These obstacles, combined with a lack of continuous, protected pedestrian and bike pathways to the river, make it difficult for residents to reach the river. In some areas, the river feels completely cut off from the communities that surround it, limiting its potential as a recreational and social resource.



THE JORDAN RIVER TRAIL CURRENTLY PROVIDES CONTINUOUS ACCESS ALONG THE RIVER, BUT TYPICALLY THE TRAIL IS ONLY ON ONE SIDE OF THE RIVER.



NEW PEDESTRIAN BRIDGE COMPLETED IN APRIL 2024 NEAR MEADOW BROOK GOLF COURSE JUST SOUTH OF W MEADOWBROOK EXPRESSWAY.



AT THE NORTH END OF THE STUDY AREAS THE JORDAN RIVER IS BORDERED BY THE UTA RAIL SERVICE CENTER AND CROSSED BY THE TRAX GREEN LINE

## Connected Vehicular Access

Most people presently access the Jordan River, its parks, and trails by car, with several major roads crossing through the central area. These roads are often wide, featuring 4 to 6 lanes of heavy traffic, making it challenging for visitors to safely enter and exit parks or trail access points. Given the volume of traffic and the road widths, it's crucial that trailheads, parking areas, and access points are clearly marked and easily visible from the main thoroughfares. Unfortunately, the Central Jordan River lacks adequate signage, gateways, and other directional markers, which can make it difficult for drivers to recognize when they are approaching key sites along the river.

As a result, many pass by parks and trail access points without realizing they're nearby, or unknowingly drive over the Jordan River itself without being aware of its presence. This lack of visibility, combined with the difficulty of navigating wide, high-traffic roads, limits public awareness and creates significant barriers to accessing the area's natural and recreational resources, which could otherwise serve as valuable community spaces.



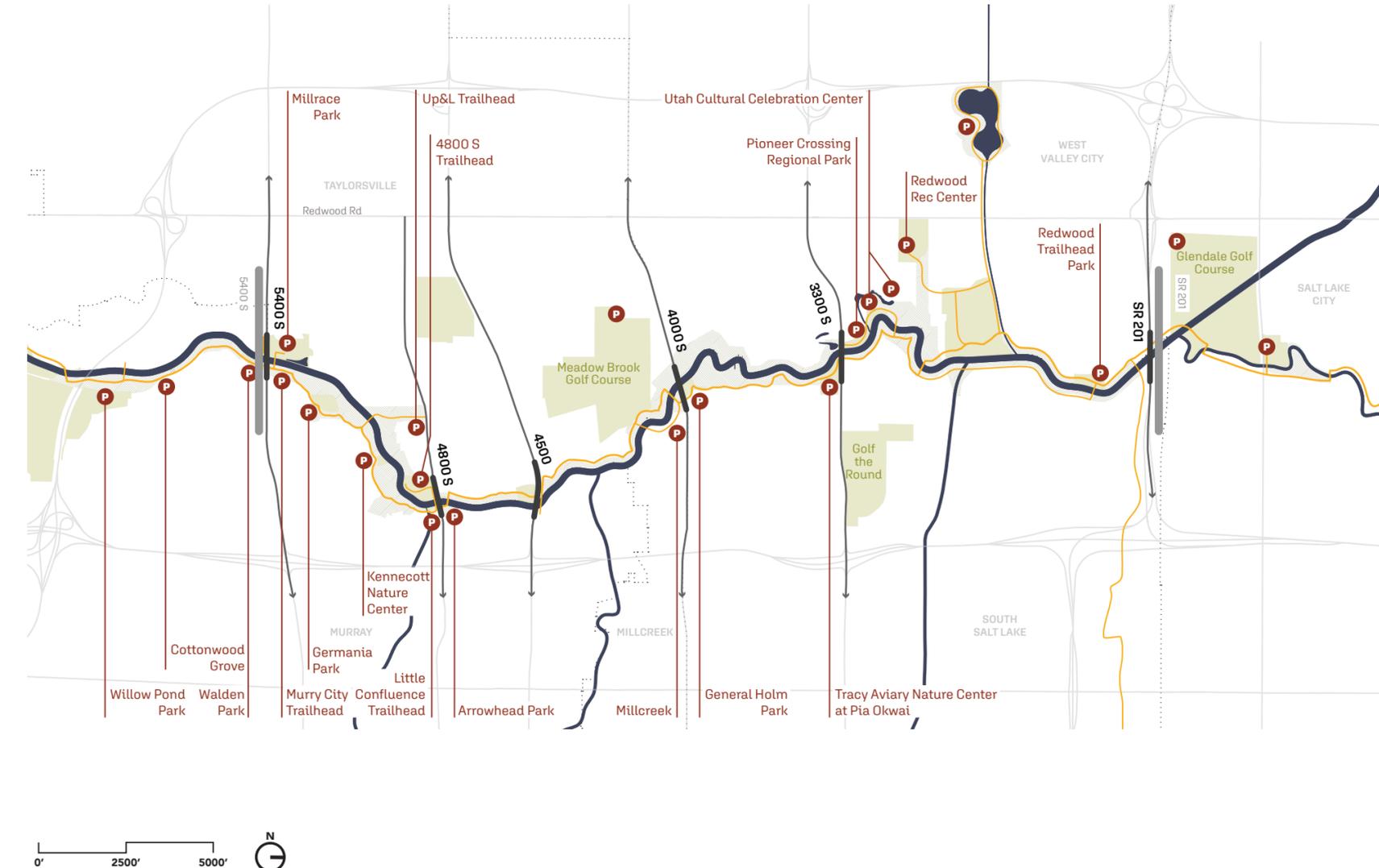
WEST MEADOWBROOK EXPRESSWAY BRIDGE OVER THE JORDAN RIVER



PARKING AREA AT PIONEER CROSSING PARK

## Major Roads + Parking Areas

Numerous parking areas existing along the Jordan River, allowing ample room for drivers to get to the river and get on the trail. All of the parks and trailheads along the river have parking spaces associated with them, making driving access to the river easy and convenient.



## Streets + Roadways

Images to the right show several bridges and road crossings along the Central Jordan River. These crossings could be important gateways into the park and river trail, however most of these crossings do not provide any direct access to the trail.



WEST TAYLORSVILLE EXPRESSWAY (4500 S) IS A 4 LANE EXPRESSWAY WITH 20,000-45,000 CARS PER DAY



3300 S IS A SEVEN LANE ROAD WITH 20,000-45,000 CARS PER DAY



5400 S, A FIVE LANE ROAD, BOUNDS THE SOUTH END OF THE STUDY AREA AND HAS 20,000-45,000 CARS PER DAY

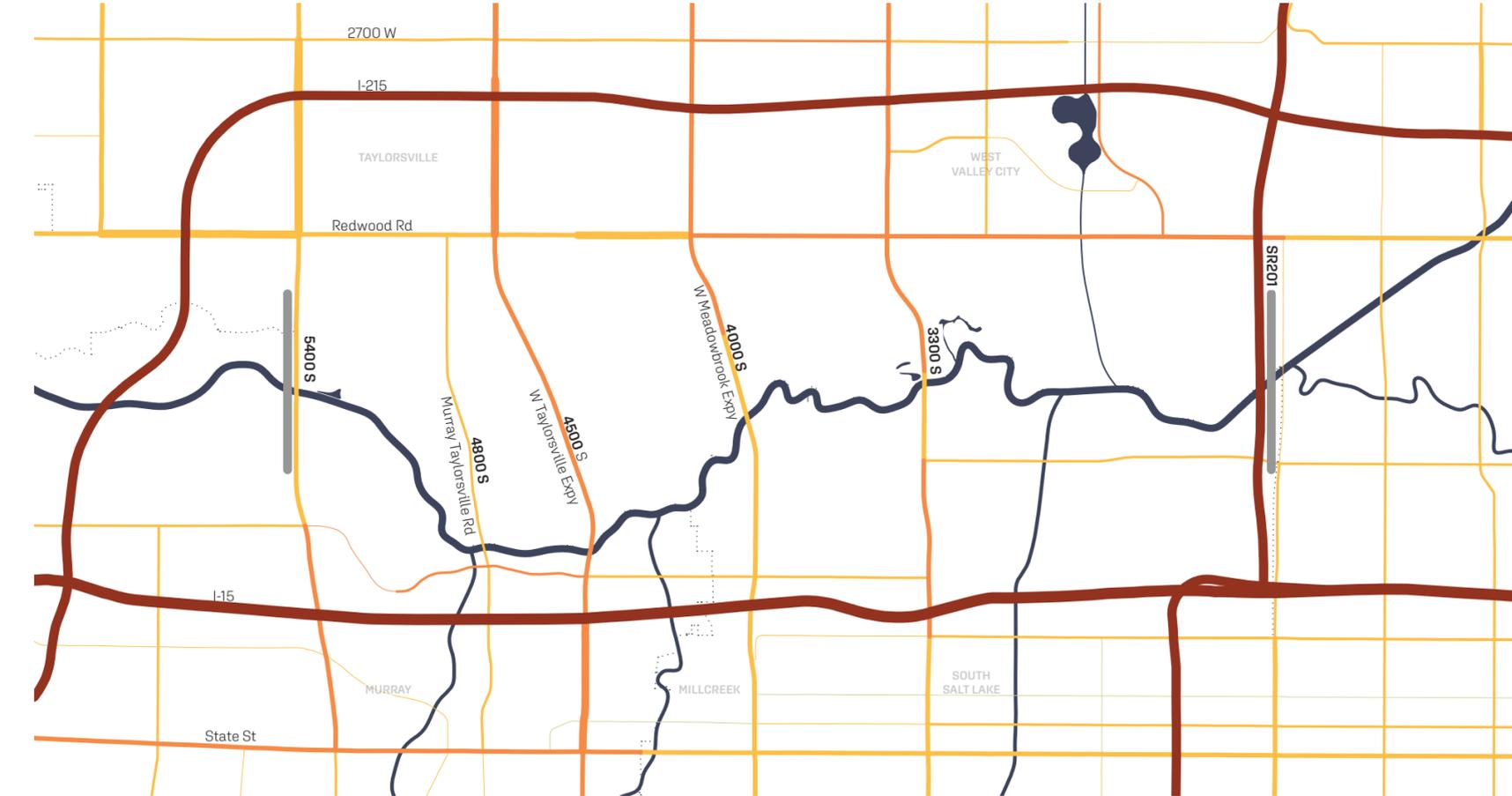


STATE ROUTE 201, A SIX LANE HIGHWAY, BOUNDS THE NORTH END OF THE STUDY AREA AND HAS 90,000-154,000 CARS PER DAY

## Traffic Volume + Speed

Typically the major roads across and parallel to the Jordan River are fast moving and have a high traffic volume. Connector corridors like Redwood Road and State Street are important north-south connectors. SR-201 is the fastest and most used transit route that crosses our study area. Other vital east-west connections include 3300 S, 4000 S, 4500 S, and 5400 S.

- 1,000-9,000 cars/day
- 20,000-45,000 cars/day
- 45,000-90,000 cars/day
- 90,000-154,000 cars/day
- > 154,000 cars/day
- 20-29 mph
- 30-39 mph
- 40-49 mph
- over 50 mph
- Municipal Boundary
- Waterway



## Vehicular Bridges + Crossings

Images to the right show the variety of vehicular bridges that cross the Jordan River. Typically they are multiple lanes wide and have fast moving traffic. In many places it is easy for drivers to not even realize they are crossing a river at all.



ALONG MURRAY TAYLORSVILLE ROAD ARE TWO MARKED TRAILHEADS, CONFLUENCE PARK AND ARROWHEAD PARK, BUT THE JORDAN RIVER TRAIL'S PRESENCE IS NOT CLEAR.



REDWOOD TRAILHEAD PARK'S PARKING AREA HAS OVERGROWN VEGETATION AND BROKEN OR MISSING STREETLIGHTS.



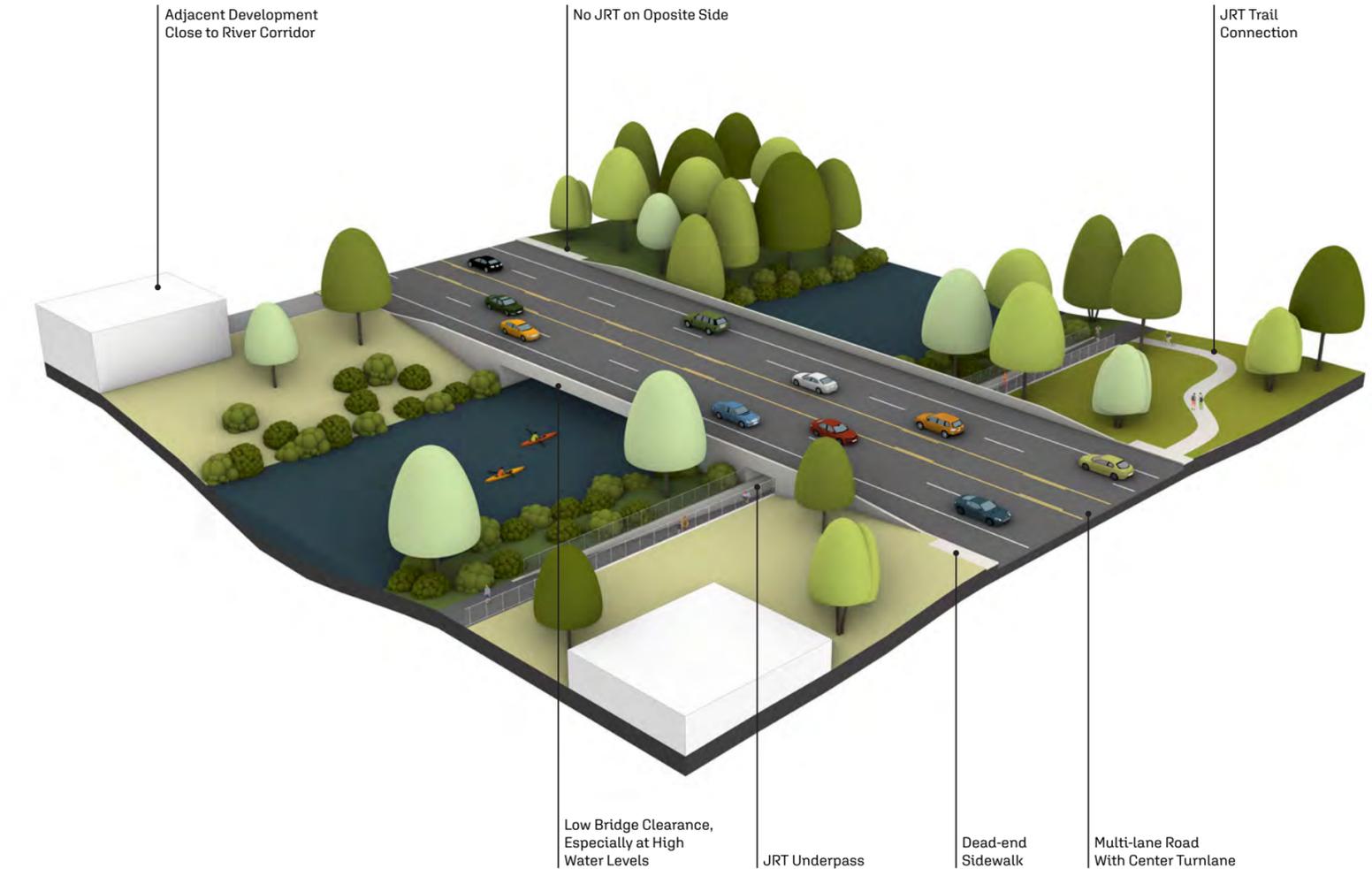
GENERAL HOLM PARK OFFERS GREAT TRAIL ACCESS BUT LACKS MAIN ROAD VEHICULAR ACCESS AND SIGNAGE DIRECTING CARS TO THE ENTRANCE VIA A SMALLER SIDE ROAD.



THE PARKING AREA AT PIONEER CROSSING REGIONAL PARK FEATURES SHADE TREES, STREETLIGHTS, AND WOODEN BOLLARDS.

## Typical Vehicular Crossing

Typically, vehicular bridges within the study area provide little to no room for bikers or pedestrians. They also tend to be quite low to the river, creating a hazard for kayakers and canoers during high water. Many areas have the Jordan River Trail pass under vehicular bridges through concrete underpasses. This infrastructure is aging, and replacement bridges should be redesigned to foster better access under and across the bridge.



## Connected Public Transit

Public transit access to the Jordan River is a key component of connectivity in the study area, with varying levels of service across different municipalities. The Utah Transit Authority (UTA) operates an extensive network, including the TRAX light-rail system, FrontRunner commuter rail, and numerous bus routes, providing access to neighborhoods near the river. South Salt Lake, Millcreek, and Murray benefit from stronger transit connections, with high ridership along the TRAX and FrontRunner lines. These areas have well-connected transit nodes, offering easier access to the river and its recreational amenities.

The West Valley Intermodal Hub is another important station for residents using public transit, while the River Trail Station on the Green Line, though close to the trail, has relatively low ridership. Public transit service along Redwood Road in West Valley and Taylorsville also contributes to accessibility, though the connection to the river is less direct in these areas.

Despite these transit options, gaps in connectivity persist, particularly in areas like West Valley and Taylorsville, where industrial areas and highways limit access. Expanding public transit stops and enhancing connections to the river will improve access, offering residents more opportunities to enjoy the Jordan River's natural and recreational spaces.



RIVER TRAIL STATION ON THE TRAX GREEN LINE IS JUST MINUTES FROM REDWOOD TRAILHEAD PARK ALONG THE JORDAN RIVER.

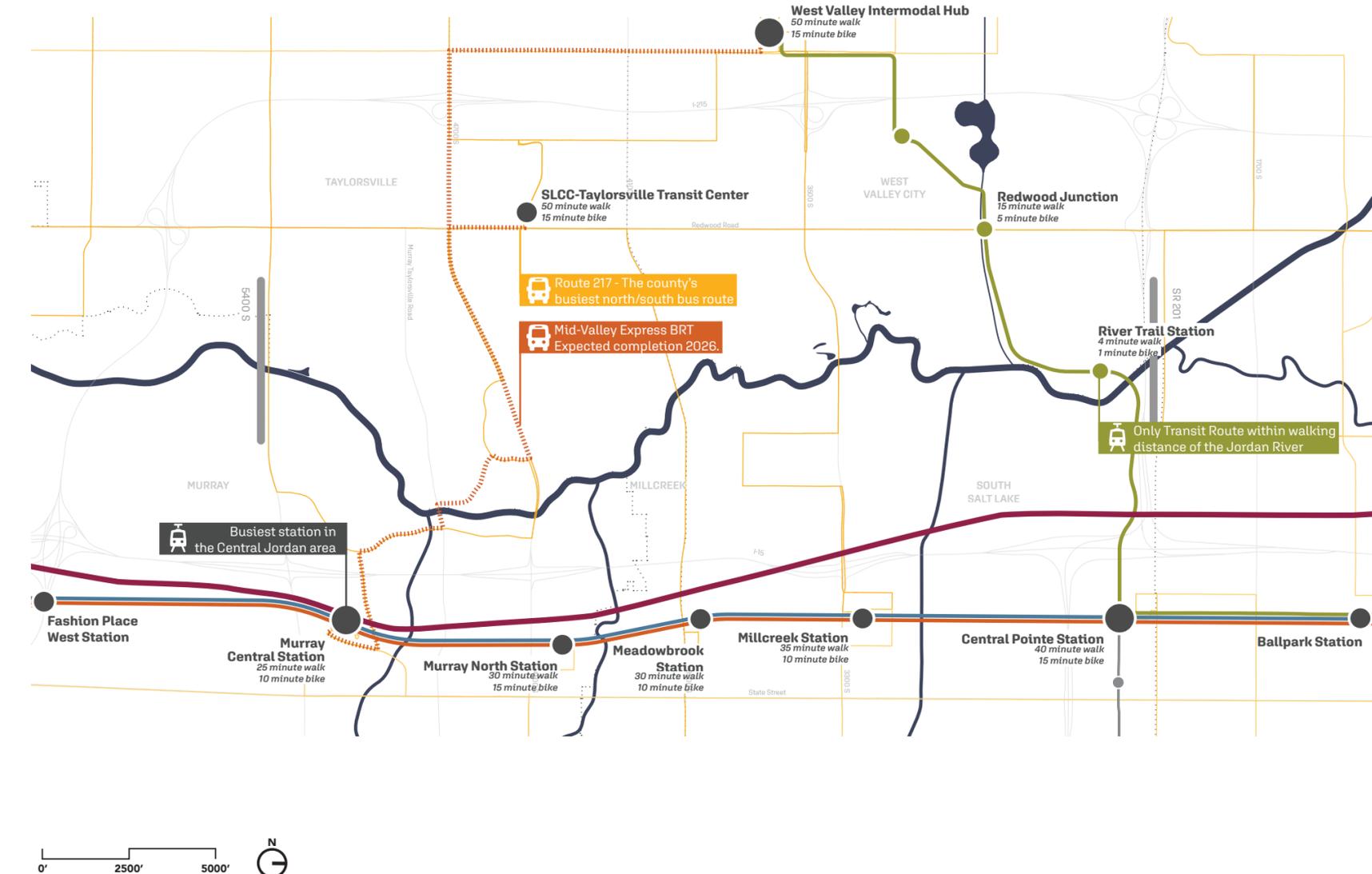


MURRAY CENTRAL STATION IS A MAJOR TRANSIT HUB SERVED BY THE FRONTRUNNER AND TRAX BLUE AND RED LINES. SOURCE: JAMES BELMONT PHOTOGRAPHY

## Existing Transit Network

Our analysis highlights the existing transit nodes, pedestrian and bike infrastructure, and barriers such as highways and industrial areas that impact connectivity to the Jordan River across the study area. The map on the right also shows the relative accessibility of the river from surrounding neighborhoods, with stronger connections in South Salt Lake, Millcreek, and Murray, and more limited access in West Valley and Taylorsville.

- Major Transit Hub
- Minor Transit Hub
- Frontrunner
- TRAX Green Line
- TRAX Red Line
- TRAX Blue Line
- Proposed BRT Line
- Bus Line
- Major Roads
- Municipal Boundary
- Waterways



## Modes of Transit

The Utah Transit Authority (UTA) offers an extensive transit network across the Wasatch Front. The TRAX light-rail system covers 42.5 miles with 50 stations, including the Green Line, which connects Salt Lake City International Airport to West Valley Central via downtown. The FrontRunner commuter rail spans 83 miles from Ogden to Provo, serving Weber, Davis, Salt Lake, and Utah counties, with Murray Central Station as a key stop. UTA also operates over 400 buses on 120 routes across a 1,400-mile service area and the S-Line Streetcar, a two-mile modern trolley linking South Salt Lake to the Sugarhouse neighborhood in Salt Lake City.



THE TRAX GREEN LINE AT RIVER TRAIL STATION



UTA ROUTE 200 ON STATE STREET RUNNING FROM NORTH TEMPLE TO MURRAY CENTRAL STATION.  
SOURCE: THE SALT LAKE TRIBUNE



THE FRONTRUNNER AT SALT LAKE CITY CENTRAL STATION.  
SOURCE: VISIT SALT LAKE

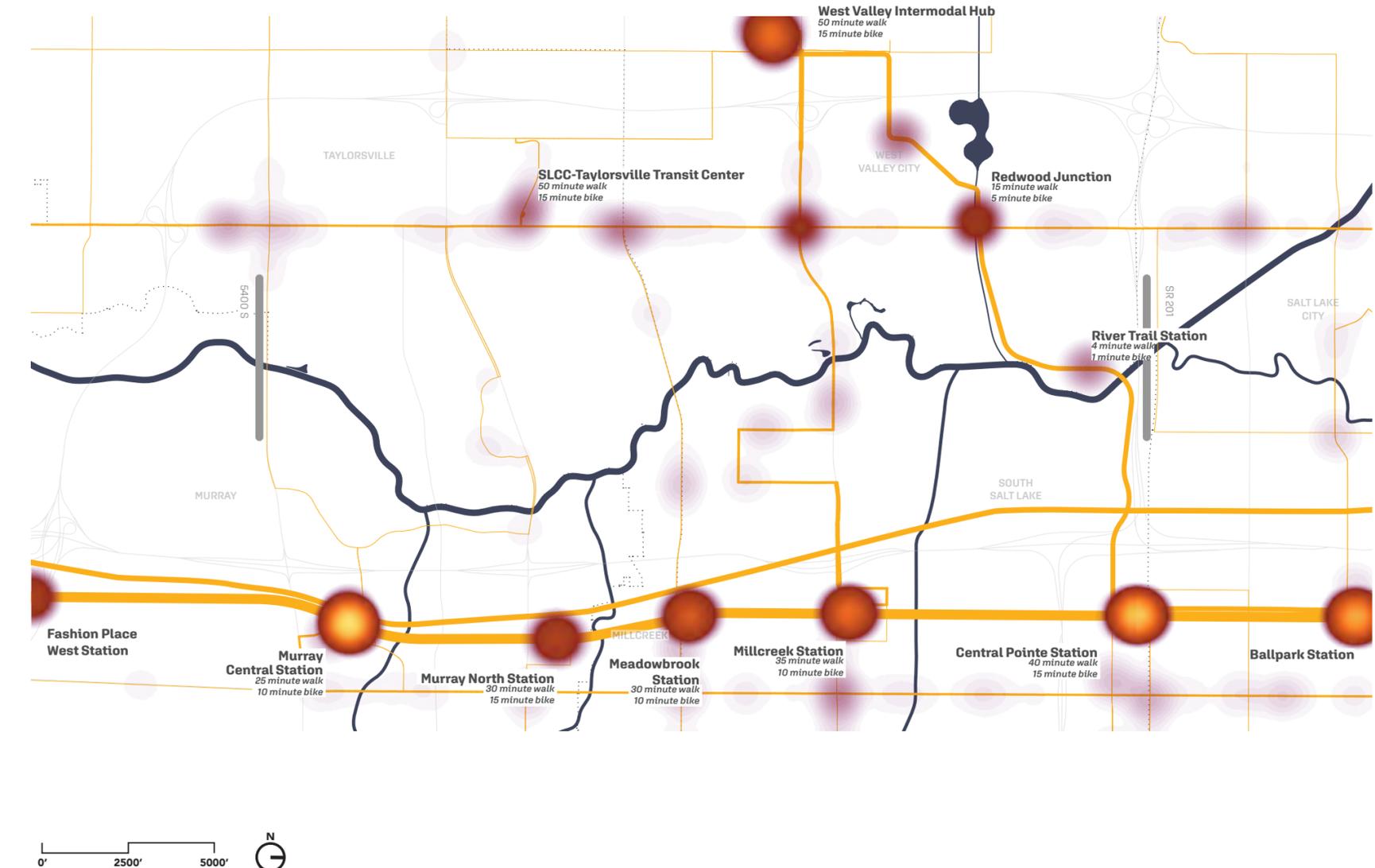


THE S-LINE STREETCAR BETWEEN SOUTH SALT LAKE AND SUGARHOUSE PARK.  
SOURCE: PARLEY'S TRAIL WEBSITE

## Ridership

The largest volume of ridership within the study area is along the Trax and FrontRunner lines that go through South Salt Lake, Millcreek, and Murray. The West Valley Intermodal Hub is also a highly used station for public transit riders. The closest stop to the trail, River Trail Station on the green line has low use. Redwood Road in West Valley and Taylorsville is also a public transit corridor.

-  Small Ridership Volume
-  Large Ridership Volume
-  Public Transit Line
-  Major Roads
-  Municipal Boundary
-  Waterways



## Connected Bike + Pedestrian

The Jordan River Trail provides continuous access for cyclists and pedestrians through the study area, offering valuable recreational and transportation opportunities. However, a key limitation is that the trail is located on only one side of the river in most areas, creating gaps in connectivity. Expanding the trail to both sides of the river would create a more cohesive and accessible route, enhancing the overall user experience. Pedestrian bridges play a vital role in bridging these gaps, with 10 non-vehicular bridges connecting the east and west sides of the river. These bridges are especially prominent in Taylorsville and Murray, where more trail mileage exists.

In addition to pedestrian bridges, six vehicular bridges offer additional connectivity for both cyclists and pedestrians. While bike infrastructure along the river itself is generally well-developed, connectivity to the trail from surrounding neighborhoods is less consistent. Some areas have strong bike lanes and paths, while others lack safe and direct routes for cyclists to reach the river. Expanding bike infrastructure leading to the river would improve access, making the area safer and more accessible for people who rely on cycling as a primary mode of transportation. Enhancing both trail connectivity and bike infrastructure will ensure the Jordan River remains a more accessible and sustainable public space.



THE NEW TRAIL CONNECTION AT PARLEY'S TRAIL LINKS MANY MILES OF TRAIL NETWORK

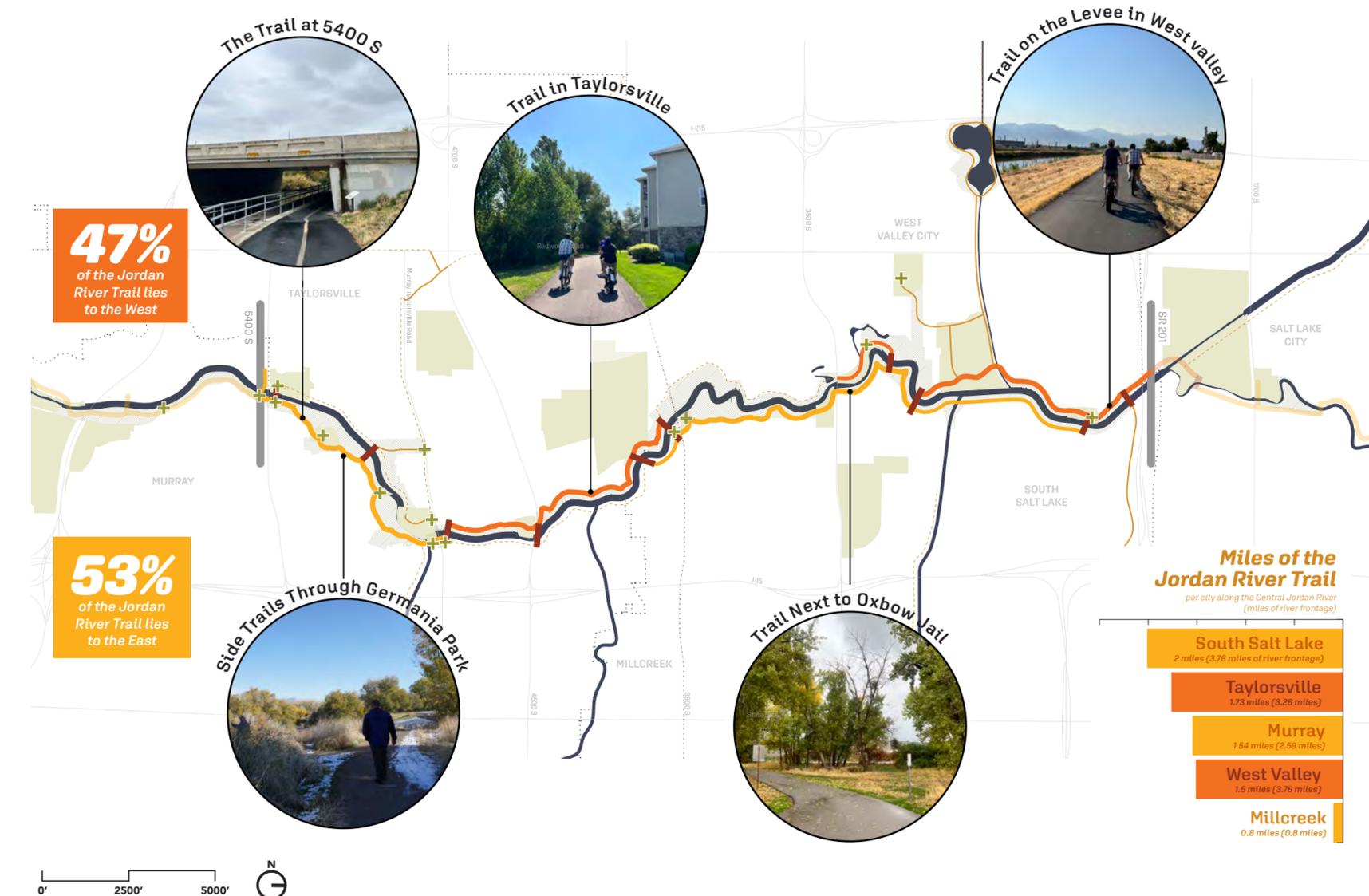


AT LITTLE COTTONWOOD CONFLUENCE THERE ARE NUMEROUS WELL USED SOFT SURFACE PATHS

## The Jordan River Trail

The Jordan River Trail runs continuously through the study area, providing valuable access to the river for cyclists and pedestrians. However, a significant limitation is that the trail is not present on both sides of the river. In most areas, only one side of the river has a trail, leaving gaps in connectivity. Expanding the trail to both sides of the river would improve access and create a more complete, cohesive route for users along the entire corridor.

- + Trailheads
- Jordan River Trail ( East)
- Jordan River Trail ( West)
- Pedestrian Bridge
- Secondary/Other Trail
- - - - Proposed Trails
- · · · · Municipal Boundary
- Waterways



## Pedestrian Bridges + Crossings

To the right is a variety of the types of pedestrian bridges present along the Central Jordan River. These non-vehicular bridges are predominantly located in Taylorsville and Murray where there is generally more mileage of trail. Because the trail is not on both sides of the river, these pedestrian bridges become vital connectors.



PIONEER CROSSING BRIDGE AT PIONEER CROSSING PARK



PEDESTRIAN BRIDGE OVER THE WEST MEADOWBROOK EXPRESSWAY (4000 S)



PEDESTRIAN BRIDGE IN GERMANIA PARK, AT WATERS EDGE CIRCLE

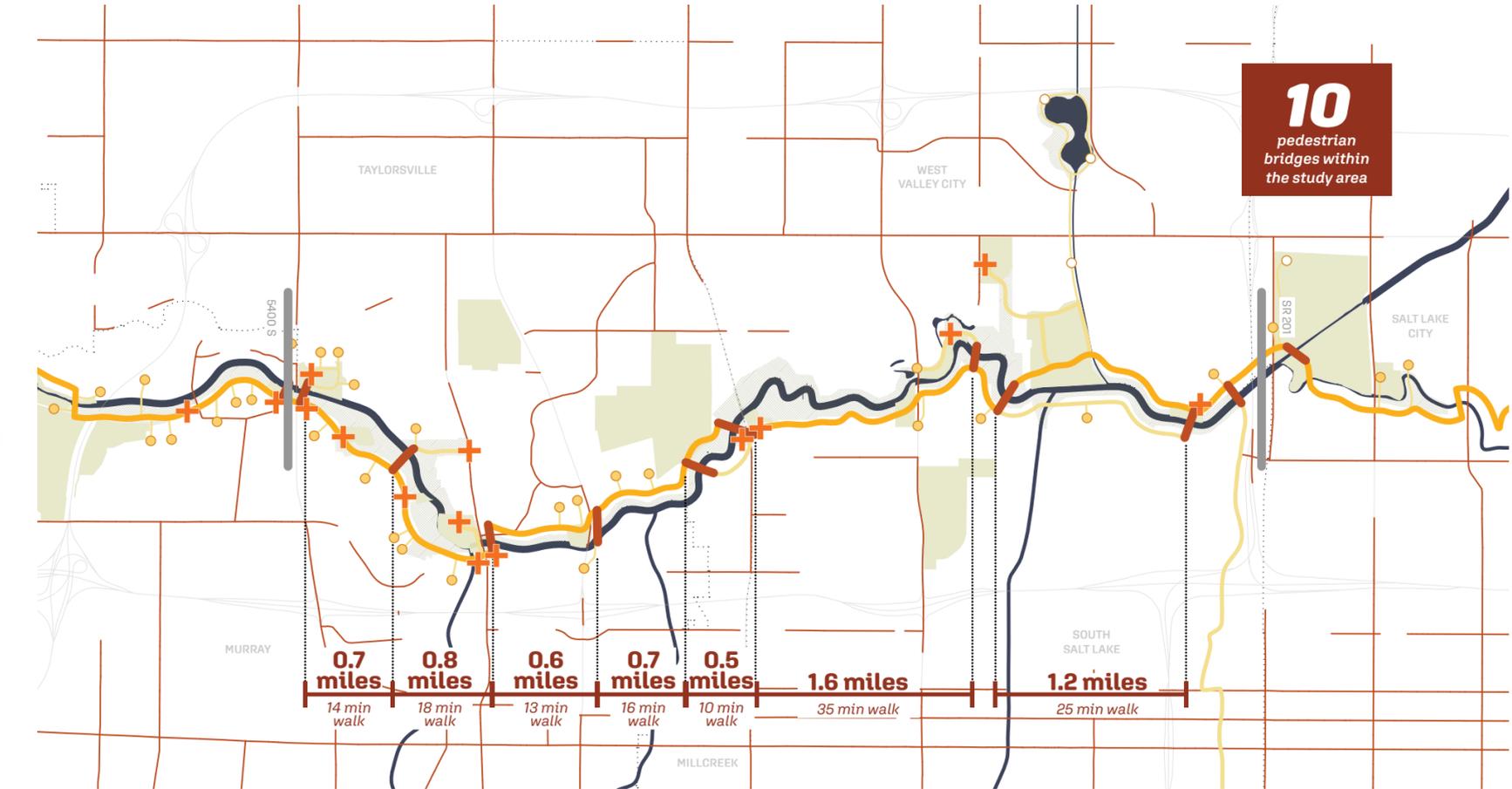


PEDESTRIAN BRIDGE OVER LITTLE COTTONWOOD CREEK

## Pedestrian Routes + Crossings

Crossings along the Central Jordan River play a vital role in connecting neighborhoods to the river, enhancing access for recreation and active transportation. There are a total of 10 pedestrian bridges linking the east and west sides of the Jordan River Trail, offering dedicated pathways for walkers, runners, and cyclists. Additionally, six vehicular bridges provide further opportunities to cross, supporting broader connectivity and integration across the area.

- Primary Trail
- Secondary Trail
- Pedestrian Bridge
- Sidewalk
- + Trailhead
- Major Roads
- - - - Municipal Boundary
- Waterways



## Bike Infrastructure Along the Trail

Bike infrastructure is crucial for providing safe, efficient access to the Jordan River, especially for residents who rely on cycling as a primary mode of transportation. Well-connected bike lanes and paths help bridge the gap between neighborhoods and the river corridor, encouraging more people to visit and enjoy the area. By improving bike infrastructure, we can promote sustainable transportation, reduce traffic congestion, and ensure that all community members, regardless of age or ability, can easily access the natural and recreational opportunities along the river.



THE NEW TRAIL CONNECTION AT PARLEY'S TRAIL LINKS MANY MILES OF TRAIL NETWORK



TRAILHEADS AND WAYFINDING IMPROVES CYCLIST EXPERIENCE ALONG THE TRAIL



UNDERPASSES CREATE UNINTERRUPTED STRETCHES OF TRAIL



MANY PARKS ARE LINKED BY THE JORDAN RIVER TRAIL NETWORK, HOWEVER FEW PROVIDE AMENITIES LIKE BIKE RACKS OR BIKE FIX-IT STATIONS

## Bike Infrastructure to the Trail

Bike infrastructure along the Jordan River is well-developed, with the continuous Jordan River Trail. However, bike infrastructure connecting to the river is less consistent. While some areas offer good connectivity, others lack safe and direct routes for cyclists to reach the river. Expanding bike infrastructure leading to the river would enhance accessibility, ensuring that cyclists can safely navigate to and along the river, making it a more connected and user-friendly space.

- Primary Trail
- Secondary Trail
- Parallel Bike Path
- Designated Marked Bike Lane
- - - Shared Road Bike Route (Shared Lane or Shoulder)
- + Trailhead
- Major Roads
- - - - - Municipal Boundary
- Waterways



## Connected Trailheads + Access Points

Our analysis of the Jordan River corridor highlights the varying levels of trail access across the study area. In areas like Murray and Taylorsville adjacent residents enjoy strong connectivity, with numerous neighborhood access points and formal trailheads situated near parks. For many, getting onto the trail is as simple as walking a short distance to a nearby access point. In these regions, local infrastructure, including pedestrian and bike routes, supports easy movement to the river, encouraging increased use. However, in areas like West Valley and South Salt Lake, physical barriers such as highways, industrial zones, fences, and private property significantly limit access to the river. These obstacles create gaps in connectivity, making it more difficult for residents to reach the trail. Some residents have found creative ways to access the trail, including using their own backyards, but these informal routes are not accessible to everyone.

Improving access to the river, particularly in areas with limited connections, is essential for increasing public use. By reducing barriers and enhancing the number and visibility of access points, we can encourage more people to enjoy the natural beauty and recreational opportunities the Jordan River provides.



THE TRAILHEAD IN REDWOOD TRAILHEAD PARK IN WEST VALLEY CITY.

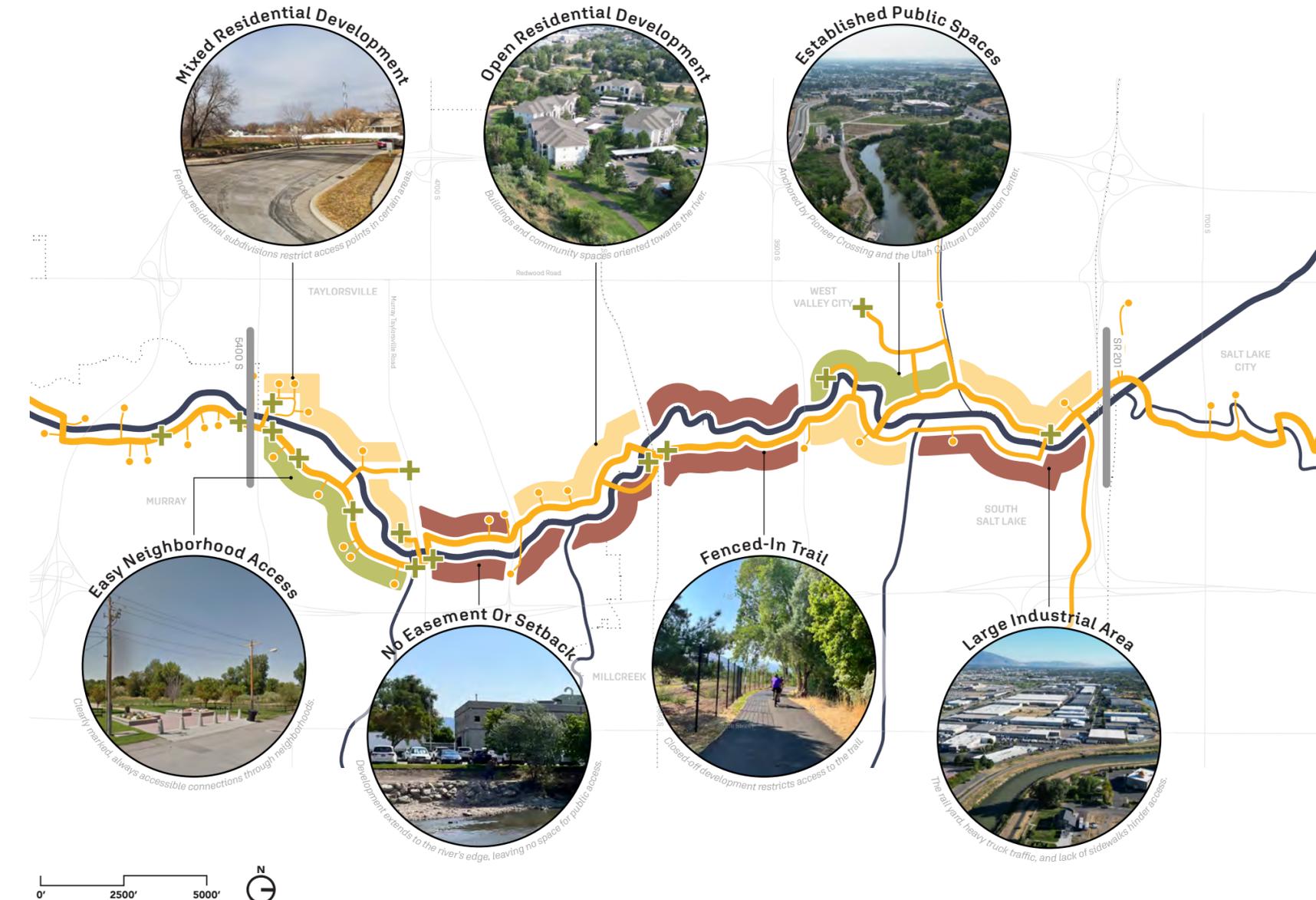


PICNIC SHELTERS AND A WATER FOUNTAIN AT LITTLE COTTONWOOD CONFLUENCE.

### Degrees of Access

In some areas of the study area getting on the trail is as easy as walking down the block to the neighborhood access point, however in other areas physical barriers like industrial zones, fences, or private land limits access. Improving local access to the river is vital to increasing its usage.

- Neighborhood Access Point
- Jordan River Trail
- Major Connecting Trail
- Minor Connecting Trail
- Easy River Access
- Medium River Access
- Difficult River Access
- Trailhead
- Major Roads
- Municipal Boundary
- Waterways



### Jordan River Trail Access

There are numerous ways to access the trail, from neighborhood access points to formal trailheads located in parks. Some residents have gotten creative and provided personal access from their own backyards to the trail.



SOME RESIDENTS HAVE ADDED CUT-THROUGHS FROM THEIR BACKYARDS DIRECTLY TO THE TRAIL



PARKING AND WAYFINDING SIGNAGE AT KENNECOTT NATURE CENTER TRAILHEAD



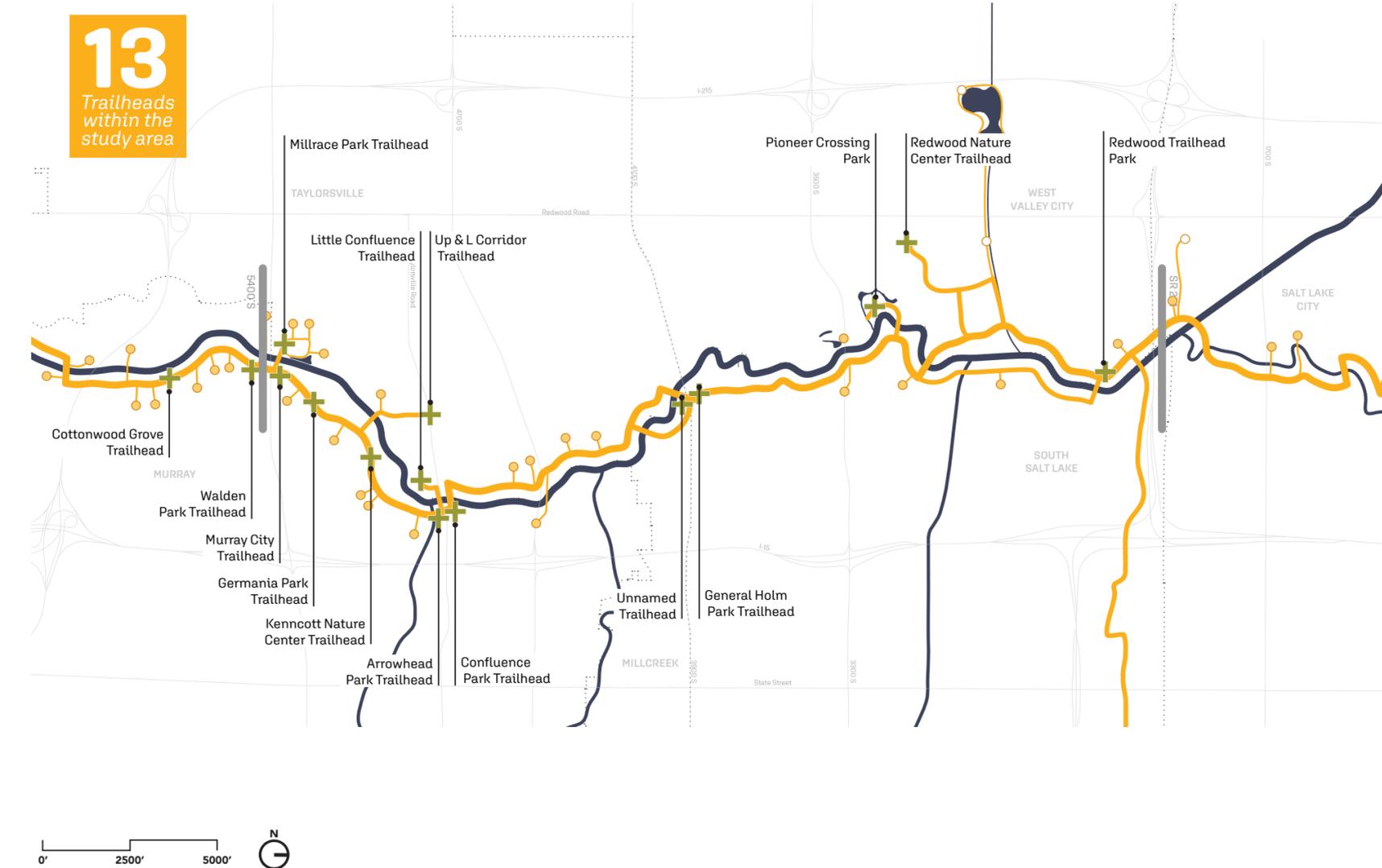
UNOFFICIAL TRAIL ACCESS IN SOUTH SALT LAKE INDUSTRIAL AREA



NEIGHBORHOOD ACCESS POINT IN MURRAY WHERE A LOCAL ROAD LEADS DIRECTLY TO THE TRAIL

### Frequency of Access

Generally there are more access points that are closer together in the southern part of the study area. In Murray especially, there are numerous neighborhood access points where neighborhood roads lead directly to the trail. Other sections of the river, like those in West Valley, have much less access from surrounding residential areas.



## Connected Conclusion

Improving access and connectivity to the Jordan River is crucial for ensuring that surrounding communities can fully engage with this valuable resource. While some areas benefit from good transit and bike infrastructure, other regions face significant challenges due to physical barriers like highways and industrial zones. These obstacles limit the ability of residents to easily reach the river and its amenities. Additionally, the lack of clear signage and well-marked access points further complicates navigation. Enhancing connectivity through better infrastructure, clearer signage, and reducing barriers will ensure that the river is more accessible, benefiting the community as a whole.

Increased access to parks and open spaces is also proven to improve physical and mental health by encouraging outdoor activity, reducing stress, and fostering a stronger sense of community. Connecting residents to these natural spaces can significantly enhance overall wellness and quality of life. Furthermore, greater use of the river corridor could create more lasting stewardship of the river and a great connection between users and the park.



PIONEER CROSSING BRIDGE AT PIONEER CROSSING PARK



NEIGHBORHOOD CONNECTION TO THE TRAIL IN TAYLORSVILLE



GREEN LINE TRAX AT RIVER TRAIL STATION

*Central Jordan River*  
**RECONNECT**

# ECOLOGICAL

Site Analysis

[Updated June 2025] December 2024 | Prepared by PORT

The Central Jordan River should be  
**ECOLOGICAL**

The Jordan River flows through one of Utah's most urbanized landscapes, yet it remains a rare and crucial ecological resource. Over the years, human interventions—including dam operations at Utah Lake, channelization, dredging, and levee construction—have significantly altered the river's natural flow and disconnected it from its floodplain.

These changes have not only reshaped the river's physical landscape but also introduced a range of water quality issues, from pollution caused by urban runoff to erratic flow rates that strain the river's ecosystems. As a result, the Jordan River today faces considerable challenges in supporting its native flora and fauna while also providing a safe, accessible space for recreation.

Despite these pressures, pockets of the river corridor continue to support diverse habitats where native birds, mammals, and amphibians find refuge. Along certain stretches, visitors can still experience the natural beauty of the riverbanks and observe the presence of native wildlife. However, the health of these habitats varies greatly along the river's length; while some areas remain resilient, others suffer from severe degradation, with diminished ecological value due to altered flow patterns and human encroachment.



FALL COLOR ALONG THE JORDAN RIVER HIGHLIGHTS THE DIVERSITY OF PLANT SPECIES ALONG ITS BANKS



KAYAKING ON THE JORDAN RIVER PROVIDES A UNIQUE PERSPECTIVE OF THE RIVER MORPHOLOGY



JUST NORTH OF GENERAL HOLM PARK CANOPY TREES AND SHRUBS OVERHANG THE BANKS OF THE JORDAN RIVER PROVIDING BANK STABILIZATION AND HABITAT.

## Ecological Jordan River Watershed

The Jordan River flows through a diverse and expansive watershed covering 3,805 square miles, bounded by the Wasatch Range to the east and the Oquirrh Mountains to the west. This watershed encompasses the highest elevations in the region, with the Wasatch Range towering over 11,000 feet and the Oquirrh Mountains reaching heights of more than 9,000 feet. Between these mountain ranges lies a series of sloping benches, each gradually descending from the mountains and dropping sharply to the next level. This unique topography channels water from the surrounding highlands into a network of streams, tributaries, and canals that ultimately converge in the Jordan River.

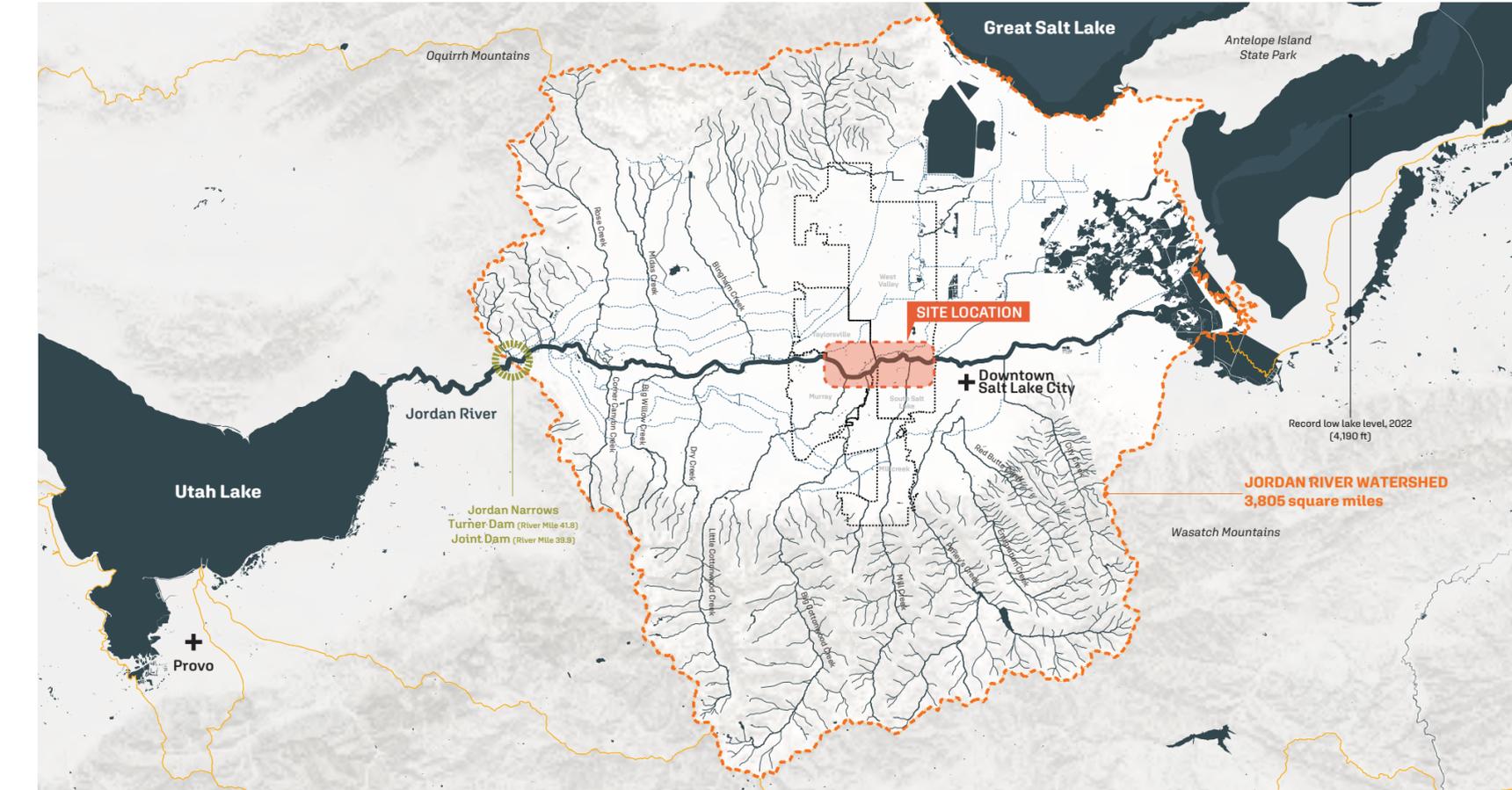
These natural features, along with the man-made water infrastructure, shape the river's flow and influence its overall health. The complexity and interconnectedness of this landscape mean that changes in any part of the watershed can have significant impacts downstream. To sustain the Jordan River as a resilient natural resource, it is crucial for municipalities, agencies, and communities across the basin to collaborate, taking a coordinated approach that respects the river's unique geography and ecological significance.



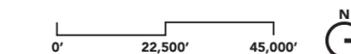
LOOKING SOUTH ACROSS THE SALT LAKE VALLEY FROM ENSIGN PEAK  
SOURCE: CLIFTON, ADOBE STOCK

### From Utah Lake to the Great Salt Lake

The Jordan River meanders for 51 miles, flowing north from the outlet of Utah Lake to the Great Salt Lake. Along its course, the river is fed by many tributaries, including the seven major creeks: Little Cottonwood, Big Cottonwood, Mill Creek, Parley's Creek, Emigration Creek, Red Butte Creek, and City Creek. Notably, all of the Jordan River's major tributaries originate in the Wasatch Mountains on the east side of the valley, with no major streams coming from the west side. This distinct pattern of flow highlights the river's connection to the surrounding mountain ranges and the uneven distribution of water sources in the region.



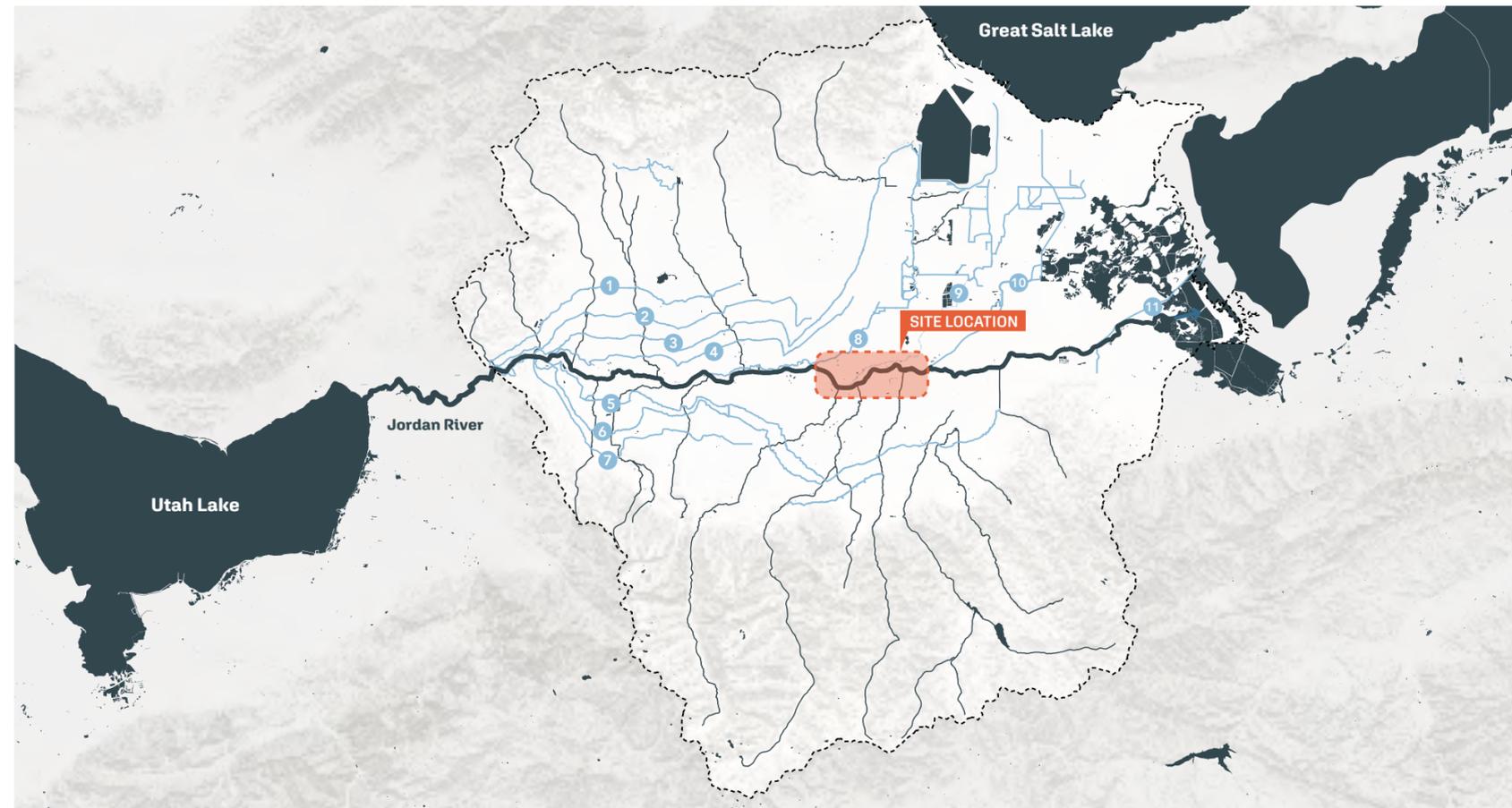
- Jordan River Watershed
- Other Watershed Boundary
- ..... Municipalities Adjacent to Site
- - - Canals
- Waterways



## Salt Lake Valley Canal Network

In the early settlement of the Salt Lake Valley, water was diverted from streams into a network of ditches to supply irrigation and household water. The earliest recorded diversions from the Jordan River date back to 1850, and by the turn of the century, seven major canals were redirecting water from both Utah Lake and the Jordan River. Today, this extensive system diverts water for agricultural, industrial, and municipal uses, influencing both water quantity and quality in the river and its surrounding ecosystem.

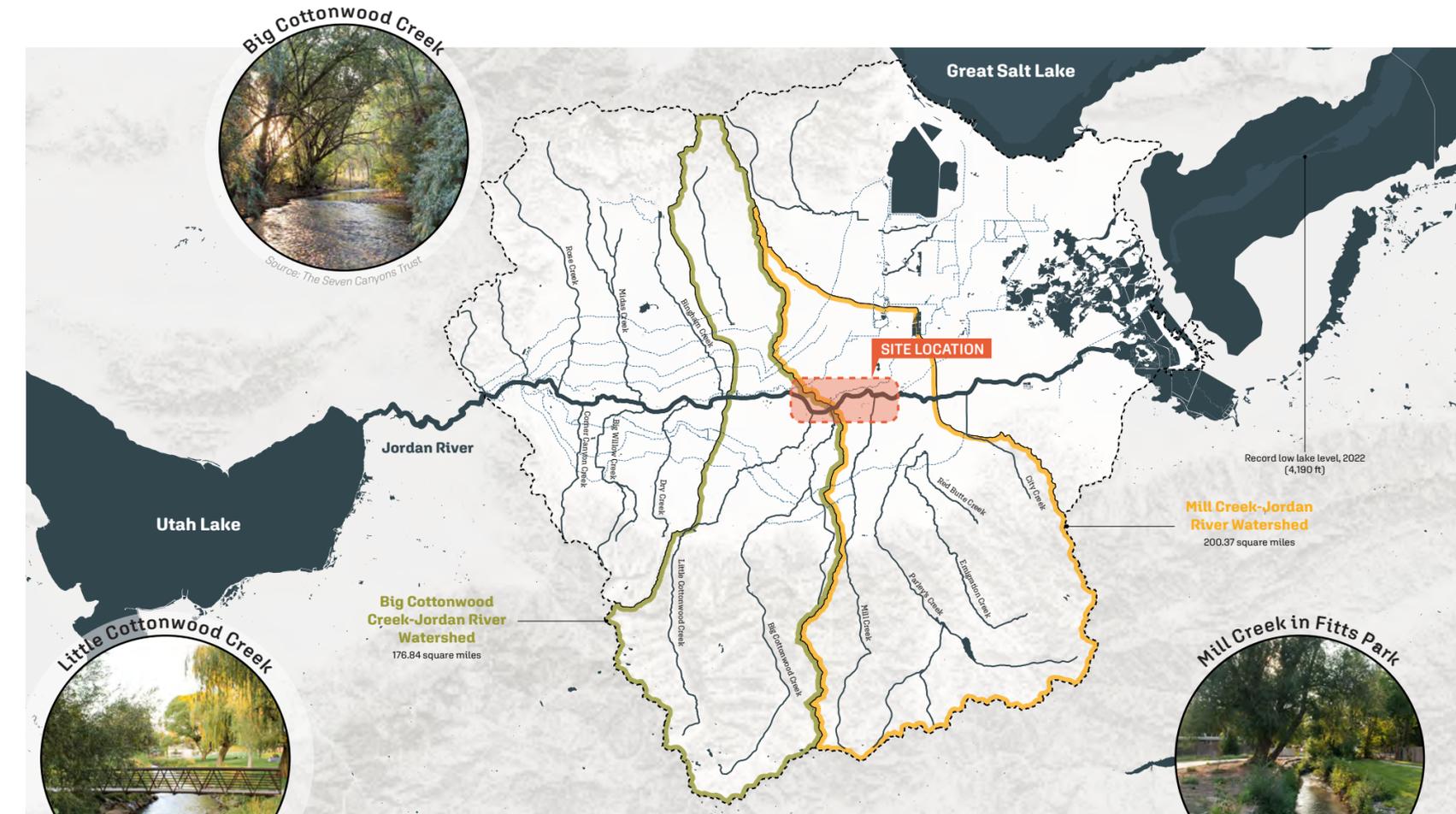
- 1 Provo Reservoir Canal
- 2 Utah Lake Distributing Canal
- 3 Utah & Salt Lake Canal
- 4 South Jordan Canal
- 5 Jordan and SLC Canal
- 6 East Jordan Canal
- 7 Draper Irrigation Canal
- 8 North Jordan Canal
- 9 Brighton and North Point Canal  
[Closed 2023]
- 10 Surplus Canal
- 11 Sewage Canal



## Central Jordan River Watershed

The Central Jordan River is fed by the Big Cottonwood Creek-Jordan River and Mill Creek-Jordan River sub-watersheds. Big Cottonwood Creek, impacted by 1850s timber operations, is now a protected watershed and Salt Lake City's largest drinking water source. Mill Creek, once lined with mills, showed significant degradation by the 1990s, prompting restoration by the U.S. Forest Service and Salt Lake County. However, as Mill Creek flows through urban and industrial areas toward the Jordan River, it continues to face watershed health challenges.

- Jordan River Watershed
- Sub-Watershed Boundary
- Canals
- Waterways



## Ecological Site Hydrology

The Central Jordan River displays a complex array of hydrological features, including confluences, levees, canal diversions, and intersecting flood zones. Each of these elements plays a critical role in shaping the river's flow, water distribution, and flood dynamics.

Historically, the Jordan River interacted naturally with its floodplain, with periodic flooding that supported diverse habitats and riparian ecosystems. However, the construction of levees and expansion of urban development along its banks have gradually disconnected the river from its floodplain.

These modifications have reshaped the river's natural cycles, reducing its overall ecological function. The river's capacity to absorb and filter water, support wildlife habitats, and maintain riparian vegetation has diminished. The loss of these natural interactions not only affects the ecological health of the river but also impacts water quality and resilience across the valley. For future management and restoration efforts, acknowledging these changes will be essential in creating a more resilient river system that can better support both ecological and human needs.



THE SURPLUS CANAL AND JORDAN RIVER DIVERSION JUST NORTH OF STATE ROUTE 201.  
SOURCE: THE WASHINGTON POST

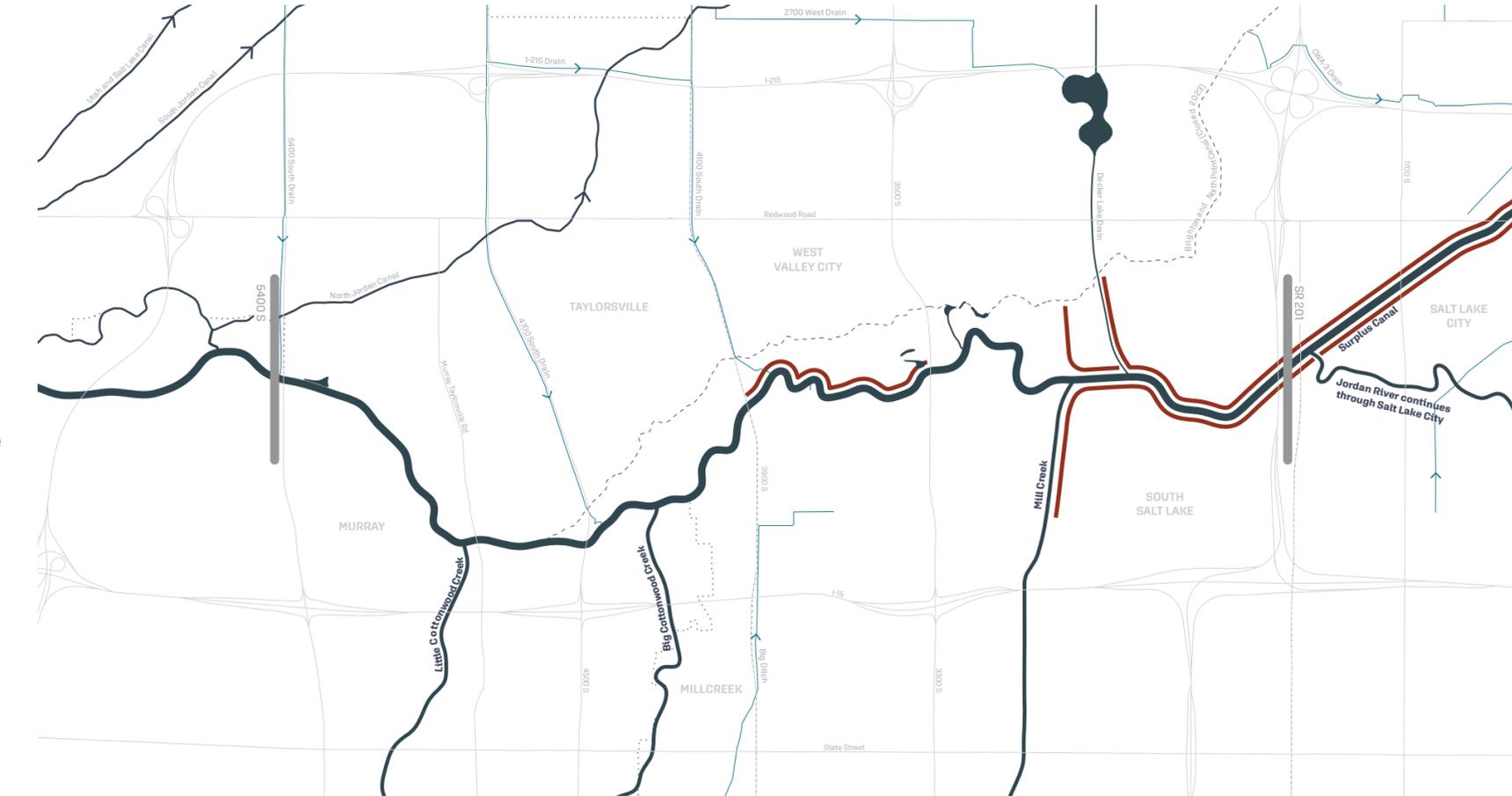


THE WARM WATERS OF MILL CREEK MEET THE TURBID JORDAN RIVER  
SOURCE: THE SALT LAKE TRIBUNE

## Waterways System

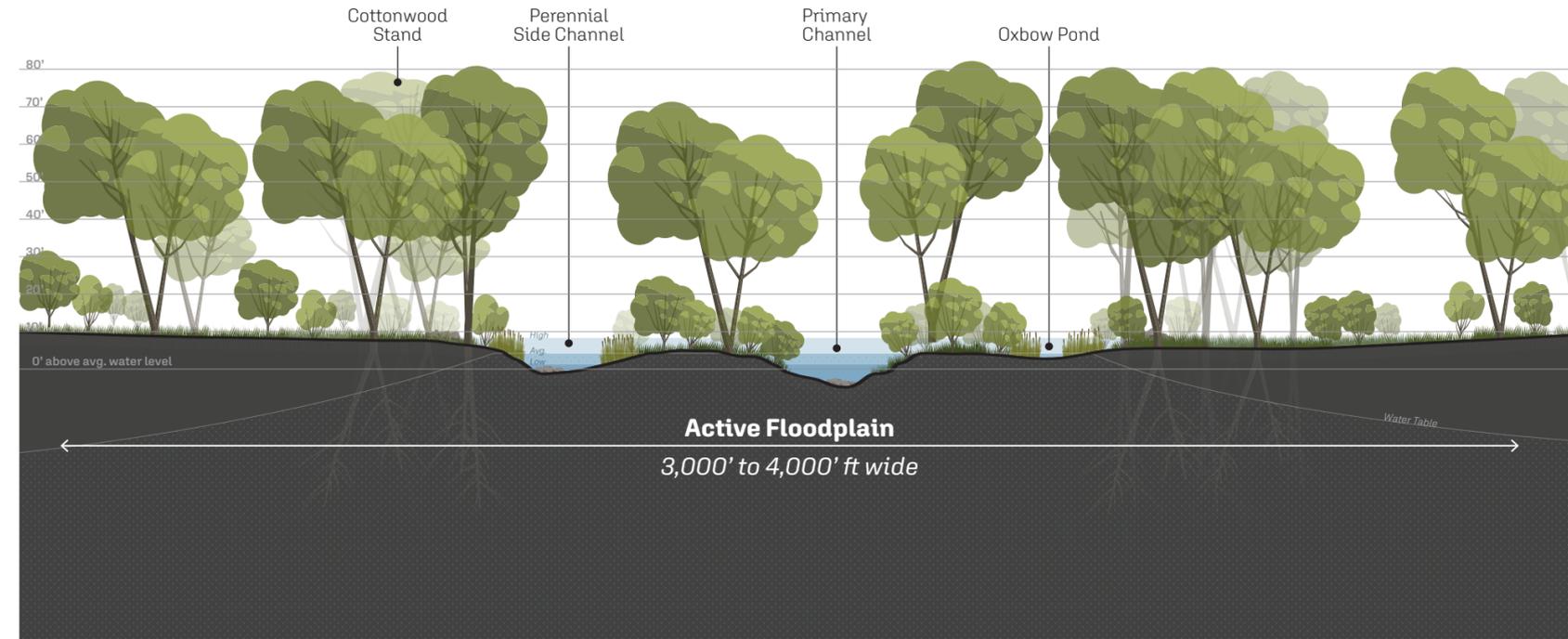
Within the study area there are numerous waterways that deliver water to the river or extract water from it. Three main creeks—Big Cottonwood Creek, Little Cottonwood Creek, and Mill Creek—flow from the Wasatch Range into the Jordan River. Numerous drains and ditches were constructed to drain areas that were historically floodplain but have now been filled in and developed. At the north end of the site the Surplus Canal diverts the majority of the water from the main channel of the Jordan River directly to the Great Salt Lake.

- Levees
- Canal
- - - Closed Canal
- Drain/Ditch
- Major Road
- · · · · Municipal Boundary
- Waterways

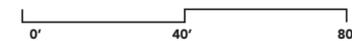


## The River Historically

The valley gradient between Utah Lake and the Great Salt Lake is approximately 0.1%, supporting the historic formation of a highly sinuous and meandering Jordan River channel with broad, active floodplains containing large wetlands and many side channels. Previously, the river meandered broadly across its floodplain. Episodic floods created new channels in the floodplain and cut off old meanders, leaving behind oxbow lakes in events called channel avulsions. In some areas, the unobstructed floodplain (excluding levees and development) is around 3,000 to 4,000 ft wide, suggesting the floodplain width has been reduced between 45%-97%

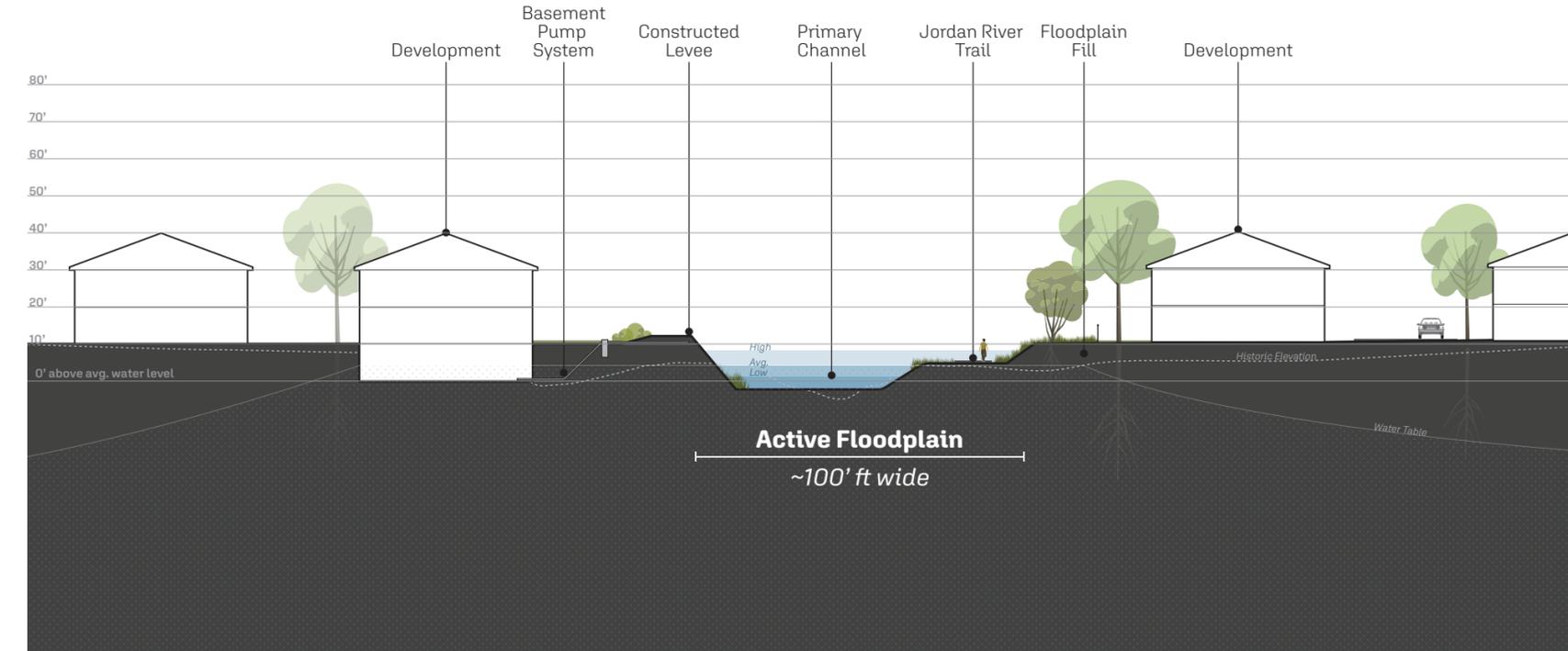


HISTORIC RIVER CONDITION (CONCEPTUAL)

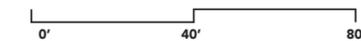


## The River Today

Historically, the rate and frequency of channel migration and avulsion would have been controlled by dense riparian vegetation that provided bank stability and hydraulic roughness across the floodplain. By the early 1900s, much of the riparian vegetation had been cleared, resulting in bank recession and channel widening. Urban encroachment during the 1900s and early 2000s also resulted in filled floodplain, armored banks, and levees built to limit flood risk. Similarly, portions of the Jordan River have been straightened and woody debris has been removed from the channel. These changes have created a more hydraulically smooth and simplified channel with limited floodplain connectivity and lacking the diversity and complexity found in the historical river and floodplain.



EXISTING RIVER CONDITION (TYPICAL)



## How We Got Here



### 1937

The Jordan River flowed through a wide and shallow floodplain. It meandered broadly across its floodplain by eroding its banks on the outside of a bend while depositing sediment on the inside of a bend. Episodic floods created new channels in the floodplain and cut off old meanders, leaving behind oxbow lakes in events called channel avulsions. The river supported a large area of wetlands that contributed to the biodiversity of the valley.



### 1970

Development through the valley started to dramatically change the course of the Jordan River. Farmers moved into the fertile floodplain and created a series of canals and drains to irrigate crops, dramatically modifying the hydrologic system. To control flooding the river was dammed and channelized and the floodplain began to be filled. Much of the riparian vegetation had been cleared, resulting in bank recession and channel widening. In the aerial image above, you see the channelization of the river with remnant oxbow ponds at its edges.

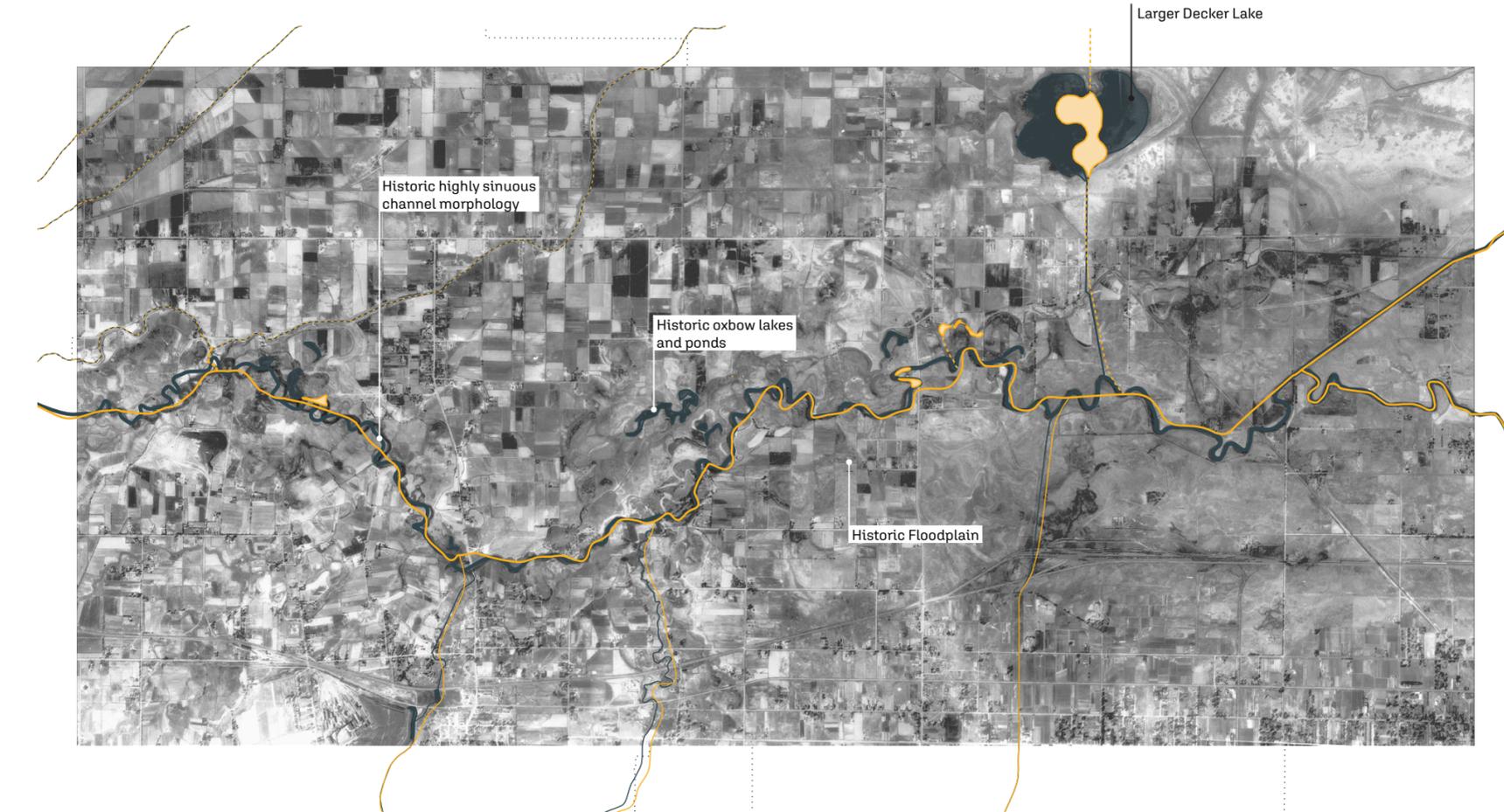


### Today

Development patterns shifted from predominantly farming to housing. The floodplain continued to be filled in, allowing development to occur closer and closer to the river. Constricting the river led to more dramatic flood events, such as the 1980s floods. In response, levees were built to limit flood risk and river banks were armored against erosion. Invasive species occupy much of the river's edge and the amount of riparian wetlands has been dramatically reduced.

## The River in 1937

The image to the right shows the historic aerial of the river from 1937, overlaid with the centerline of the river we see today. In the patchwork of landscape around the river you can see the vast agricultural landscape that used to be adjacent to the river. At this time the river had a wide and shallow floodplain that allowed it to meander and change course frequently.



- 2024 River and Creek
- 2024 Ponds and Lakes
- 1937 River and Creeks
- 1937 Ponds and Lakes
- - - - - Municipal Boundary



## Flood Control Infrastructure



### Federally Regulated Levees

These levees are regulated by the Army Corps of Engineers and are managed and maintained by Salt Lake County Flood Control. Per regulations, you cannot have any woody plants growing on the banks of the levee. The levees are maintained to prevent flooding in adjacent and downstream urban areas.



### Non-federally Regulated Levees

These levees have been built to protect development adjacent to the river, but are not regulated by the Army Corps of Engineers. Often the homes behind these levees still have basement flooding issues due to high groundwater, so they require frequent or continual pumping.



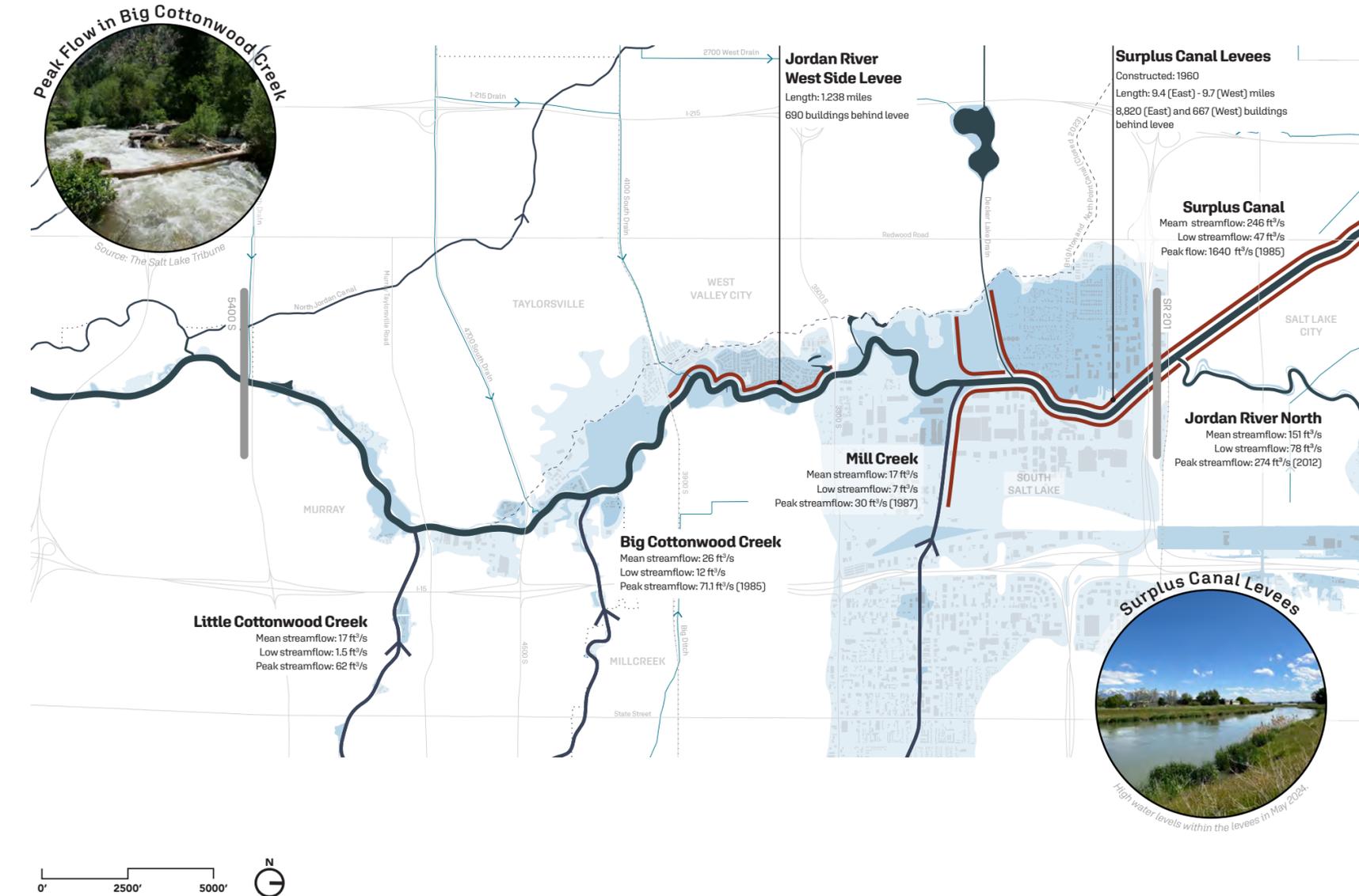
### Stormwater Infrastructure

Stormwater outfalls, like the one pictured above, are concrete or metal structures that direct stormwater directly from city streets into the river. If these structures are underwater during flood events the floodwaters back up into communities. Any containments that have been picked up by stormwater are delivered directly into the river, impacting water quality.

## Flow Volumes + Flooding

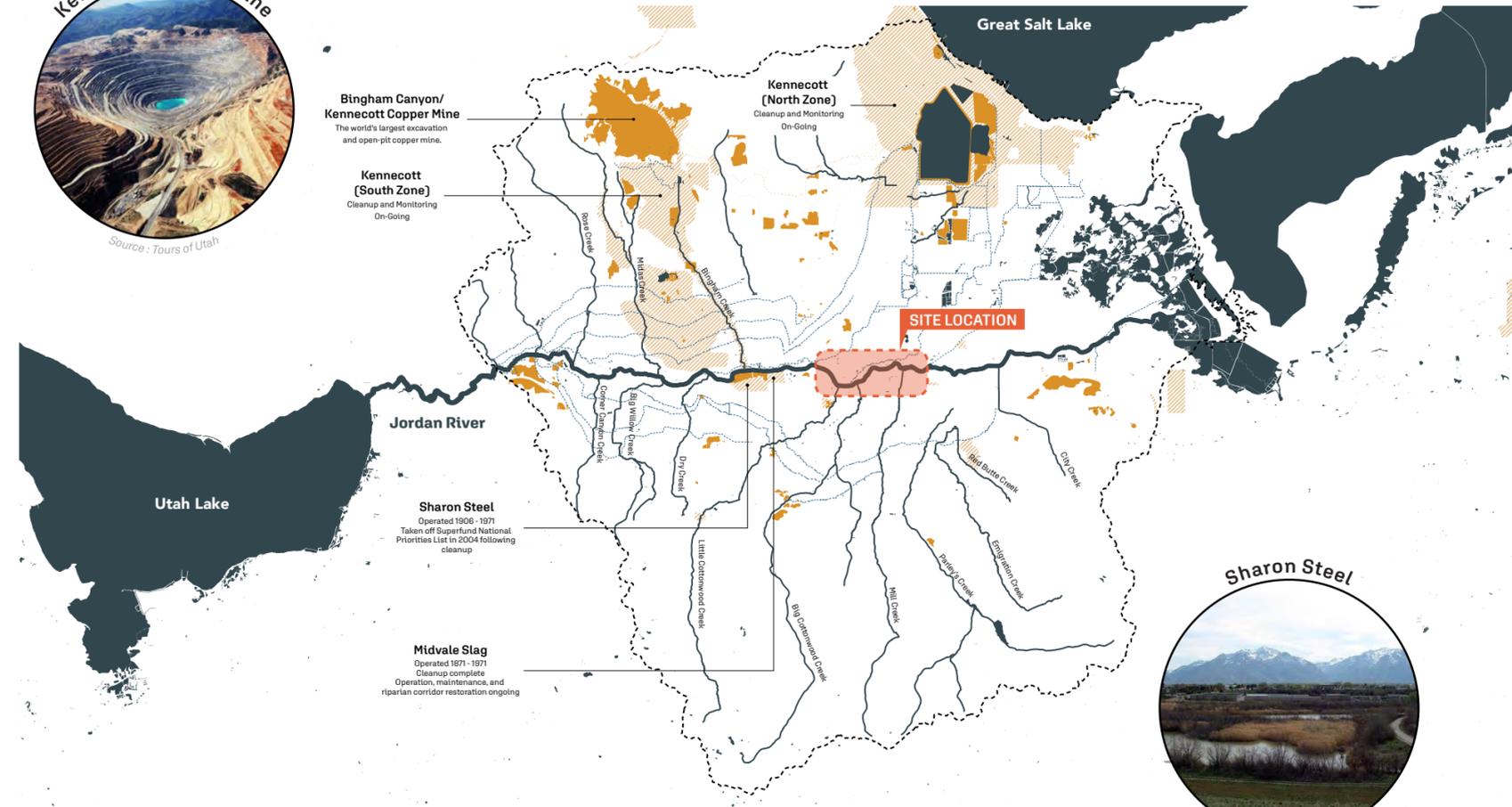
The Central Jordan River and its tributaries experience major flow fluctuations, impacting flood risk and water quality. FEMA-designated flood zones with 1% and 0.2% risks contain key levee systems, such as the Jordan River West Side and Surplus Canal Levees, which protect thousands of structures. Big and Little Cottonwood Creeks show the largest flow variations. Meanwhile increased runoff from nearby neighborhoods can cause rapid, debris-filled surges in all three creeks. Understanding these flow patterns and flood risks is essential for resilient planning, water management, and ecological restoration in river corridor.

- 1% Chance of Flood
- 0.2% Chance of Flood
- Building Within Flood Zone
- Levee
- Canal
- Closed Canal
- Drain/Ditch
- Major Road
- Municipal Boundary
- Waterway

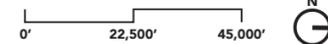


## Water Quality at the Watershed

At the watershed level, water quality of the Jordan River is highly impacted by industrial activity. Superfund and mining sites have contaminated both surfacewater and groundwater. The water quality in Utah Lake is similarly impacted, so water flowing into the Jordan River is already compromised. Improving water quality needs to be addressed at the watershed level in order to be effective.



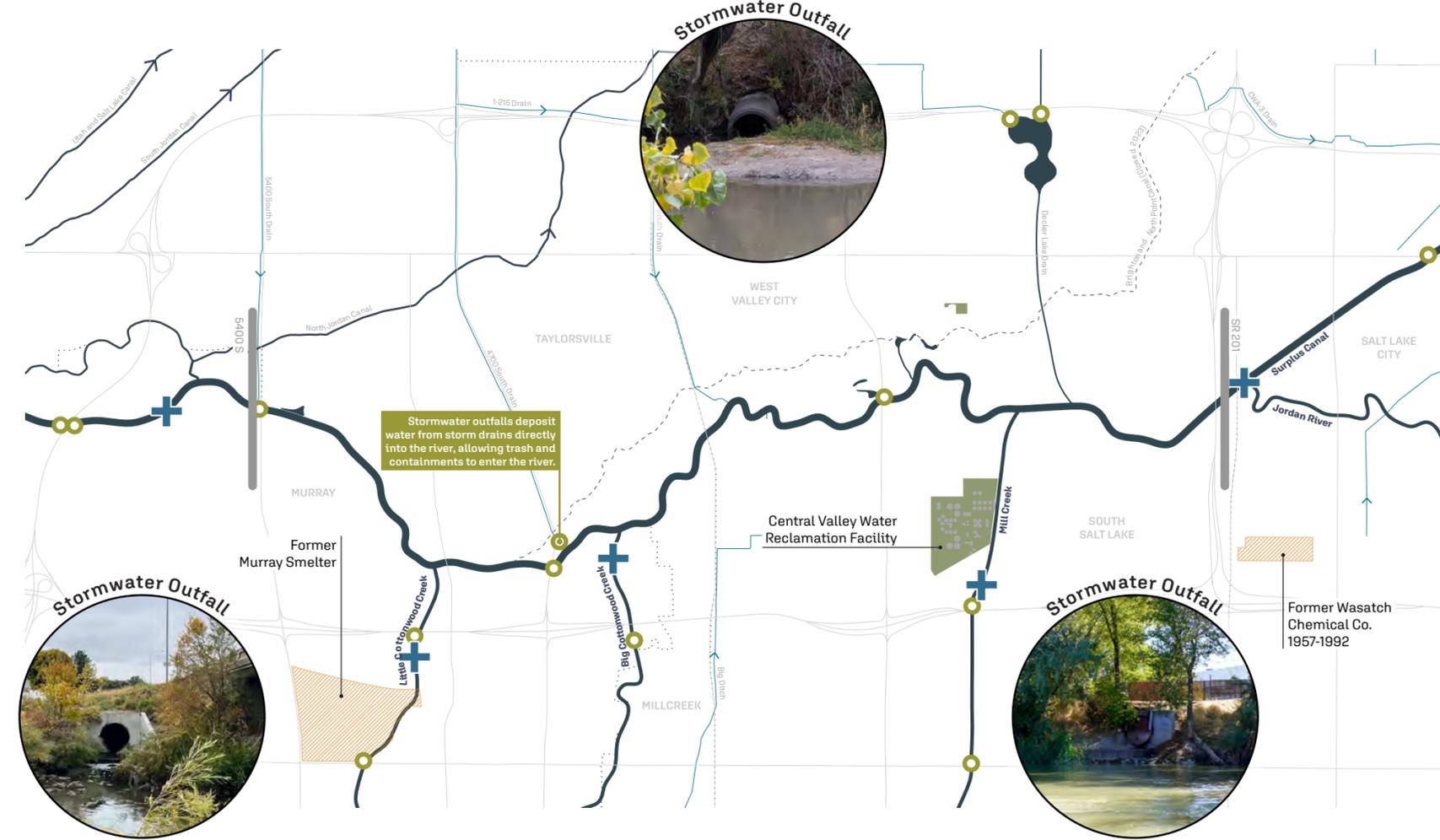
- EPA Superfund Site
- Active Mine Site
- Water Bodies
- Canals
- Municipal Boundary
- Waterway



## Water Quality in the Central Jordan River

Within the Central Jordan River area there are both point-source and non-point-source pollutants. One EPA Superfund site (a highly contaminated site) sits adjacent to Little Cottonwood Creek. Meanwhile, numerous stormdrains deposit unclean stormwater directly into the river. Green stormwater infrastructure can help eliminate or reduce these containments. However, water quality issues cannot be entirely solved without larger watershed-wide management.

- EPA Superfund Site
- Water Reclamation Site
- Water Quality Monitoring Site
- Stormwater Outfalls
- Canal
- Closed Canal
- Drain/Ditch
- Major Roads
- Municipal Boundary
- Waterway



## Ecological **Three Reaches**

Although the Central Jordan River is impacted by similar factors that affect sediment, vegetation, and bank stability throughout its course, its characteristics change as it flows through different communities. The river can be roughly divided into three reaches—the upper, middle, and lower reaches—each with its own unique geomorphological and ecological features shaped by both natural processes and human modifications. These reaches highlight the complexity of managing the Central Jordan River and underscore the need to balance ecological health with the practical limitations imposed by surrounding infrastructure and urban development.



THE UPPER REACH - THE JORDAN RIVER NEAR GERMANIA PARK WITH THE MILLRACE PARK POND IN THE FOREGROUND



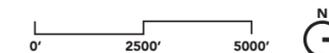
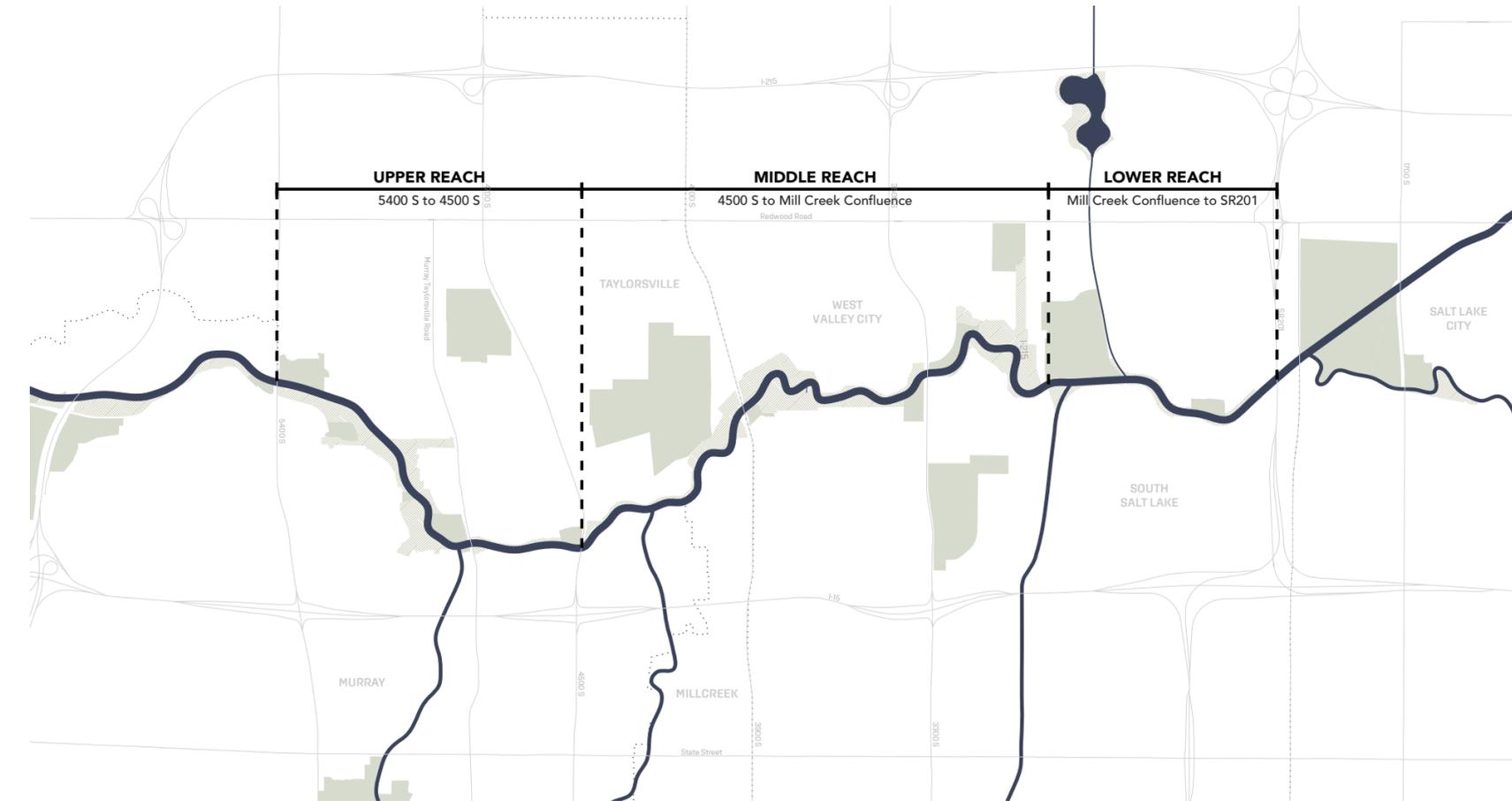
THE MIDDLE REACH - THE JORDAN RIVER NEAR PIONEER CROSSING REGIONAL PARK WITH PIONEER BRIDGE IN THE FOREGROUND



THE LOWER REACH - THE JORDAN RIVER NEAR STATE ROUTE 201 WITH KHADEEJA ISLAMIC CENTER IN THE FOREGROUND

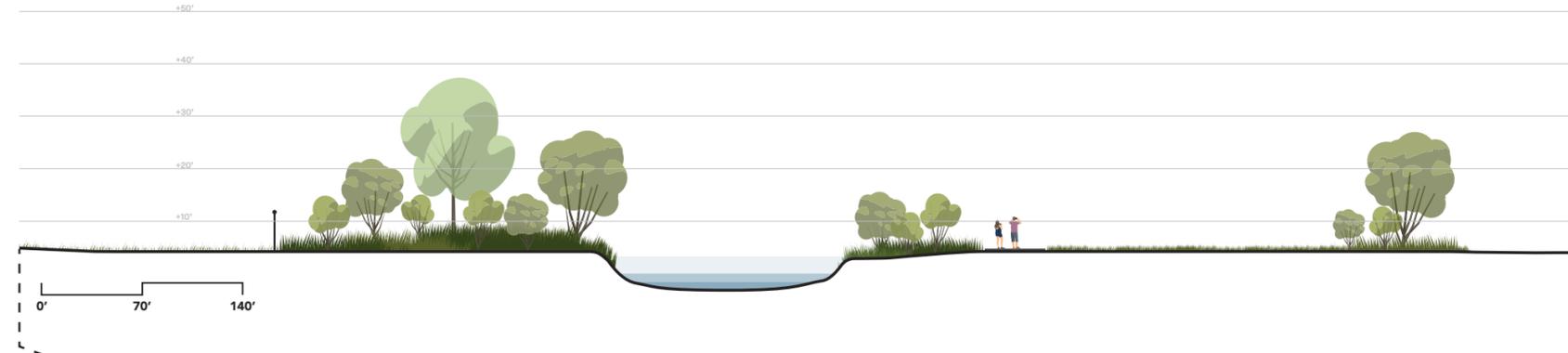
### **Extent of the Reaches**

The Central Jordan River can be divided into three distinct reaches: the upper, middle, and lower reaches. The upper reach stretches from 5400 South near Millrace Park to 4500 South (West Taylorsville Expressway). The middle reach extends from 4500 South to the confluence with Mill Creek. The lower reach runs from the Mill Creek confluence to the State Route 201 overpass. Each of these reaches presents unique characteristics and challenges that are shaped by the river's interaction with its surrounding environment and infrastructure.



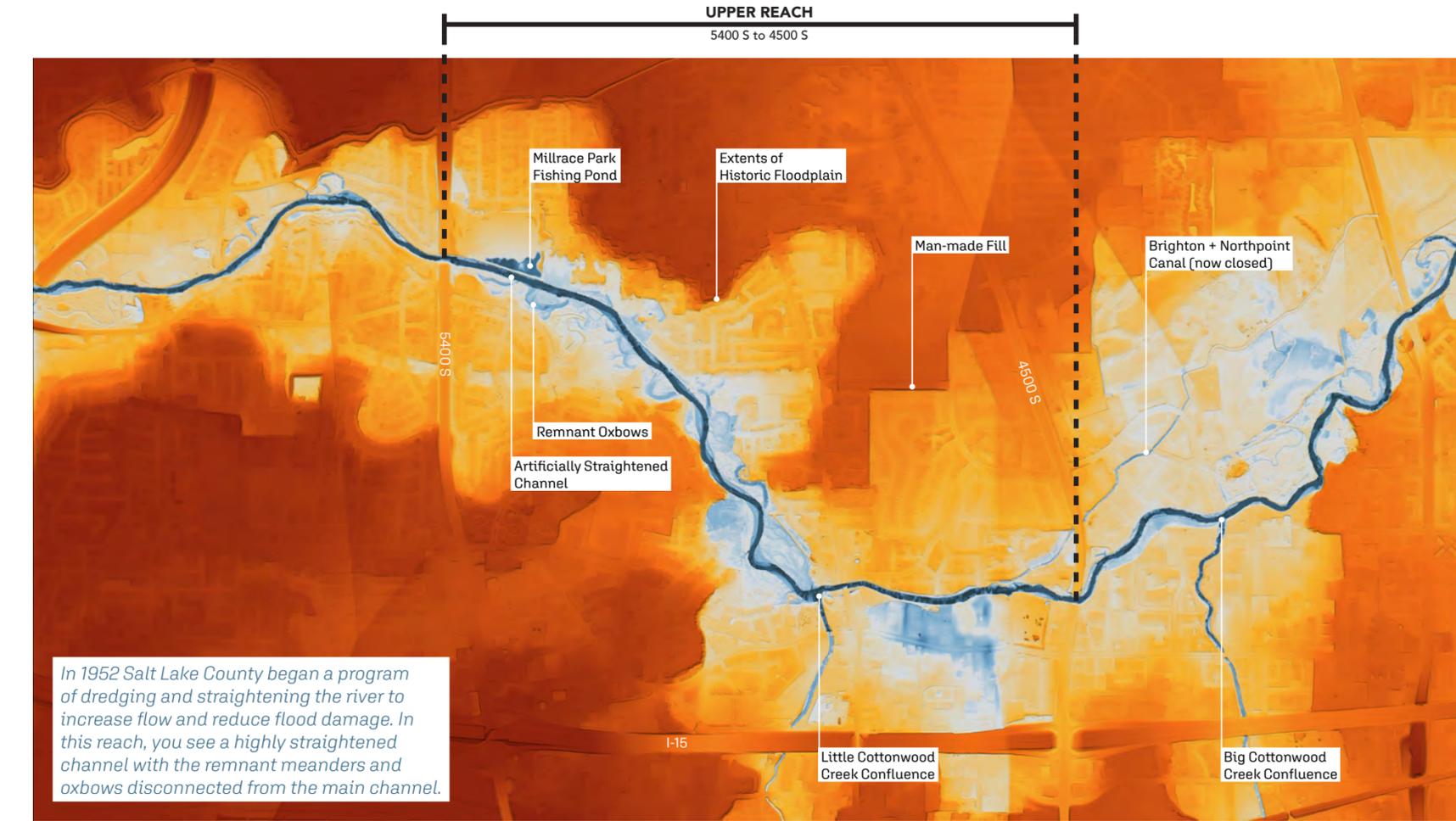
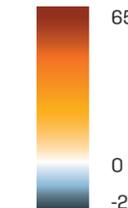
## Upper Reach

This section of the river is relatively straight, with only slight natural curves, and has a simple, single-channel structure that remains consistent throughout. The channel is generally wide and shallow, ranging between 25 and 40 feet across, with only a few deeper pool areas. A significant amount of gravel flows through this part of the river, as shown by gravel bars and past dredging near the Little Cottonwood Creek junction, though most of it continues downstream except where it can settle in wider parts of the channel.



The channel's size, combined with disconnected levees, limits the river's ability to naturally overflow into nearby areas, although homes on the left bank near Little Cottonwood Creek have basements that sometimes flood, due to their location on a former flood path. Several low-lying areas on the floodplain remain undeveloped, while higher ground typically has urban or suburban infrastructure. Stormwater has been directed into a floodplain wetland near the Kennecott Nature Center, filtering out sediments and other contaminants before reaching the Jordan River. Most other storm drains, however, empty directly into the Jordan River and its tributaries.

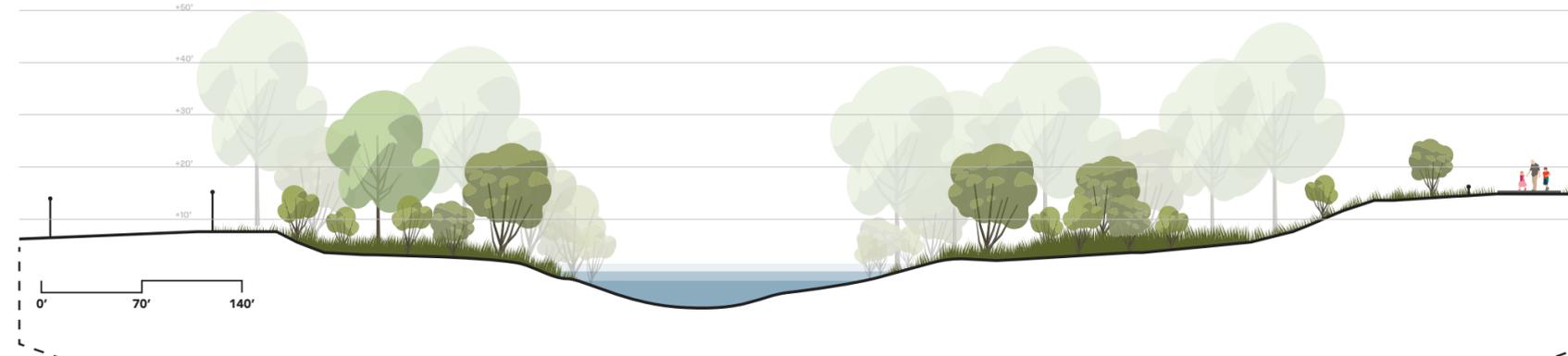
Height Above/Below Water (m)



*In 1952 Salt Lake County began a program of dredging and straightening the river to increase flow and reduce flood damage. In this reach, you see a highly straightened channel with the remnant meanders and oxbows disconnected from the main channel.*

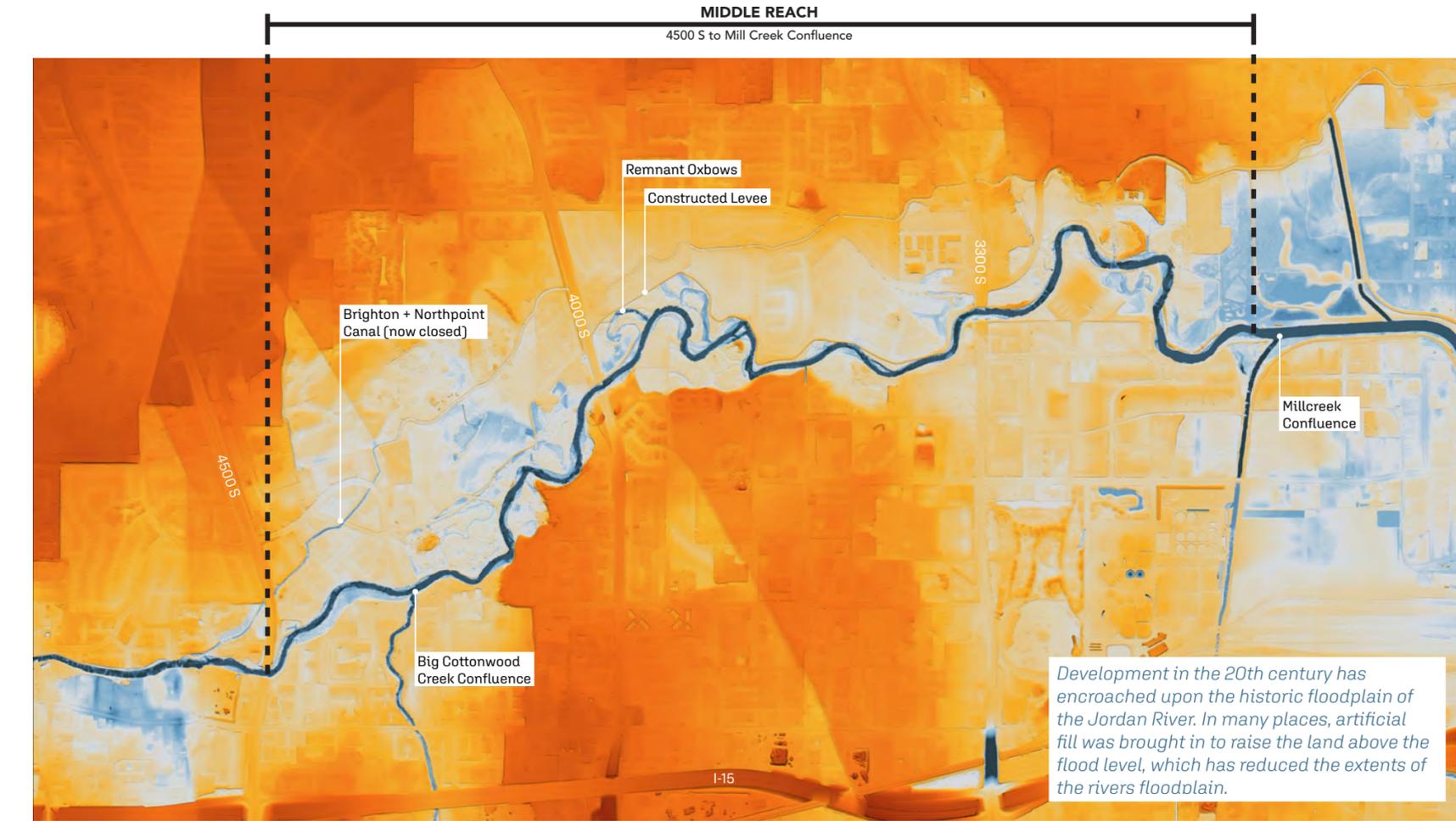
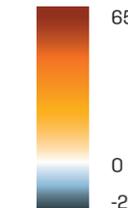
## Middle Reach

As the river flows downstream, it becomes more confined, with banks frequently reinforced by rock riprap. The channel follows a moderately winding, single path, alternating between deep pools and shallow riffles. The width varies along its course. Narrower sections, around 50-60 feet wide, form pools over 6 feet deep, while wider areas, roughly 80-100 feet, create shallow riffles less than a foot deep. Narrow sections are often caused by vegetation growth, especially Russian olive, while wider sections lack dense vegetation, leading to some bank erosion and widening. Small gravel islands also form in these wider areas. This stretch of the river has well-defined bends that can reach up to 800 feet in length, while tighter bends, under 65 feet in radius, create backwater zones during high flows, leading to deep pools and bank erosion.



LiDAR mapping reveals abandoned meanders throughout the floodplain, especially near the West Meadowbrook Expressway. These old channels and other features of the floodplain have been separated from the river by levees or filled in for development. FEMA maps show that significant portions of the 100-year floodplain have been built upon, leaving these areas at risk of flooding despite the levees and reinforcement. The width of the accessible floodplain varies, from around 100 feet to more than 1,300 feet as the river gradient flattens. However, the overall floodplain width without obstructions is about 3,000-4,000 feet, suggesting the floodplain has been reduced by 45-97% due to levees, fill, and development.

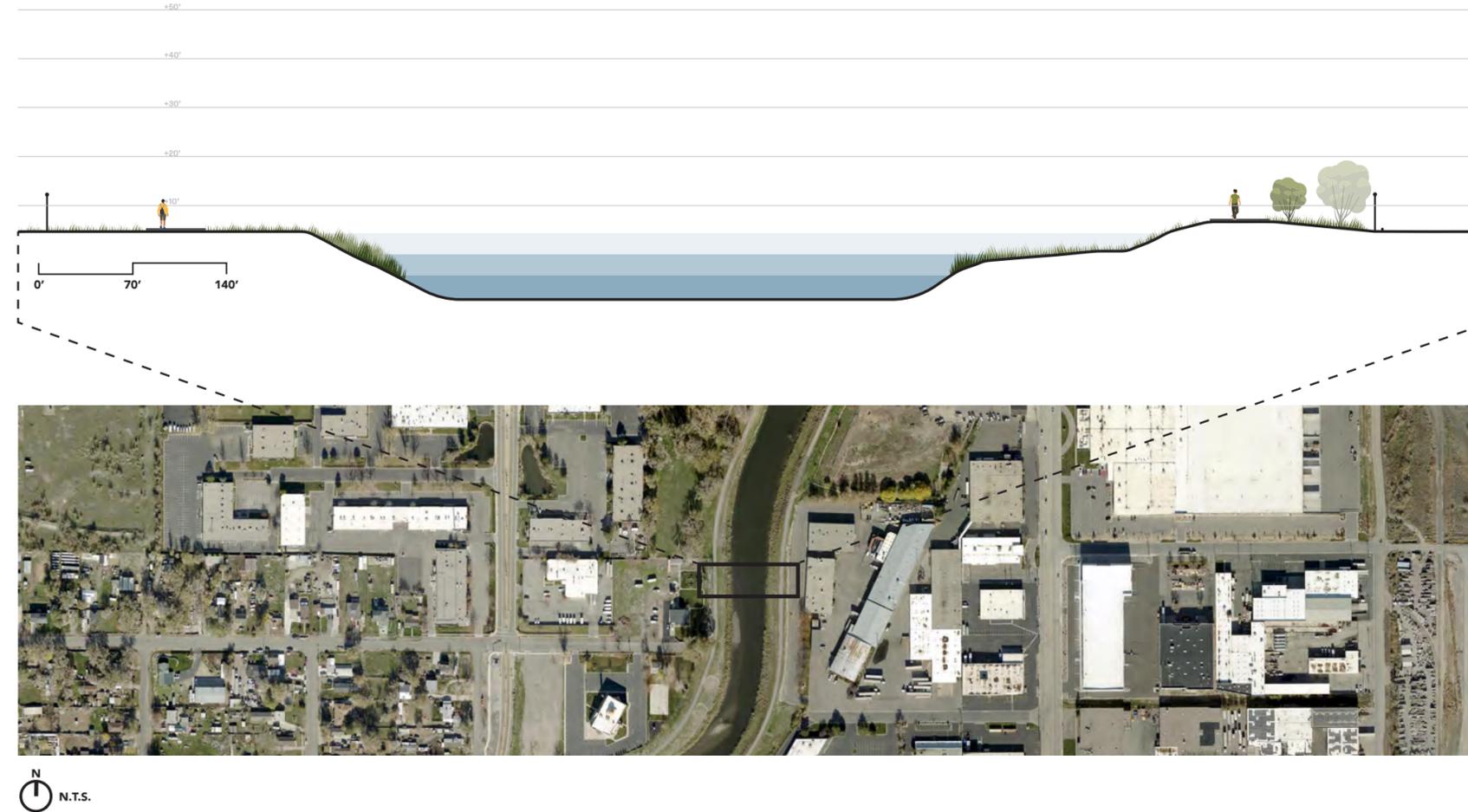
Height Above/Below Water (m)



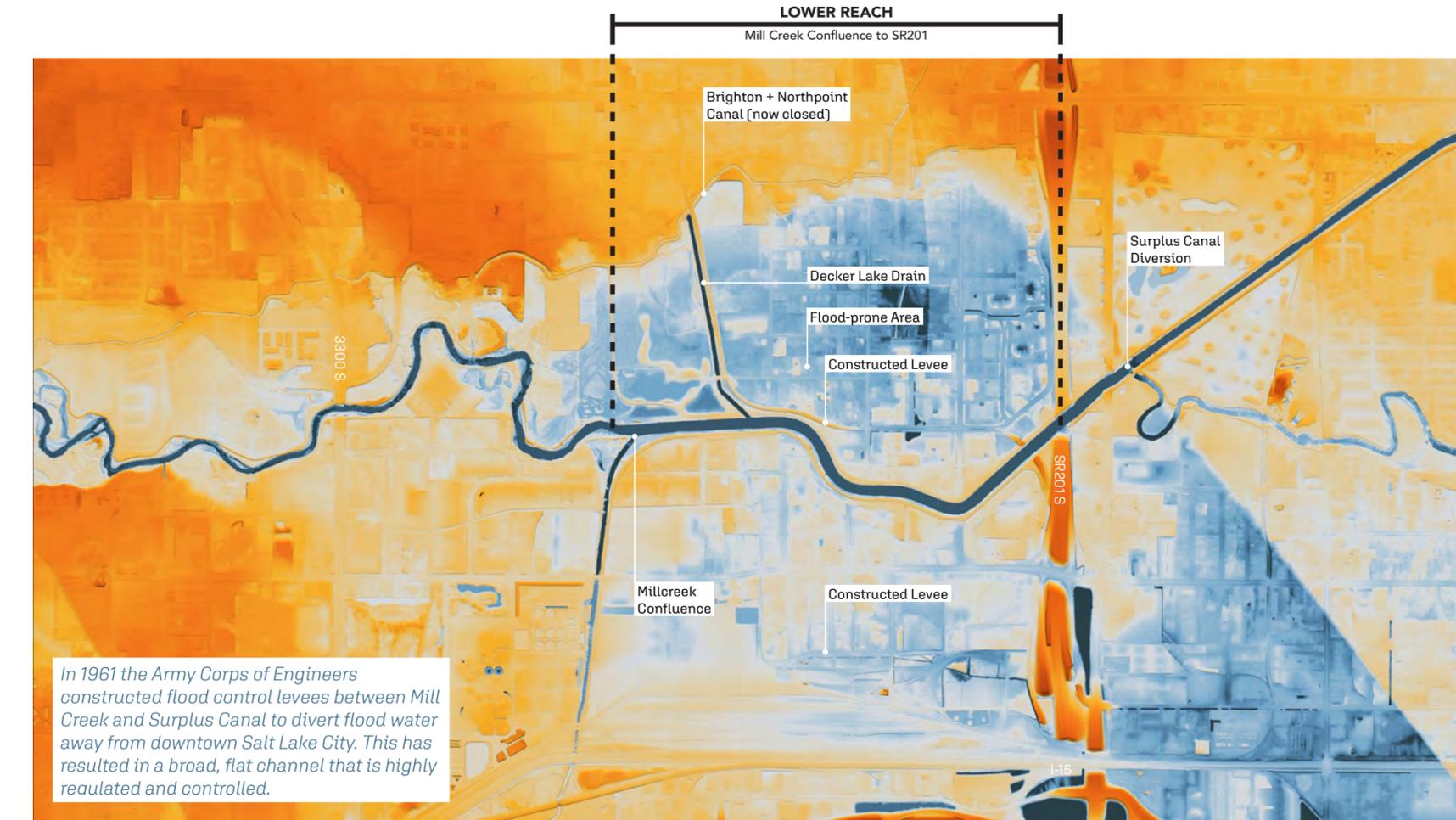
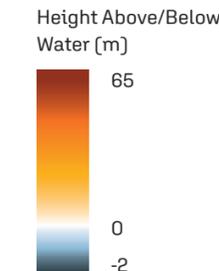
*Development in the 20th century has encroached upon the historic floodplain of the Jordan River. In many places, artificial fill was brought in to raise the land above the flood level, which has reduced the extents of the rivers floodplain.*

## Lower Reach

In the lower part of the river, levees tightly contain the river's flow, and there's little to no vegetation along the banks to help stabilize them. Regulations require these levees to be clear of trees and other woody vegetation. This has led to over-widening of the channel to an average of 120 feet and a flat, uniform riverbed. The wide and shallow riverbed without vegetation increases the temperature of the water and decreases available habitat for aquatic species. The floodplain is also narrow, reduced to about 1.5 times the channel width, or roughly 175 feet, due to levees and nearby development. Although the riverbed materials haven't been directly observed, it likely consists of gravel with more sand and silt than upstream.



Much of the original floodplain, now cut off by levees, has been developed, which limits the river's ability to connect with its floodplain or naturally shift its course over time. Together, the levees and the surrounding development create major obstacles to restoration, leaving few options for returning this part of the river to a more natural state.



## Ecological Key Habitats

The Central Jordan River is part of the Central Basin and Range Ecoregion, which supports diverse habitats, including lowland riparian areas and wetlands. These ecosystems are vital for numerous species, especially birds, as the site lies along a critical migration corridor. Despite covering less than 0.2% of Utah's total area, lowland riparian habitat is among the most important in the state, particularly for avian species. This section highlights the ecoregion's characteristics, key habitats, and the species that depend on these areas, emphasizing their ecological significance and the need for preservation.



ANIMAL TRACKS ON THE BANKS OF THE JORDAN RIVER

### Acres of Wetland Along the Central Jordan River

Wetlands associated with woody plants such as willow thickets or cottonwood clusters.

**Forested/Shrub Wetland**  
188 acres

Wetland type dominated by developing vegetation and commonly associated with ground-water discharge [seeps and springs].

**Freshwater Emergent Wetland**  
65 acres

Wetlands dominated by non-woody, grass-like vegetation.

**Herbaceous Riparian Wetland**  
30 acres

**Freshwater Pond**  
18 acres

### Habitat Areas + Key Species

The wetlands along the river provide essential habitats for diverse species and play a critical role in the river's floodplain. Various wetland types, such as riparian, forested, emergent, and freshwater ponds, cover significant areas within the project site. Together with the Jordan River, these wetlands support species of greatest conservation need, as outlined in the Utah Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy. They also offer vital ecological functions, including water filtration, wildlife habitat, and flood management, all of which contribute to the river's environmental health.

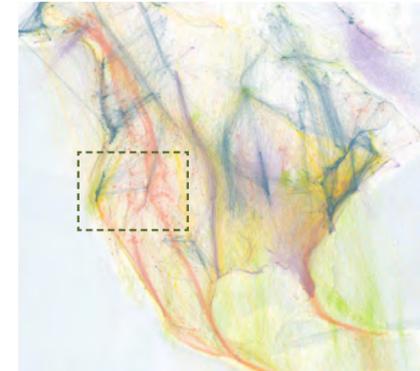
- Beaver Sighting
- Freshwater Pond
- Forested/Scrub Wetland
- Herbaceous Riparian Wetland
- Freshwater Emergent Wetland
- Parks
- Golf Courses
- Major Road
- Municipal Boundary
- Waterway



## Bird Migration

The Great Salt Lake and Jordan River in Utah are critical habitats for migrating birds, providing essential stopover points along the Pacific and Central Flyways. Without these sites, many migrating birds would face significant challenges in completing their seasonal journeys, making these habitats essential for their survival.

Source: Audubon Bird Migration Explorer Map



### Migration Destinations from Salt Lake County

Country	Species
United States	77
Canada	39
Mexico	35
Nicaragua	8
Guatemala	7
Honduras	6
Columbia	6
Panama	6
Peru	5
El Salvador	5

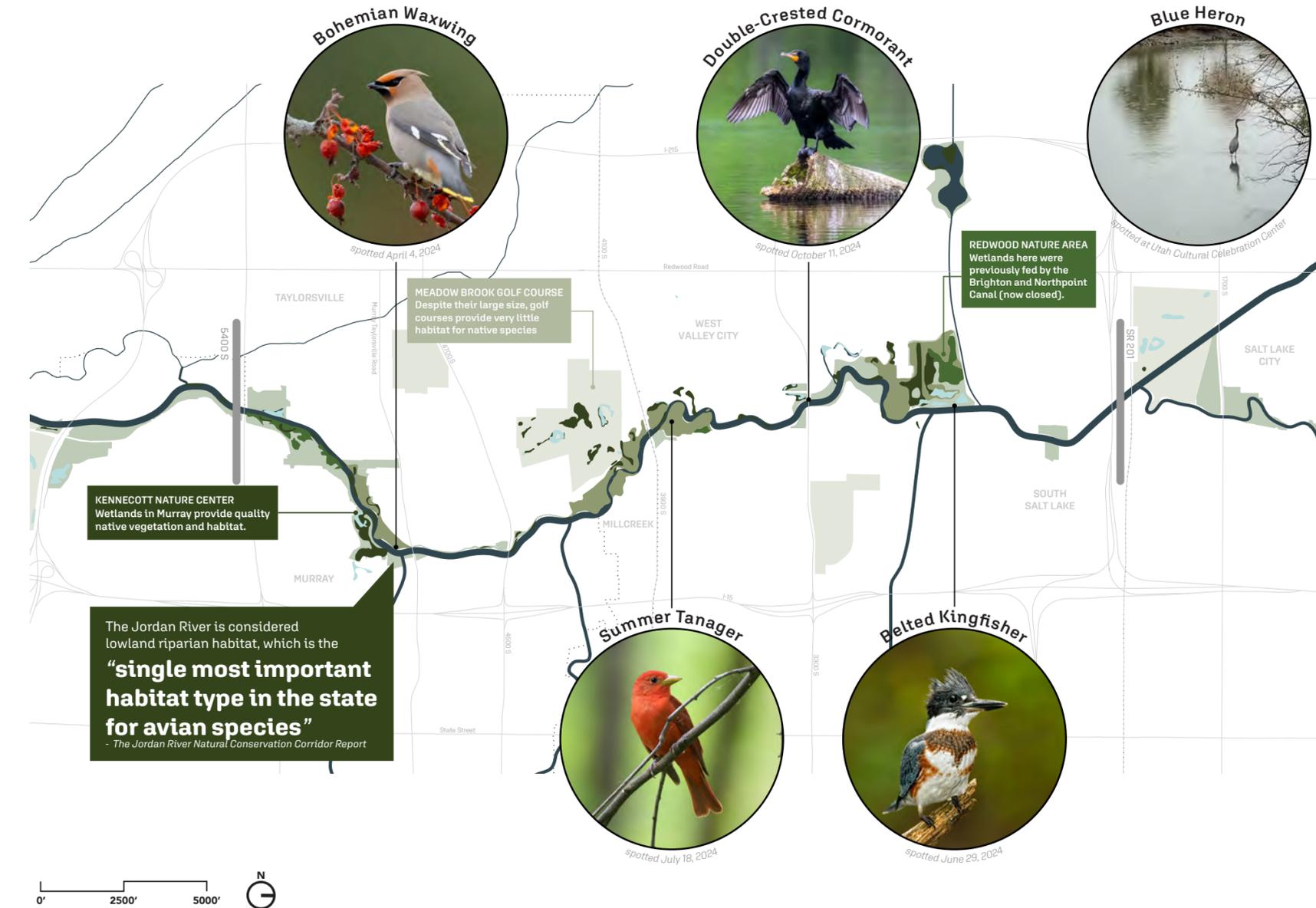
- Landbirds
- Raptors
- Shorebirds
- Waterbirds
- Waterfowl



## Avian Species on Site

These wetland areas offer abundant food sources, such as insects, algae, and aquatic invertebrates, which are vital for replenishing energy during long migratory journeys. The diverse ecosystems along the river provide safe resting areas, shelter, and nesting sites for numerous species, including shorebirds, waterfowl, and songbirds.

- Freshwater Pond
- Forested/Scrub Wetland
- Herbaceous Riparian Wetland
- Freshwater Emergent Wetland
- Parks
- Golf Courses
- Major Road
- - - - Municipal Boundary
- Waterway



## Invasive Plant Species

A plant is considered native to a location if it has evolved in that region, which results in relationships with other species around it. Some non-native species are not problematic for the local ecology (these are called adapted species), however other species create issues because they grow aggressively and/or create conditions where native species cannot grow. These invasive species provide little to no habitat value to local insects, birds, and other animals and thus disrupt the local food chain and reduce the overall available habitat.



### Common Reed

*Phragmites australis*

Common Reed is an extremely aggressive and hard to remove invasive species. It prefers damp soil to standing water and often creates dense stands of 6-12' tall reeds that can spread 16' or more per year. Because it spreads so rapidly and displaces other valuable wetland plants that provide essential habitat to aquatic species its presence is of particular concern.



### Russian Olive

*Elaeagnus angustifolia*

Russian olive is a deciduous tree native to Eurasia that was introduced in the early 1900s. It is a highly competitive tree which crowds out native species. While its distinctive silvery leaves are beautiful, they provide little to no habitat value to other species.



### Saltcedar

*Tamarix spp.*

Saltcedar, otherwise known as tamarisk, is a deciduous shrub that is a highly problematic invasive species in much of the western United States. It uses a huge amount of water per day, which lowers the water table and leaves behind high concentrations of salt, which discourages the growth of other species.

## Protected Species

Currently, there are no endangered species who are known to occupy the study area. However, threatened or endangered species could occur given the right circumstances. Providing quality habitat for these species could improve their status as well as the species that depend on them. Numerous species not listed here are protected under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act.



SOURCE: National Audubon Society

### Bald Eagle

*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*

Bald Eagles have a special status as a protected species under the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act. Their numbers have rebounded since they were originally listed on the Endangered Species List, and they were delisted in 2007. Providing quality fishing and nesting habitat is still crucial to maintaining this majestic species. Bald eagles are currently present along the Jordan River, but the quality and quantity of habitat available could be improved.



SOURCE: Butterfly Conservation

### Monarch Butterfly

*Danaus plexippus*

The Monarch butterfly is listed as a candidate species for federal protection under the Endangered Species Act. Monarchs depend on certain pollinator plants, specifically milkweed, which can form in the Jordan River wetlands and wet meadow habitats adjacent to the river. Providing such habitat is critical to Monarch population recovery. According to the USFWS the probability of extinction for western monarchs by 2080 is greater than 95%.



SOURCE: National Audubon Society

### Yellow-Billed Cuckoo

*Coccyzus americanus*

The Yellow-Billed Cuckoo is a small bird listed on the Endangered Species list. It requires a dense multi-story riparian canopy for its habitat. The Jordan River floodplain is not large enough to provide breeding habitat, but if the riparian forest was more developed, they could potentially use it for migration to more suitable breeding habitats.

## Management Practices

Maintaining the river in its current configuration requires human inputs like dredging and bank stabilization. This is because development has encroached upon the river's floodplain, often times very close to the main channel, so the location of that channel must be maintained. This work is often undertaken by Salt Lake County.



### Dredging

As rivers meander, they naturally pick up sediment along the outside of a bend and deposit it on the inside of a bend. This process contributes to the creation of the river channel and generally forms a broad, meandering floodplain. However, because the river has been channelized and disconnected from its floodplain excess sediment builds up in particular bends. Because of this dredging is required to keep the main channel clear for flood control.



### Bank Stabilization

Rivers naturally want to move and change course over time, however development within the floodplain has restricted how much the river is able to move. Because of this, some of the river's banks have severely eroded and have required stabilization to try to combat the erosion. Shown here are large wood 'lunkers', woody debris placed along the bank to provide structure to the edge.

## The River's Edge

Along the 7-mile study area, the conditions along the river's edge, including the vegetation cover, bank conditions, access, and maintenance, vary widely. At the south end, wetland vegetation with fuller canopy coverage dominates. While at the north end, the presence of federally regulated levees dictates that no tall vegetation is allowed to be present. These conditions affect the experience of trail users, the quality of habitat available, and the water quality itself.

- Levees
- Open Areas
- Shrub Coverage
- Canopy Coverage
- Major Road
- Municipal Boundary
- Waterways



## Ecological **Geology + Soils**

Geology and soils play a significant role in shaping the ecology of a landscape. The Jordan River's geology influences the formation of the river's banks, erosion patterns, and the types of habitats present. Soils, particularly alluvial soils, are key in supporting plant and animal life. Alluvial soils are formed from sediments deposited by flowing water, typically in riverbeds, floodplains, and deltas. These soils are rich in nutrients, making them highly fertile and supporting diverse ecosystems.

Along the Jordan River, alluvial soils are continually moved and reshaped by the river's flow. During periods of high water, such as spring runoff, the river erodes upstream sediments, carrying them downstream and depositing them as it slows. This constant movement of soil creates dynamic habitats, with different zones of moisture and fertility. Over time, this process contributes to the formation of wetlands, riparian zones, and fertile floodplains that support a variety of plant and animal species. However, because the Jordan River is so disconnected from its natural hydrologic cycle, this process is impeded. In many places the river has eroded banks, which leads to too much suspended sediment, which impacts water quality for organisms to thrive. Working with, not against, these processes is essential to create a thriving Central Jordan River.



FINE GRAVELS BUILD UP ALONG THE BANKS OF THE JORDAN RIVER



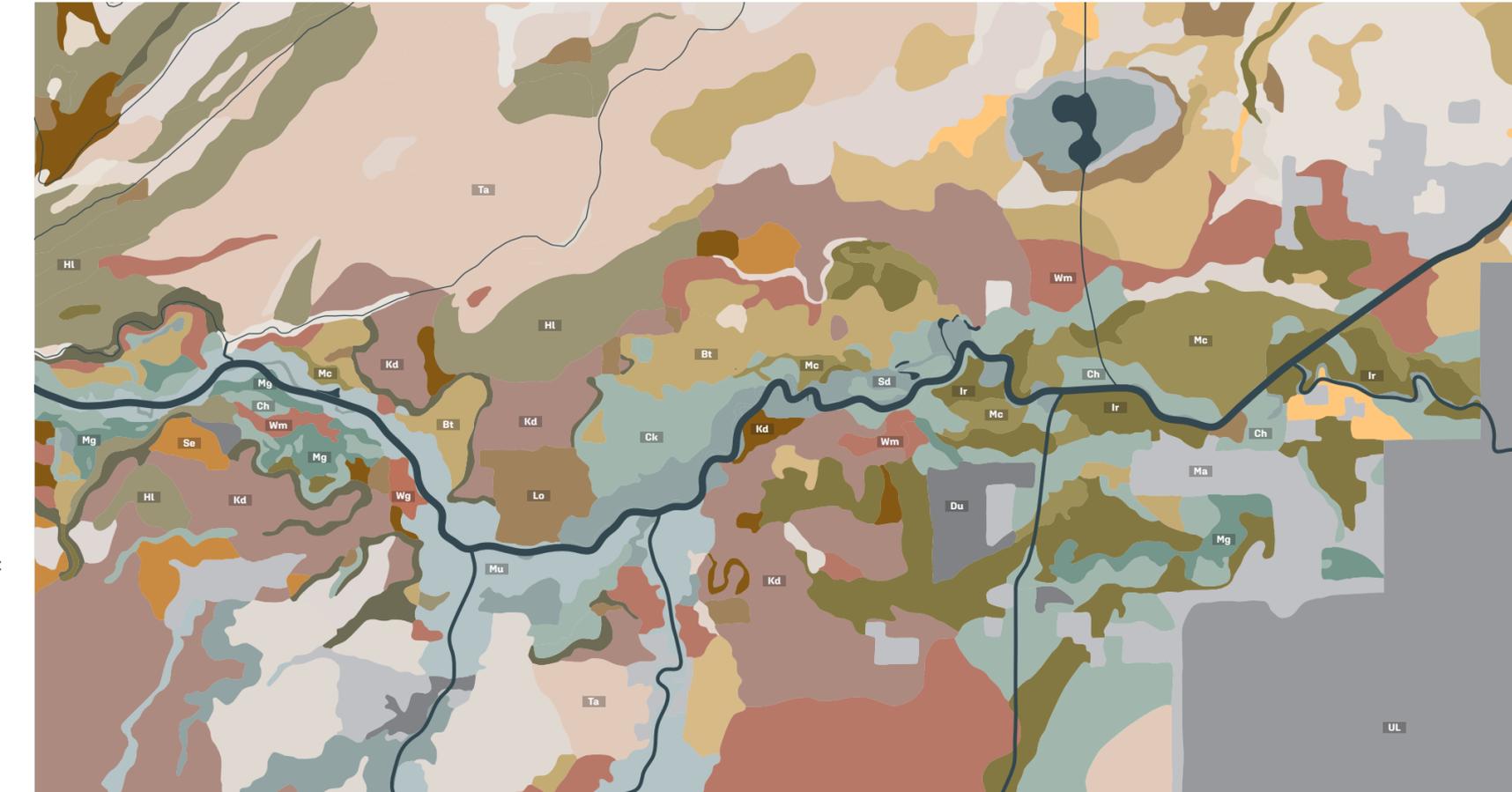
THE LAYERS OF THE SOIL HORIZONS ARE VISIBLE ALONG AN ERODED BANK

### Soils

- Wm - Welby silt loam
- Wg - Wasatch loamy coarse sand
- Mc - Magna silty clay
- Mg - Magna silty clay, peaty surface
- Mu - Mixed alluvial land
- Sa - Saltair silty clay loam
- Sd - Sandy alluvial lands
- Se - Sandy borrow pits
- Ta - Taylorsville silty clay loam
- Kd - Kidman very fine sandy loam
- Lo - Loamy borrow pits
- Bs/Bt - Bramwell silty clay loam
- Ch/Ck - Chipman silty clay loam
- Hl - Hillfield loam
- HtF2 - Hillfield-Taylorsville complex
- Ir - Lewiston loam
- Kd - Kidman very fine sandy loam
- De - Deckerman fine sandy loam
- Ma - Made land
- UL - Urban land
- Du - Dumps

..... Municipal Boundary

— Waterway



## Ecological **Conclusion**

The ecology of the Central Jordan River in Utah is deeply influenced by its riparian habitats, which are vital for maintaining biodiversity and supporting ecosystem functions. Historically, the river's interactions with its floodplain provided diverse habitats for numerous species, contributing to a thriving riparian ecosystem. However, urban development and infrastructure changes, such as levees and canal diversions, have disrupted these natural processes, reducing the river's ability to absorb floods, filter water, and sustain wildlife.

Riparian zones along the Jordan River play an essential role in stabilizing riverbanks, filtering pollutants, and providing critical habitat for birds, fish, and other wildlife. The loss of these natural interactions has led to a decline in ecological health and water quality, which further strains the area's resilience. Enhancing riparian habitats is crucial for improving the river's ecological function.

For future management, focusing on restoring riparian areas and reconnecting the river with its floodplain will enhance both ecological health and resilience. By addressing the ecological challenges caused by urban development and hydrological modifications, we can create a more balanced and sustainable river system that meets both environmental and human needs in the long term.



THE SURPLUS CANAL AND JORDAN RIVER DIVERSION JUST NORTH OF STATE ROUTE 201.  
SOURCE: THE WASHINGTON POST



THE DARK WATERS OF MILL CREEK MEET THE JORDAN RIVER.  
SOURCE: THE SALT LAKE TRIBUNE



VIEW FROM LITTLE COTTONWOOD CONFLUENCE AREA

*Central Jordan River*  
**RECONNECT**

# ACTIVE

Site Analysis

[Updated June 2025] December 2024 | Prepared by PORT

The Central Jordan River should be

## **ACTIVE**

Within the 7-mile stretch of the Central Jordan River, more than 10 public parks offer a wide range of recreational opportunities. These parks feature active recreation like playgrounds and sports fields, as well as spaces for passive activities such as birdwatching and fishing. Additionally, water-based recreation—including kayaking, paddle boarding, and canoeing—is growing in popularity, reflecting an increasing desire for dynamic outdoor experiences along the river. The Jordan River Trail, a cherished feature stretching 45 miles, further enhances the area by attracting walkers, runners, bikers, and skaters.

Despite these strengths, gaps in park amenities and connectivity remain. The Jordan River Trail, while continuous, primarily runs along one side of the river at a time, presenting opportunities to extend the trail to both sides and improve accessibility. Furthermore, some stretches of the river lack sufficient amenities, leading to uneven usage and engagement across the area. Addressing these gaps—such as adding new recreation opportunities, picnic areas, and water access points—will be essential for activating underutilized spaces and ensuring the park system is welcoming, equitable, and fully utilized.



THE JORDAN RIVER TRAIL NEXT TO THE MAISON'S LANDING APARTMENTS PROVIDES DIRECT ACCESS FOR RESIDENTS



KAYAKING IN THE JORDAN RIVER NEAR THE BRIDGE AT 4800 S



RUNNING, BIKING, AND SKATING ARE SOME OF THE MOST POPULAR WAYS TO USE THE CONTINUOUS LENGTH OF THE JORDAN RIVER TRAIL

SOURCE: TAYLORSVILLE JORDAN RIVER TRAIL SYSTEM WEBSITE



## Park Programming + Facilities

The most frequent types of program areas and facilities are walking and biking trails. Active programming like fields and courts for sports are concentrated in a few parks like Redwood Recreation Center and Germania Park. Most parks within the study area have playgrounds and trails.

Parks within 1/2 mile of the Jordan River

-  **29** Miles of Multi-Use Trails
-  **1** Community Garden
-  **2** Fishing Ponds
-  **6** Boat Launches
-  **1** Swimming Pool
-  **1** Dog Park
-  **6** Baseball Fields
-  **2** Multi-Use Fields
-  **1** Soccer Field
-  **7** Tennis/Pickleball Courts
-  **2** Basketball Courts
-  **1** Combo Basketball + Pickleball Courts
-  **1** Sand Volleyball Court
-  **7** Playgrounds



NEW PLAY FEATURES AT PIONEER CROSSING PARK

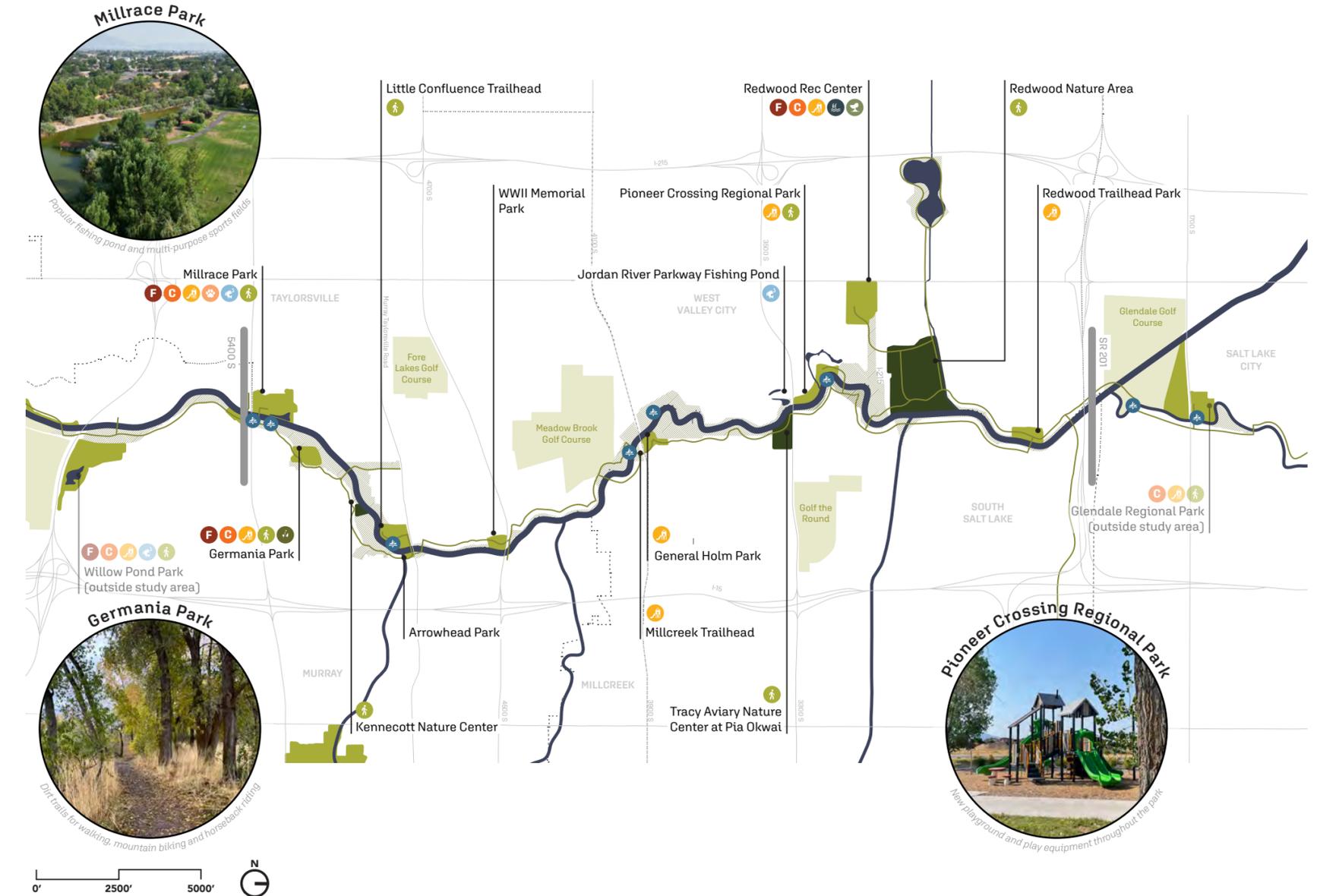


MULTI-USE FIELDS IN GERMANIA PARK

## Park Programming + Facilities

Recreation amenities play a vital role in activating the Central Jordan River corridor, providing spaces for leisure, fitness, and community engagement. These pages showcase the existing recreation amenities throughout the site area, including playgrounds, sports fields, picnic areas, and water-based facilities such as kayak launches and fishing spots. By mapping these amenities, we can better understand how they support current use patterns and where gaps in recreational offerings may exist. This analysis will inform the future design of the park, ensuring that it meets the diverse needs of the community.

-  Park
-  Nature Education
-  Open Space
-  Golf Course
-  Trail
-  Trailhead
-  Major Road
-  Municipal Boundary
-  Waterway
-  Fields
-  Courts
-  Playground
-  Dog Park
-  Pool
-  Fishing
-  Multi-Use Trails
-  Equestrian Trails
-  Community Garden
-  Boat Launch



## Park Amenities + Facilities

Amenities for the existing parks along the Jordan River include picnic pavilions, bathroom facilities, and water fountains. These facilities are intended to serve the local park system and are not sized to support a regional or destination park. Some facilities are in need of repair or refurbishment. Along the trail there are general no trash receptacles, benches, or shelters.



PICNIC TABLE ALONG THE JORDAN RIVER TRAIL

Park Facilities within 1/2 mile

-  **9** Bathroom Facilities
-  **8** Water Fountains
-  **6** Picnic Pavilions



NEW BATHROOM FACILITY AT PIONEER CROSSING PARK



PICNIC PAVILION AT MILLRACE PARK

## Park Amenities + Facilities

Park amenities make public spaces nicer to use and allow users to stay for longer periods of time. Along the Central Jordan River facilities are more frequently located in Murray and Taylorsville, and are less frequent in South Salt Lake and West Valley.

-  Park
-  Nature Education
-  Open Space
-  Golf Course
-  Trail
-  Trailhead
-  Public Restroom
-  Water Fountain
-  Picnic Pavilion
-  Major Road
-  Municipal Boundary
-  Waterway



## Active Water Trail

Increasing access to the Jordan River is crucial for fostering greater engagement with the waterway and enhancing its recreational value. This access encompasses both physical connections to the riverbanks and the ability to navigate the river by boat. By improving accessibility, more people can enjoy the river's natural beauty, engage in healthy outdoor activities, and support sustainable interactions with the environment. Creating formalized touch points along the river allows visitors easy access to the water, whether to walk along the shore, relax on sand bars, or venture out by boat. Enhanced signage and wayfinding at these points are key to encouraging increased engagement with the river.

Canoeing and kayaking offer some of the most immersive and rewarding ways to experience the Jordan River. Salt Lake County has been working to improve boat access by formalizing launch points at strategic locations, which not only enhances conditions for recreational boaters but also legitimizes user-created access points and provides safer, more functional launches. Efforts are also underway to identify and mitigate navigational hazards such as dams, weirs, debris, and low-clearance bridges. Salt Lake County, in partnership with the Jordan River Commission, is collaborating on solutions to these challenges and providing additional resources, allowing paddlers to review water trail conditions before setting out on their trips.



KAYAKING UNDERNEATH THE PEDESTRIAN BRIDGE NEXT TO MEADOW BROOK GOLF COURSE.

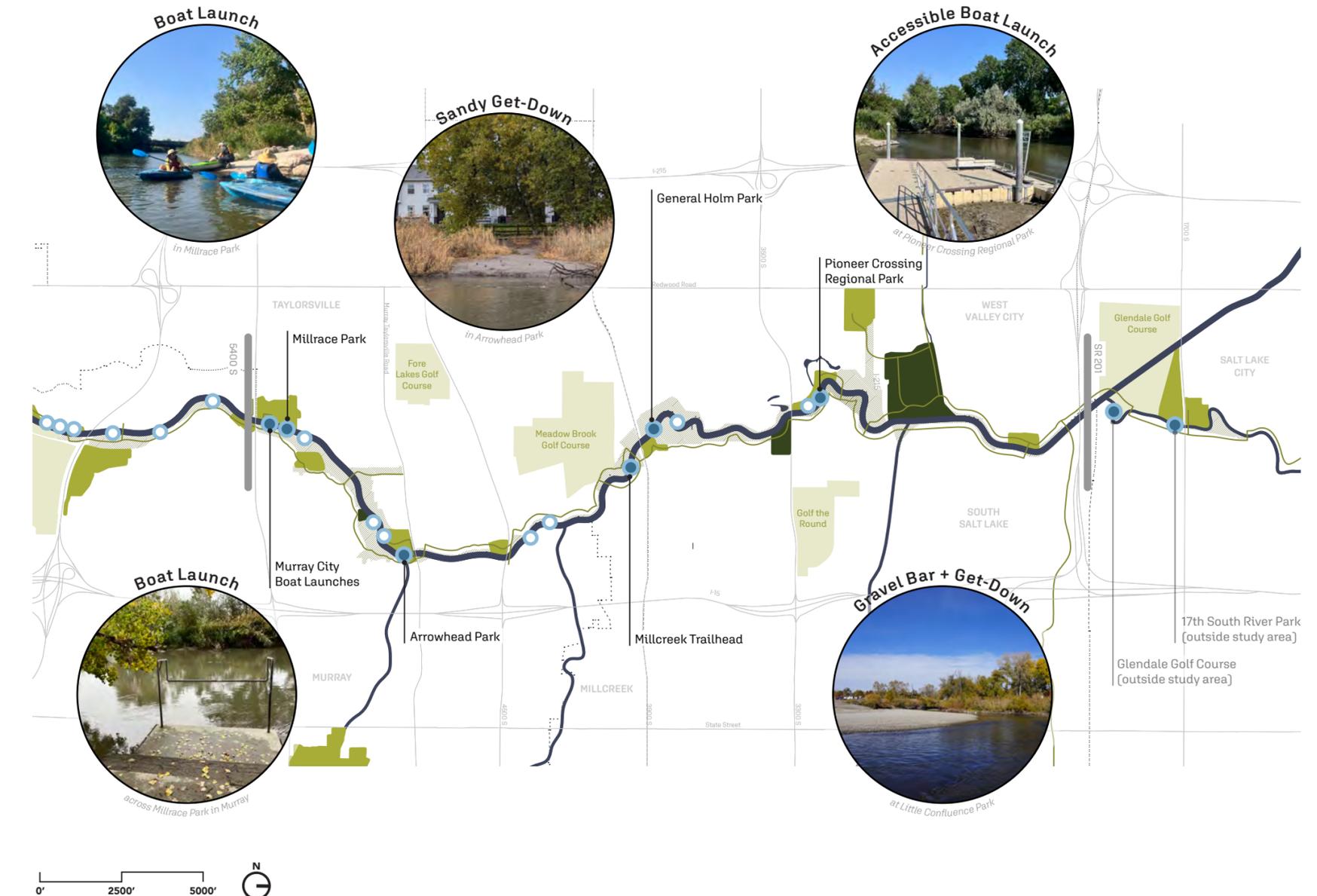


KAYAKING NORTH WITH UTA'S JORDAN RIVER RAIL SERVICE CENTER IN THE DISTANCE.

## Water Access

Within the Central Jordan River corridor, there are seven existing formal boat launches that provide access to the water. Additionally, several informal get-down points have been observed throughout the study area, reflecting the community's strong desire for greater engagement with the river. At many of these sandy or gravel access points, people were seen playing with dogs or allowing children to explore the environment. These informal access points highlight the need for improved infrastructure to support river use and ensure safe, convenient entry points for both paddlers and those on the shore, fostering better interaction with the river for all.

- Park
- Nature Education
- Open Space
- Golf Course
- Trail
- Boat Launch
- Water Get-Down
- Major Road
- Municipal Boundary
- Waterways



## Active Trails

The Jordan River Trail spans 45 miles, stretching from Utah Lake in the south to the Great Salt Lake in the north. It serves as the primary multi-purpose pathway running alongside the Jordan River, offering space for recreational activities, biking, and walking, while also acting as a vital commuting corridor for cyclists and pedestrians. As the backbone of an expanding regional trail system, the Jordan River Trail connects a wide array of communities across the Salt Lake Valley. This growing network of trails is designed to link residents to job hubs, cultural sites, and various recreational opportunities, including parks, public spaces, and sports facilities. Additionally, the trails integrate the urban areas with the nearby natural resources, creating seamless connections that extend from the valley floor into the vast open spaces and outdoor recreation opportunities of the surrounding mountains. By offering accessible routes for transportation, exercise, and exploration, the Jordan River Trail helps promote a healthier and more connected community while supporting the region's vision of a more sustainable and resilient transportation network.



THE JORDAN RIVER TRAIL IN GERMANIA PARK NEAR THE KENNECOTT NATURE CENTER.

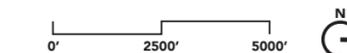


PARLEY'S TRAIL CONNECTS THE JORDAN RIVER TO SOUTH SALT LAKE & PARLEY'S CANYON.  
SOURCE: CRSA ARCHITECTURE

## Existing + Proposed Trails

With the Jordan River Trail serving as the central feature of the regional trail network, expanding east-to-west connections between neighboring communities is a critical priority for future development. One of the most recent additions to this network is Parley's Trail, which connects the mouth of Parley's Canyon in the foothills of the Wasatch Mountains to the Jordan River Trail. In addition, several proposed east-to-west connections, primarily following major tributaries, are currently in the planning stages, further enhancing the trail network and ensuring an interconnected system for residents and visitors.

- Park
- Nature Education
- Open Space
- Golf Course
- Existing Trail
- Proposed Trail
- Existing Trailhead
- Major Road
- Municipal Boundary
- Waterway



## Trail Design

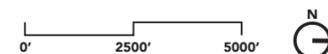
The trail is managed differently along its 7-mile length. In some areas each city maintains its own section of trail, while in other areas Salt Lake County is responsible for trail design and maintenance. This leads to inconsistencies in the trail's design and upkeep. The adjacency of the trail to the river is also variable. In some areas the trail has been placed too close to the river and is at risk of being eroded, while in other areas the river is not visible at all.



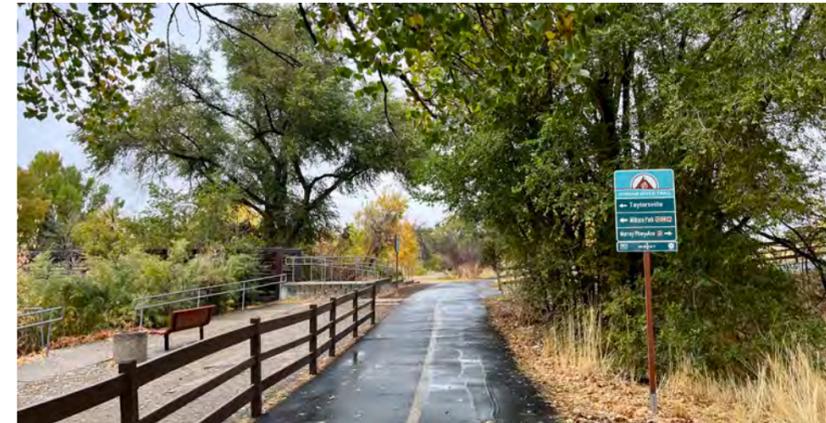
THE 10-FOOT-WIDE JORDAN RIVER TRAIL ATOP THE LEVEES HAS FREQUENT CRACKS AND SCRUBBY VEGETATION ENCROACHING IN SOME SECTIONS.



NORTH OF CONFLUENCE PARK IN TAYLORSVILLE, THE 11-FOOT-WIDE JORDAN RIVER TRAIL HAS VEGETATION TRIMMED BACK 4 FEET FROM THE EDGE.



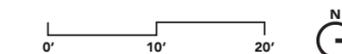
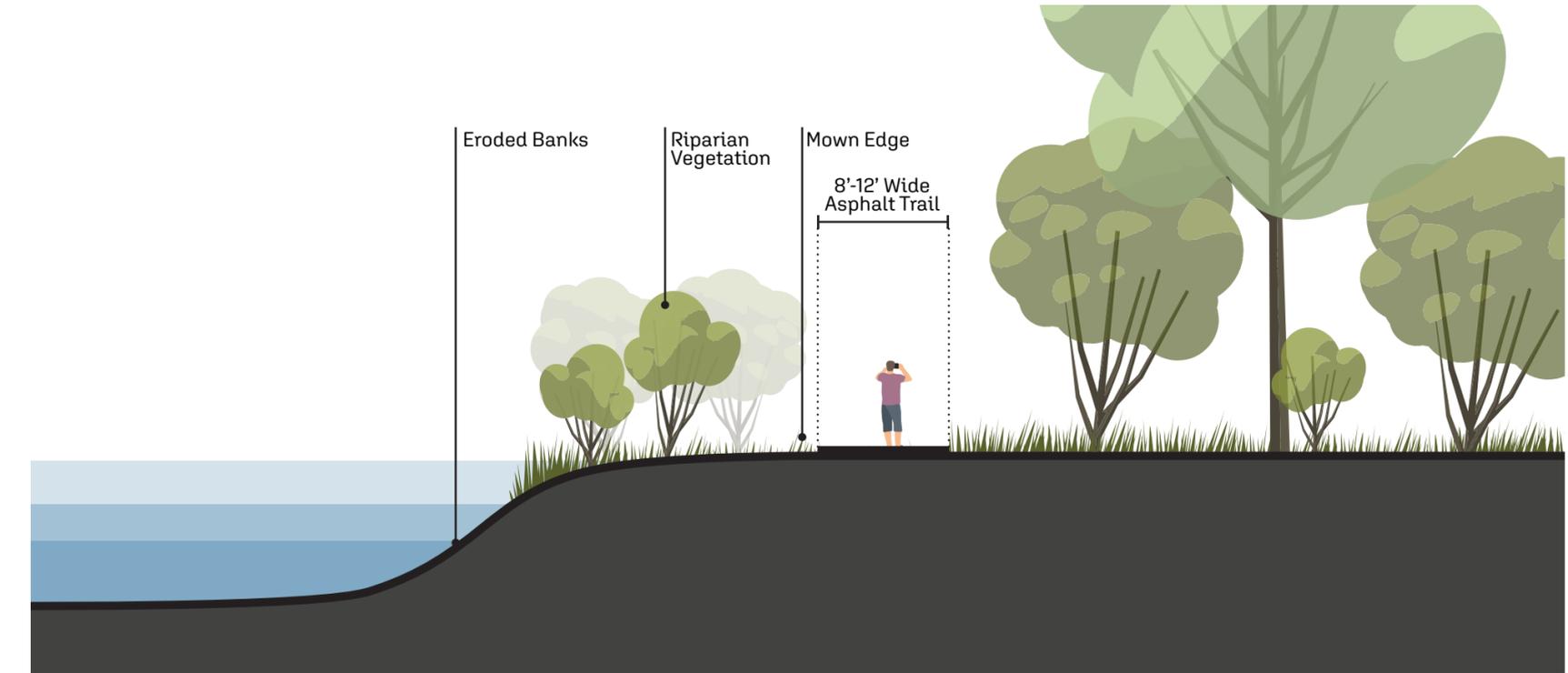
THE 12-FOOT-WIDE TRAIL IN PIONEER CROSSING REGIONAL PARK IS EQUIPPED WITH AMPLE PEDESTRIAN LIGHTING AND TRIMMED OF VEGETATION.



GERMANIA PARK IN MURRAY FEATURES 12-FOOT-WIDE PATHWAYS WITH CLEAR TRAIL MARKINGS AND SIGNAGE FOR EASY NAVIGATION.

## Typical Trail Conditions

Across the 7-miles of the Central Jordan River there are no consistent trail standards, however there are some conditions that are present throughout the majority of the area. Typically the trail is paved asphalt that is 8-12' wide with a mown strip on either side. Except where the trail goes through park areas there is no lighting. The trail is not plowed consistently in winter, so does not allow for year-round activities.



## Active Programming + Events

Programming and events in parks and public spaces play a crucial role in enhancing community engagement, promoting physical and mental well-being, and fostering a sense of connection among diverse groups. These spaces serve as hubs for cultural, recreational, and educational activities that cater to people of all ages and backgrounds. Events such as outdoor concerts, festivals, fitness classes, and farmer's markets create opportunities for social interaction and build a sense of belonging, while also stimulating local economies through increased foot traffic and tourism.

Organized activities help maximize the use of public spaces, transforming them into vibrant places that encourage active participation and healthy lifestyles. They provide accessible avenues for individuals to enjoy nature, exercise, or learn new skills. Public space programming also serves to make parks more inclusive by offering free or low-cost events for all, regardless of socioeconomic status. Well-executed events can also contribute to environmental awareness, community activism, and cultural appreciation. Increased programming along the Central Jordan River could increase visitorship, awareness, and stewardship for the river.



THE UTAH SYMPHONY AT THE UTAH CULTURAL CELEBRATION CENTER  
SOURCE: THE UTAH CULTURAL CELEBRATION CENTER

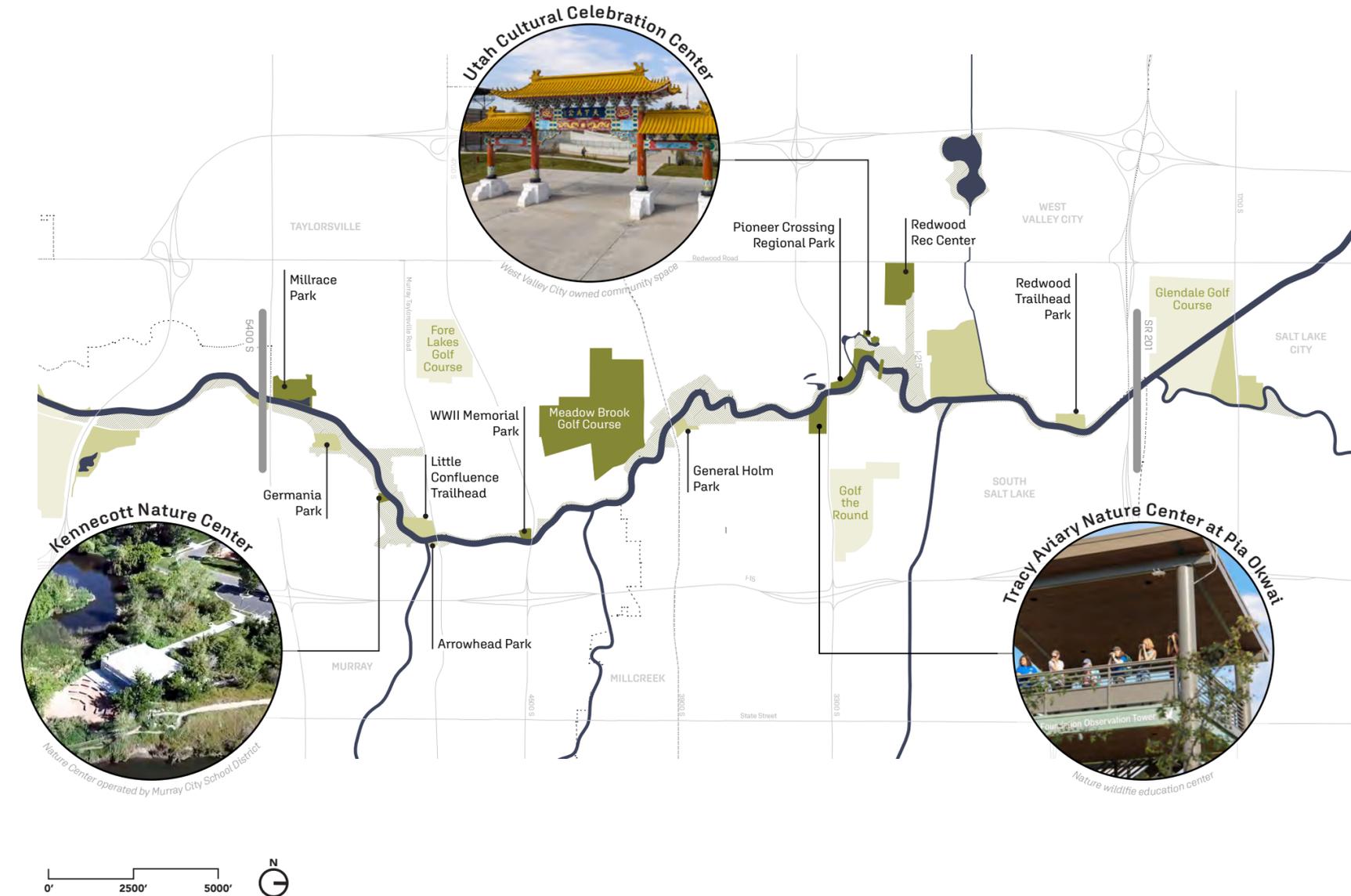


GUIDED NATURE WALKS AT TRACY AVIARY NATURE CENTER AT PIA OKWAI  
SOURCE: TRACY AVIARY

## Gathering Spaces + Destinations

Destinations and anchor institutions play a vital role in providing amenities, attractions, and programming along the river. Currently, the three largest destinations are the Utah Cultural Celebration Center, the Tracy Aviary Nature Center at Pia Okwai, and the Kennecott Nature Center (only open to Murray public schools). Providing more destinations and gathering spaces could help to draw more people to the river and create a larger sense of community.

- Destination
- Park
- Open Space
- Golf Course
- Major Road
- Municipal Boundary
- Waterway



## Events + Partnerships

Getting people out to the river is essential for it to be a valued public space. The Jordan River Commission makes this a focus of their programming, especially with events like Get to the River Month in September and the Golden Spoke Bike Ride. Partner institutions like the Utah Cultural Celebration Center can co-host events. More active programming and events could bring more visitors to the river and would require active and healthy partnerships between all the invested institutions and groups.



THE JRC HOSTS VOLUNTEER EVENTS TO PICK UP LITTER OR PULL PUNCTURE VINE WEEDS ALONG THE TRAIL.  
SOURCE: JORDAN RIVER COMMISSION, 2024



THE JRC'S ANNUAL GET TO THE RIVER MONTH KAYAK TRIP.  
SOURCE: "FESTIVAL CELEBRATES THE JOYS OF THE JORDAN RIVER", DESERT NEWS, SEPT 7 2018



THE JRC AND THE UTAH CULTURAL CELEBRATION CENTER CO-HOST EVENTS AS A PART OF GET TO THE RIVER MONTH.  
SOURCE: JORDAN RIVER COMMISSION, 2024

## Nature Education

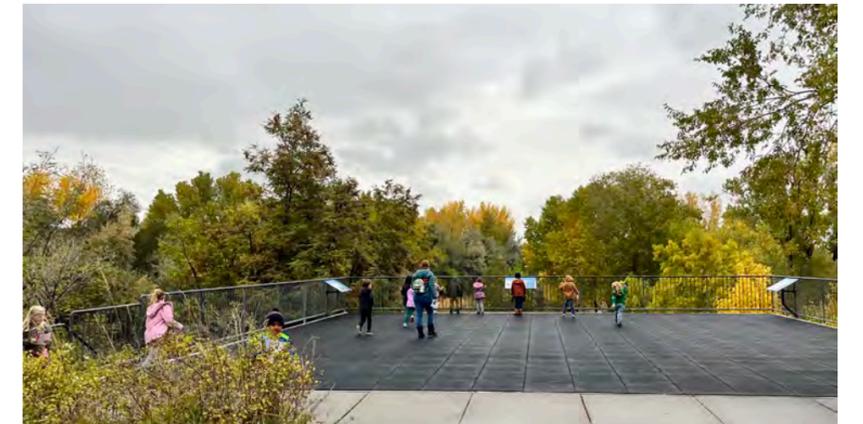
Education about the natural environment is an important part of creating stewardship for the land and parks. Currently, institutions like Tracy Aviary and the Kennecott Nature Center provide valuable nature based education and programming. Informational signage can also help to expand visitors' understanding of the landscapes around them. Signage and educational programming along the Central Jordan River could be expanded to include more visitors and cover broader areas.



TRACY AVIARY NATURE CENTER PROVIDES FREQUENT NATURE-BASED EDUCATION AND PROGRAMMING.  
SOURCE: TRACY AVIARY ON X



EDUCATIONAL SIGNAGE IN REDWOOD NATURE AREA EXPLAINS THE VITAL FUNCTIONS OF WETLANDS



THE KENNECOTT NATURE CENTER PROVIDES AN OUTDOOR CLASSROOM FOR STUDENTS IN THE MURRAY SCHOOL DISTRICT TO LEARN ABOUT THE RIVER

## Active Conclusion

The Central Jordan River currently provides great park amenities, programming, and gathering spaces. However, these amenities are often overlooked or not used. Increasing the quality and quantity of facilities, amenities, and events could help increase awareness and use of the river corridor. Expanding the current facilities like restrooms, water fountains, picnic pavilions, benches, trash cans, etc. will be vital to have a well functioning and hospitable regional destination. Meanwhile providing better amenities like boat launches, kayak rentals, bike rentals, various types of trails, and improved facilities for active recreation could draw new users.

Making a vibrant, active, and inclusive Central Jordan River will rely on balancing areas for active and passive recreation. Popular activities like biking and walking on the trails should continue to be invested in, while less popular activities like kayaking can be increased through better programming and improved facilities.



KAYAKING IN THE JORDAN RIVER, AT LITTLE COTTONWOOD CREEK



BIKES ON THE JORDAN RIVER TRAIL IN TAYLORSVILLE



VIEW FROM THE TRAILS NEAR KENNECOTT NATURE CENTER

*Central Jordan River*  
**RECONNECT**

# STEWARDED

Site Analysis

[Updated June 2025] December 2024 | Prepared by PORT

The Central Jordan River should be  
**STEWARDED**

The Central Jordan River Reconnect project presents a pivotal opportunity to redefine the relationship between the river and its surrounding communities, as well as between those agencies and organizations whose work impacts the river. As development continues to evolve along the river corridor, the necessity for a well-coordinated approach to park management, safety, and zoning becomes increasingly apparent. This project crosses through five different municipalities—South Salt Lake, West Valley, Taylorsville, Millcreek, and Murray—complicating administrative efforts and underscoring the necessity for cohesive strategies tailored to each area's unique regulations, priorities, and communities. The proximity of Salt Lake City further amplifies the importance of coordination between the county and each of the cities to ensure that park improvements and policies align effectively across jurisdictional boundaries.

Success will rely heavily on long-term collaboration among local governments, private property owners, park managers, social service providers, and community stakeholders. Engaging all stakeholders and maintaining alignment will be critical to achieving a unified vision for the park's management and upkeep. This complexity underscores the importance of ongoing partnerships that can adapt and evolve over time, ensuring that the park is sustainably stewarded for future generations. The success of the Central Jordan River Reconnect project depends on careful management and collaboration.

- **Park Maintenance and Safety:**  
Ensuring that the park is well-maintained, safe, and accessible is crucial. Regular upkeep and clear safety protocols will foster a welcoming environment for all visitors.
- **Social Services and Collaboration:**  
Working with local social service providers, alongside city and county agencies, is key to fostering well-being and cohesion for both residents and park users.
- **Zoning and Land Use:**  
Each municipality's approach to zoning varies, which results in inconsistent protections for the river's natural and recreational resources. Coordinating these efforts will create a cohesive and sustainable park system.



EACH MUNICIPALITY HAS A DISTINCT APPROACH TO ENGAGING WITH THE RIVER, SHAPED BY ITS COMMUNITY PRIORITIES AND LAND USE PATTERNS.

## Stewarded Management + Maintenance

For the Central Jordan River Reconnect project, addressing safety concerns and ensuring consistent maintenance is vital to creating a functional and inviting park. Public safety issues, particularly near Salt Lake City and South Salt Lake, include reports of drug-related activity, homelessness, and limited law enforcement presence. Residents and stakeholders have emphasized the need for enhanced lighting, improved visibility, and more frequent patrols to increase safety along the trail.

The amount of funding, staff, and capacity for maintenance also varies widely across the cities within the study area. Some cities, such as Murray, have invested in well-maintained trails and public open space along the river, resulting in more frequent use and the perception of the river as an asset to local residents. Other cities, such as South Salt Lake, have less capacity to put towards maintenance and upkeep along the river, and thus rely on help from Salt Lake County. This disparity underscores the need for a unified approach to maintenance and safety across the entire Central Jordan River to ensure all sections are safe, accessible, and enjoyable for visitors.



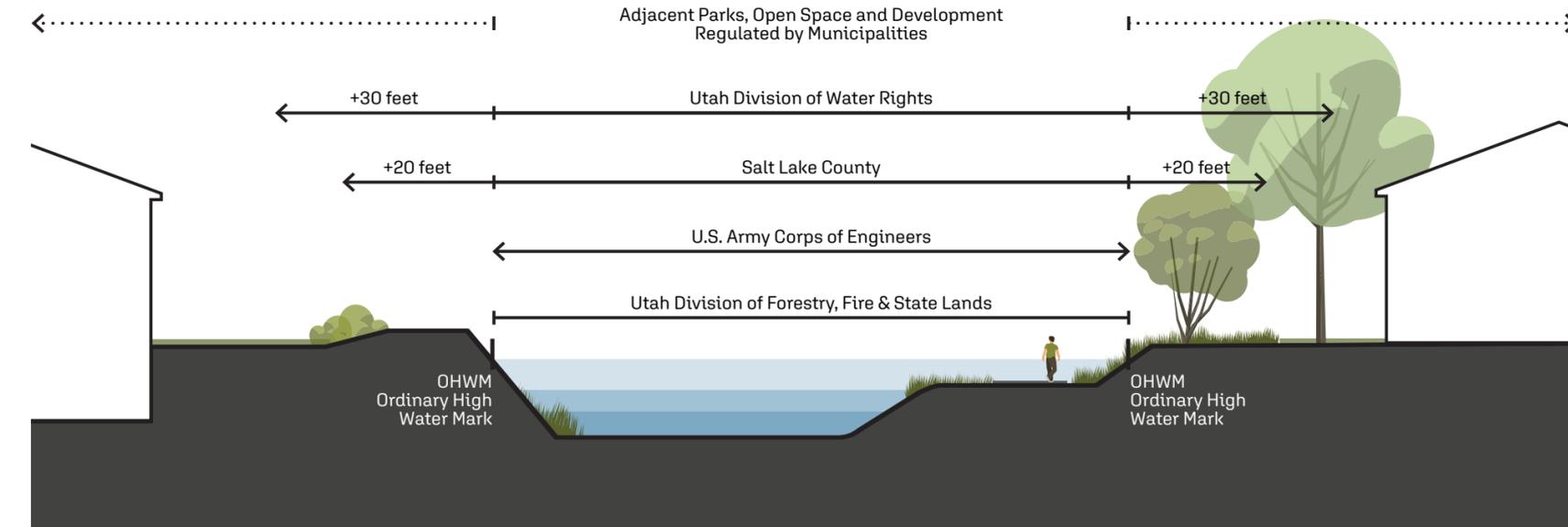
DREDGING OCCURS AT LITTLE COTTONWOOD CONFLUENCE TO MAINTAIN THE FLOODWAY



VEGETATION ALONG THE FEDERALLY REGULATED LEVEES HAS TO BE FREQUENTLY MOWN TO ABIDE BY ARMY CORPS REGULATIONS.

## Management Jurisdictions

The following agencies have jurisdiction over the river: Utah Division of Forestry, Fire, and State Lands; Utah Division of Water Rights (permitting stream alterations); Salt Lake County Flood Control (flood control permits); and the United States Army Corps of Engineers. The following offices oversee management of the Jordan River: State Historic Preservation Office (cultural resource compliance); Utah Division of Water Quality; Utah Division of Water Resources; Utah Division of Wildlife Resources; Salt Lake County; and local municipalities.



## Parks + Rec Departments

Across Salt Lake County, the five cities in the study area, and Salt Lake City, there is a huge variety in the quantity of parks space that each entity oversees. Millcreek for example, a newly incorporated city, has 2,855 residents per acre of parkland, whereas Murray has 206 residents per acre of park land. Each parks and recreation department will have different goals, capacity, and vision for how the Jordan River can become an integral part of their overall park system

### SALT LAKE COUNTY

Population: 1.166 million



1,714 Acres of Park Land  
38 Acres of Park Land in Study Area



1,038 Acres of Golf Course



20 Park Facilities

### TAYLORSVILLE

Population: 60,448

42.8 Acres in Study Area  
309.2 Acres of Park Land



3 Park Facilities

### WEST VALLEY

Population: 140,230

8.7 Acres in Study Area  
181.6 Acres of Park Land



433 Acres of Golf Course

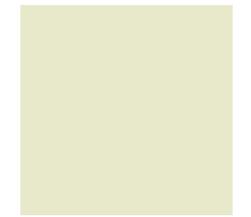
4 Park Facilities

### SALT LAKE CITY

Population: 199,587



860.2 Acres of Park Land



1,016 Acres of Golf Course

### SOUTH SALT LAKE

Population: 26,277

25.2 Acres of Park Land



3 Park Facilities

### MURRAY

Population: 50,637

79.8 Acres in Study Area  
246.2 Acres of Park Land



144 Acres of Golf Course

3 Park Facilities

### MILLCREEK

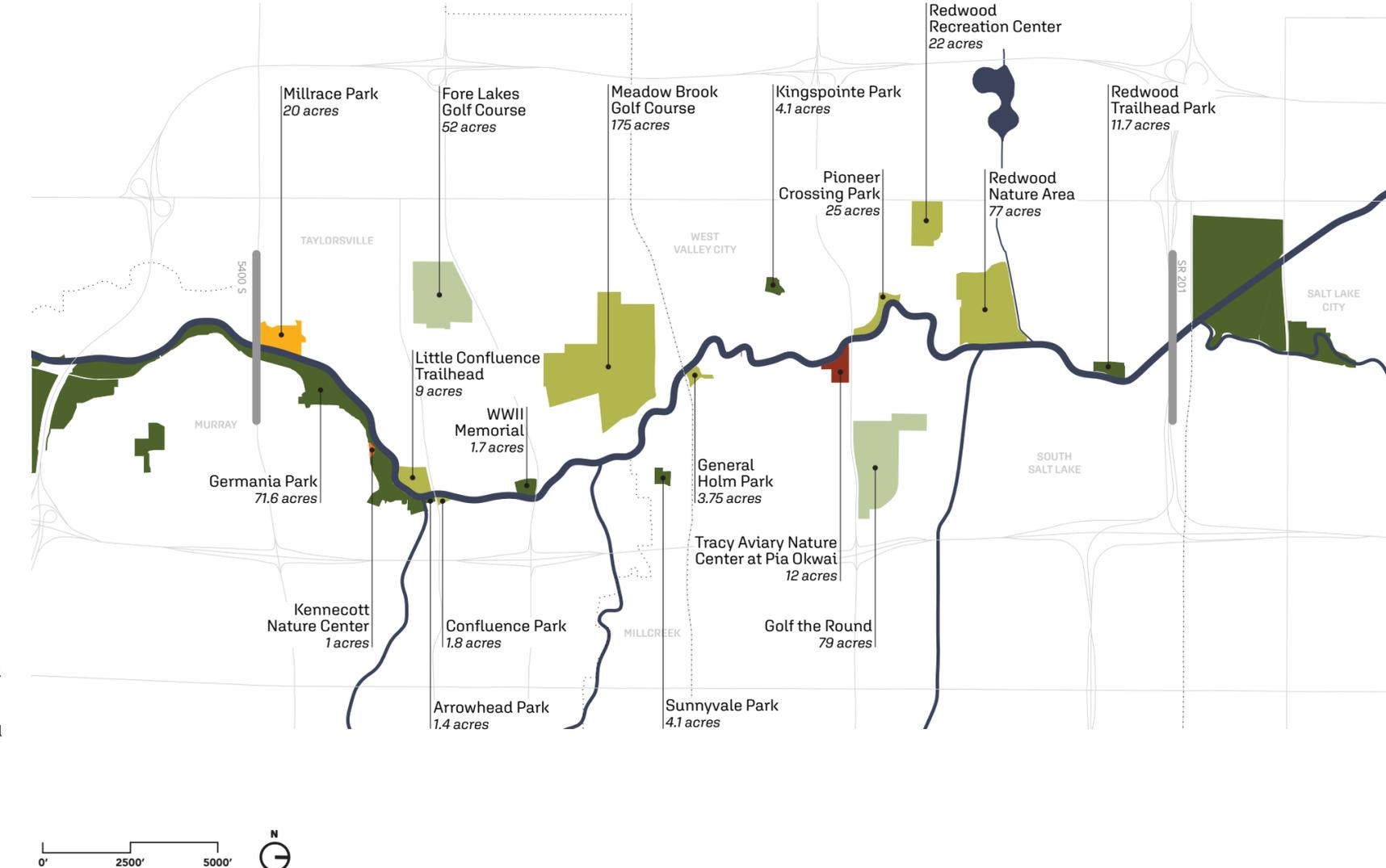
Population: 63,380

4.2 Acres in Study Area  
22.2 Acres of Park Land

## Management + Ownership

Of all the 258 acres of existing park land (not including golf courses) located within our study area only 54% is owned and managed by Salt Lake County. All the other park land is either not owned or not managed by the county. Many cities own and manage their own park space, such as Germania Park in Murray, while other cities enter into agreements to co-manage the park, as is the case in Millrace Park in Taylorsville.

- County Owned + Managed
- City Owned + Managed
- City+ County Co-Owned/Managed
- School District Managed
- County Owned/Private Managed
- Private Golf Course
- Major Roads
- Municipal Boundary
- Waterway



Stewarded  
**A Culture of Volunteering**

Salt Lake County, semi-governmental organizations like the Jordan River Commission, and non-profits like Tree Utah have a strong history of collaborating to coordinate volunteer efforts to improve the river corridor. These partnerships can fund and direct helpful volunteer activities like pulling puncturevine weed, or removing trash from the river. Beyond that, these partnerships can be critical in helping to develop a public that cares for and stewards the river.

The more that residents of Salt Lake County view the river as an asset to be protected and cared for, the more impactful and valuable public space along the river becomes. Other organizations like the Tracy Aviary Nature Center at Pia Okwai, Seven Canyons Trust, the Trust for Public Lands have also been partners in hosting volunteer events and fostering a sense of stewardship and community for the Jordan River.



#LOVEYOURWATERSHED INITIATED CREATED BY JORDAN RIVER COMMISSION TO ENCOURAGE COMMUNITIES TO LEARN ABOUT STORMWATER AND WATER QUALITY. SOURCE: JORDAN RIVER COMMISSION



EARTHDAY VOLUNTEER SOCIAL MEDIA POST SOURCE: JORDAN RIVER COMMISSION INSTAGRAM



CLEAN UP EVENT AT MILL CREEK CONFLUENCE SOURCE: SEVEN CANYONS TRUST



PUNCTURE VINE PULLS HELP REMOVE THE NUISANCE WEED SOURCE: JORDAN RIVER COMMISSION



TREE UTAH VOLUNTEERS PLAN NUMEROUS SAPLINGS ALONG THE JORDAN RIVER SOURCE: TREE UTAH

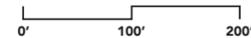
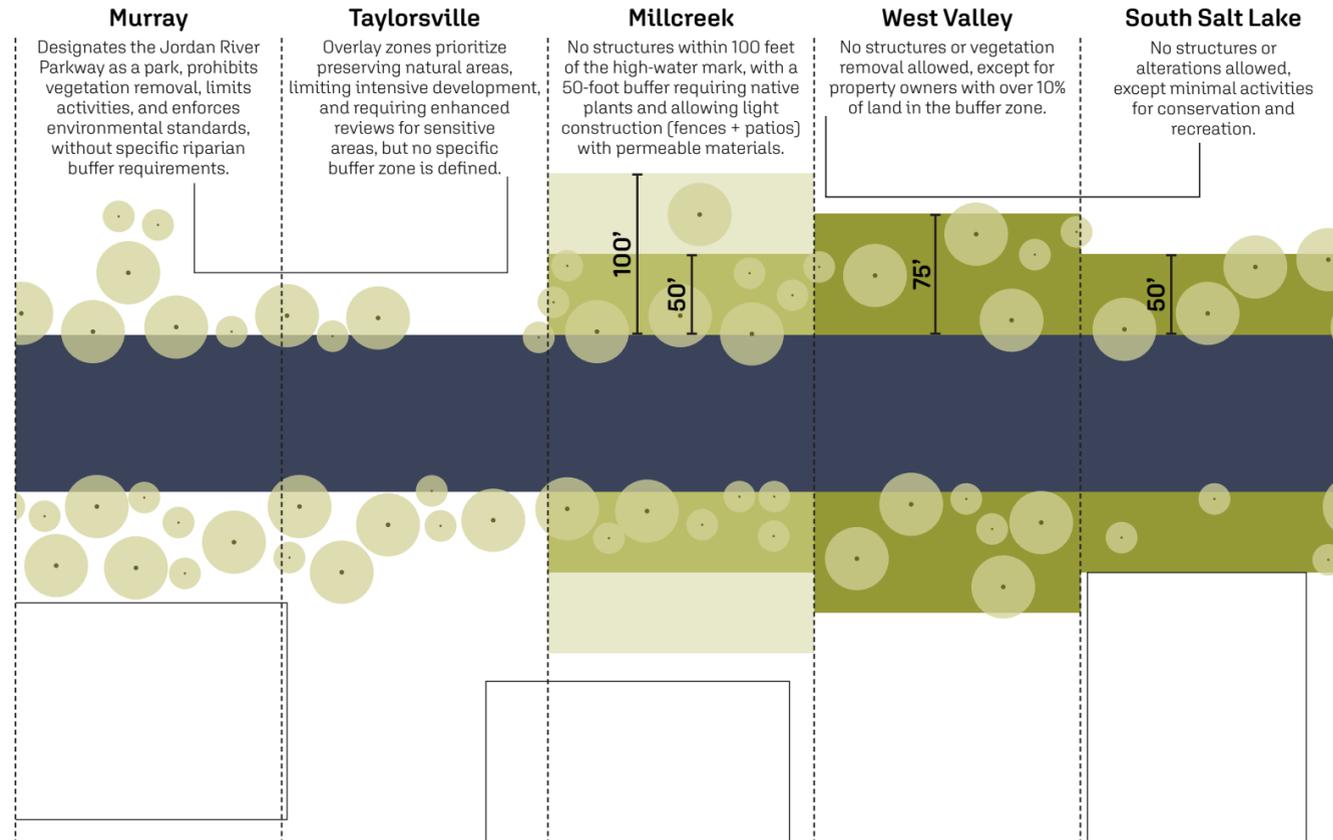


NUMEROUS GROUPS VOLUNTEER WITH THE JRC IN CLEAN UPS AND PLANTING DAYS SOURCE: JORDAN RIVER COMMISSION

## Stewarded Riparian Buffers

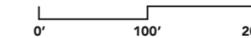
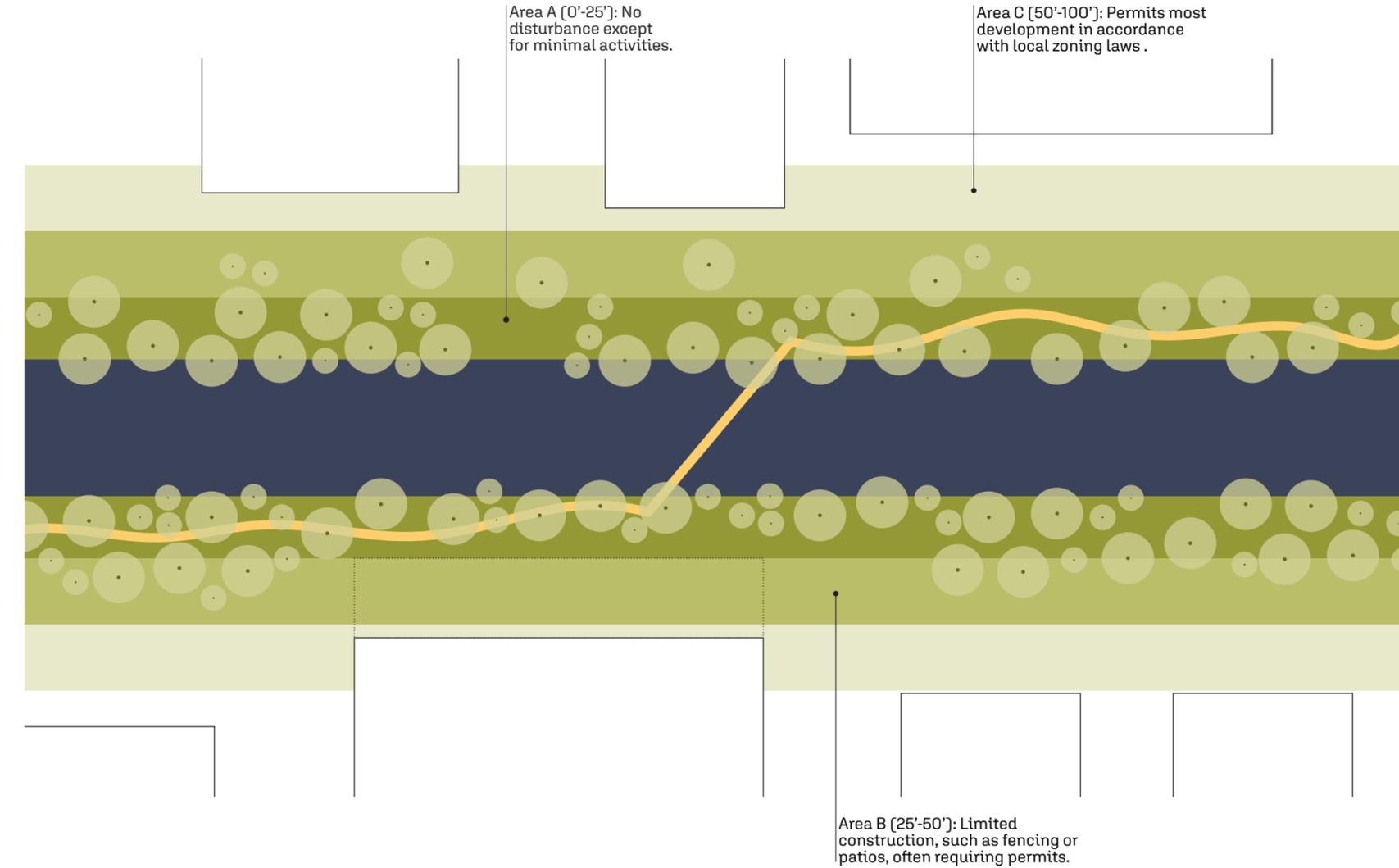
Riparian buffers are ordinances that protect a certain offset of the river from certain development activities. They can range from quite loose recommendations for best planning practices, to strict regulations that direct how development along the river corridor is allowed to proceed. Many municipalities or counties across the United States use riparian buffers to protect the vital habitat along rivers and streams, as well as to ensure the ecological benefits of maintaining these areas, such as reduced downstream flooding and filtering out pollutants. Riparian buffers that maintain vegetation along the banks of the river or stream can also aid in limiting erosion, reducing sediment load, creating ecological niches for particular species, improving water quality, and protecting valuable wetland habitat. Often, buffers use three zones with set offsets from the rivers banks to determine what practices should and shouldn't be allowed within those areas. These typically create a gradient of protection for waterways that is the most restrictive near the banks, and less restrictive as you move away from the river's edge. While riparian buffers can be crucial policy tools for the protection of waterways, their implementation can be complicated by the fact that rivers are dynamic and move over time. Thus, ensuring that there is adequate room for the river to meander within the boundaries of the riparian buffer is important when determining the width of the buffer zone.

### Current Riparian Buffers



### Riparian Buffer Best Practices

The Jordan River Commission released a guide for how communities can implement riparian buffers and other protections for the Jordan River in 2013, called Best Practices for Riverfront Communities. In this document they advocate for communities to implement buffers with a focus on creating buffers of at least 50' wide. As they note, buffers of 150' to 200' provide the greatest opportunity for the provision of habitat, recreation, and flood control.



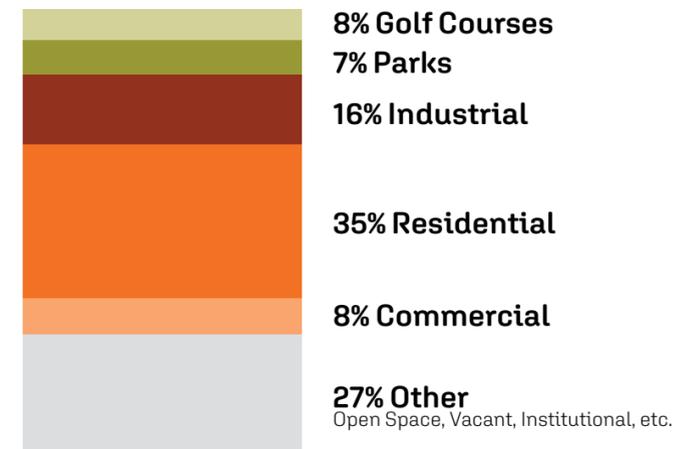
## Stewarded Land Use + Zoning

Our analysis of land use and zoning patterns along the Central Jordan River reveals a diverse and varied approach to how municipalities utilize land adjacent to the river. The following key findings illustrate the differing relationships between the river and surrounding communities, while tying in lessons learned from previous planning efforts.

- **Residential Zoning Dominates the West:** In West Valley and Taylorsville, large parcels along the west side of the river are predominantly zoned for mobile homes, with a mix of single-family and multi-family residential areas on both sides of the river. These residential zones are well-positioned to benefit from enhanced river access and improved recreational amenities.
- **Limited Commercial Presence:** Commercial land uses are notably scarce near the river. Most commercial activity is concentrated further east along I-15 or west along Redwood Road, leaving the riverfront largely free of commercial development. This creates an opportunity to maintain the river's natural and recreational character while still supporting nearby residential communities.
- **Industrial and Institutional Concentrations in South Salt Lake:** The northeastern portion of our study area, particularly in South Salt Lake, features large industrial parcels adjacent to the river. This area is also

home to major institutional and government-run facilities, including the Salt Lake County Metro Jail, Oxbow Jail, Central Valley Water Reclamation Facility, and Union Pacific Roper Terminal. These land uses present challenges for future riverfront development, as they may deter new investment and residential growth in the immediate vicinity.

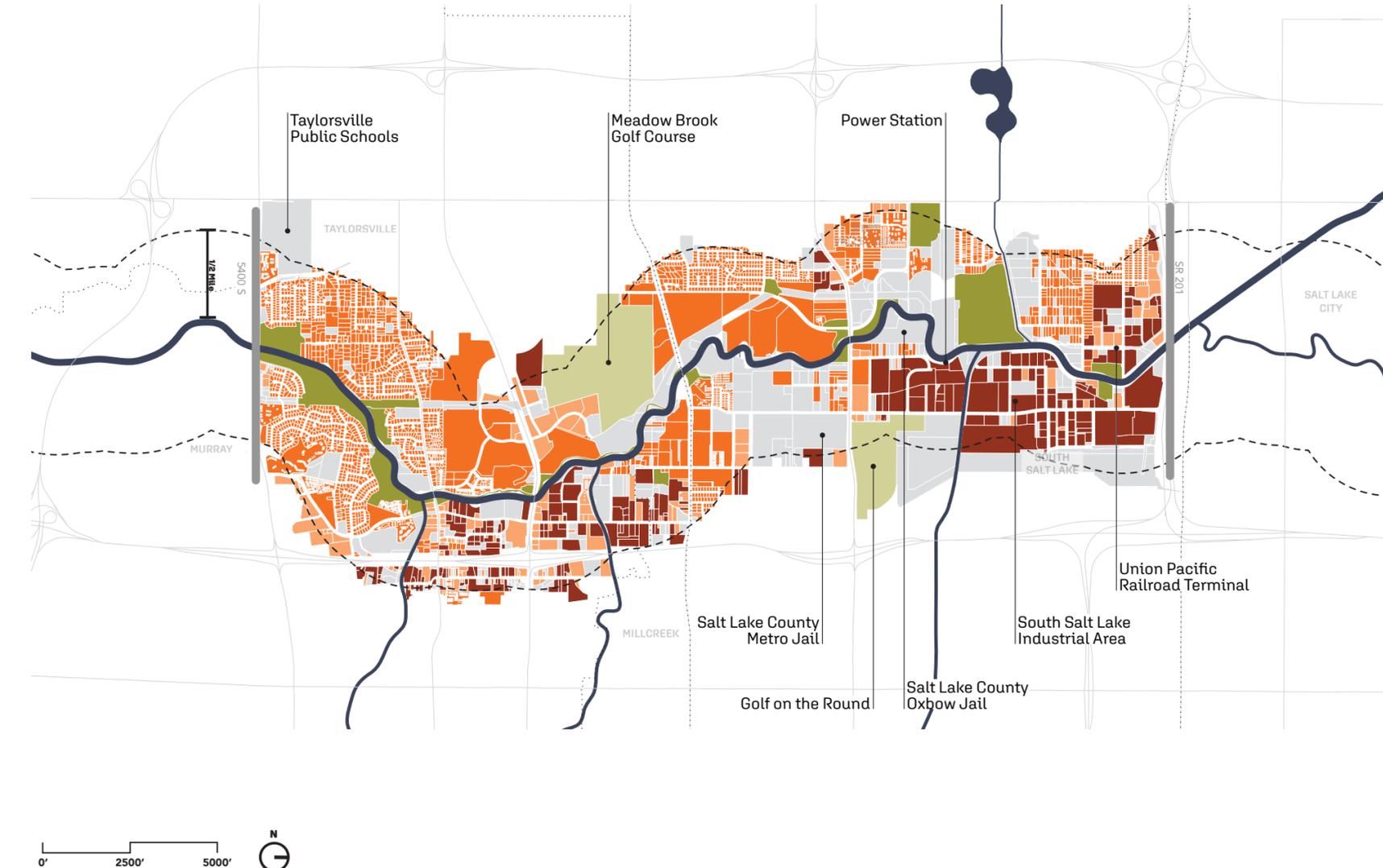
- **Residential Focus in Taylorsville and Murray:** The southern part of the study area, particularly in Taylorsville and Murray, is more residential in character. These areas benefit from a greater number of residents living within walking distance of existing trail access points, presenting a significant opportunity for community engagement and park use.



PERCENTAGE OF LAND USE WITHIN A HALF-MILE OF THE RIVER

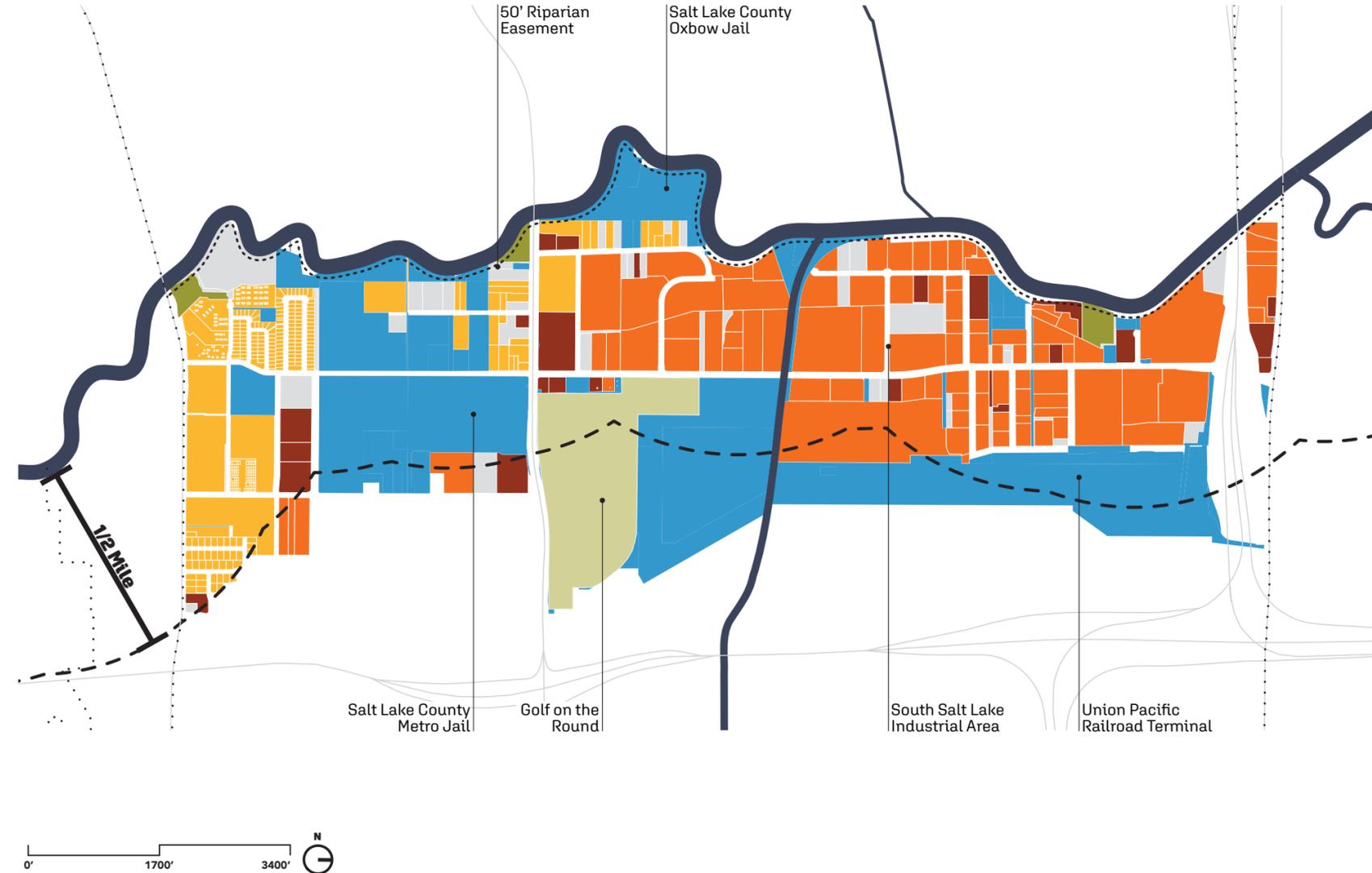
## Land Use Along the River

Along the 0.5 miles adjacent to the Central Jordan River, the predominant land use is residential. This is particularly true in Taylorsville and Murray, where developments frequently come right up to the river corridor. Other institutions like Taylorsville Public schools, Salt Lake County Jails, and the Union Pacific Railroad Terminal hold large areas of land within the study area. These large, single type land uses, like the Union Pacific Railroad Terminal, can become barriers to accessing the river because they are difficult to get around. Residential areas that do not have direct connections to the riverfront or trail can also become barriers to access.



### Current Land Use: South Salt Lake

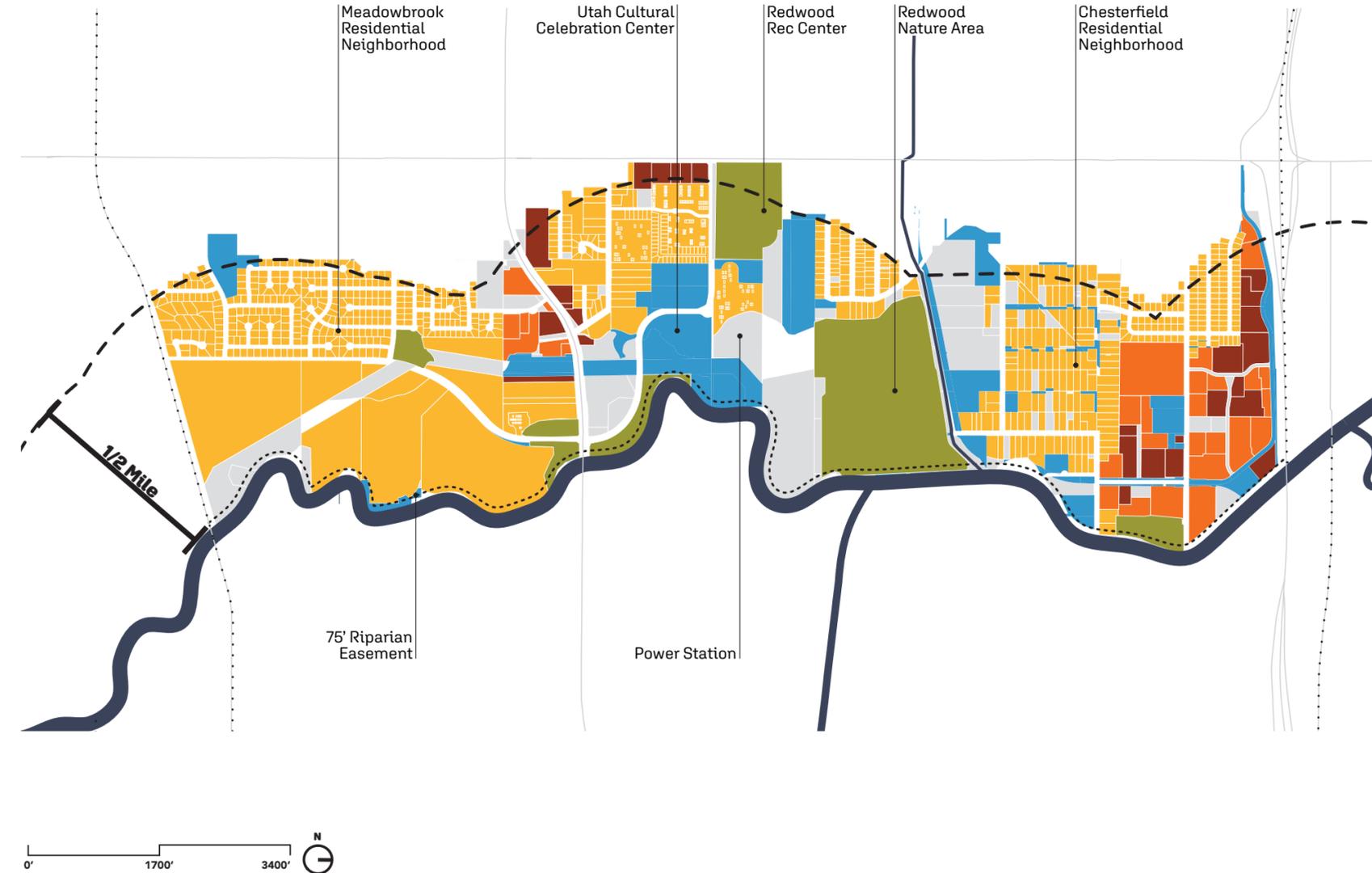
Current land use in South Salt Lake within 1/2 mile of the river is a mix of institutional and industrial use, with a small amount of residential use on the southern side. South Salt Lake is the smallest community in all of Salt Lake County but has a large amount of land dedicated to Salt Lake County institutional uses like the Metro Jail and Oxbow Jail. Downtown South Salt Lake is disconnected from the river by I-15 and the railroad terminal, which makes connections like 3300 S all the more vital.



- Golf Course
- Park
- Industrial
- Institutional
- Residential
- Commercial
- Other
- Major Roads
- Municipal Boundary
- Waterway

### Current Land Use: West Valley City

Current land use in West Valley within 1/2 mile of the river is largely residential, with some industrial, commercial, and institutional land use, particularly in the north. Large land users in the area include the Utah Cultural Celebration Center, Redwood Rec Center and Nature Area, and a power station. Larger developments of mobile homes occupy the areas adjacent to the river in the south, while single family homes are predominantly in the north.



- Golf Course
- Park
- Industrial
- Institutional
- Residential
- Commercial
- Other
- Major Roads
- Municipal Boundary
- Waterway

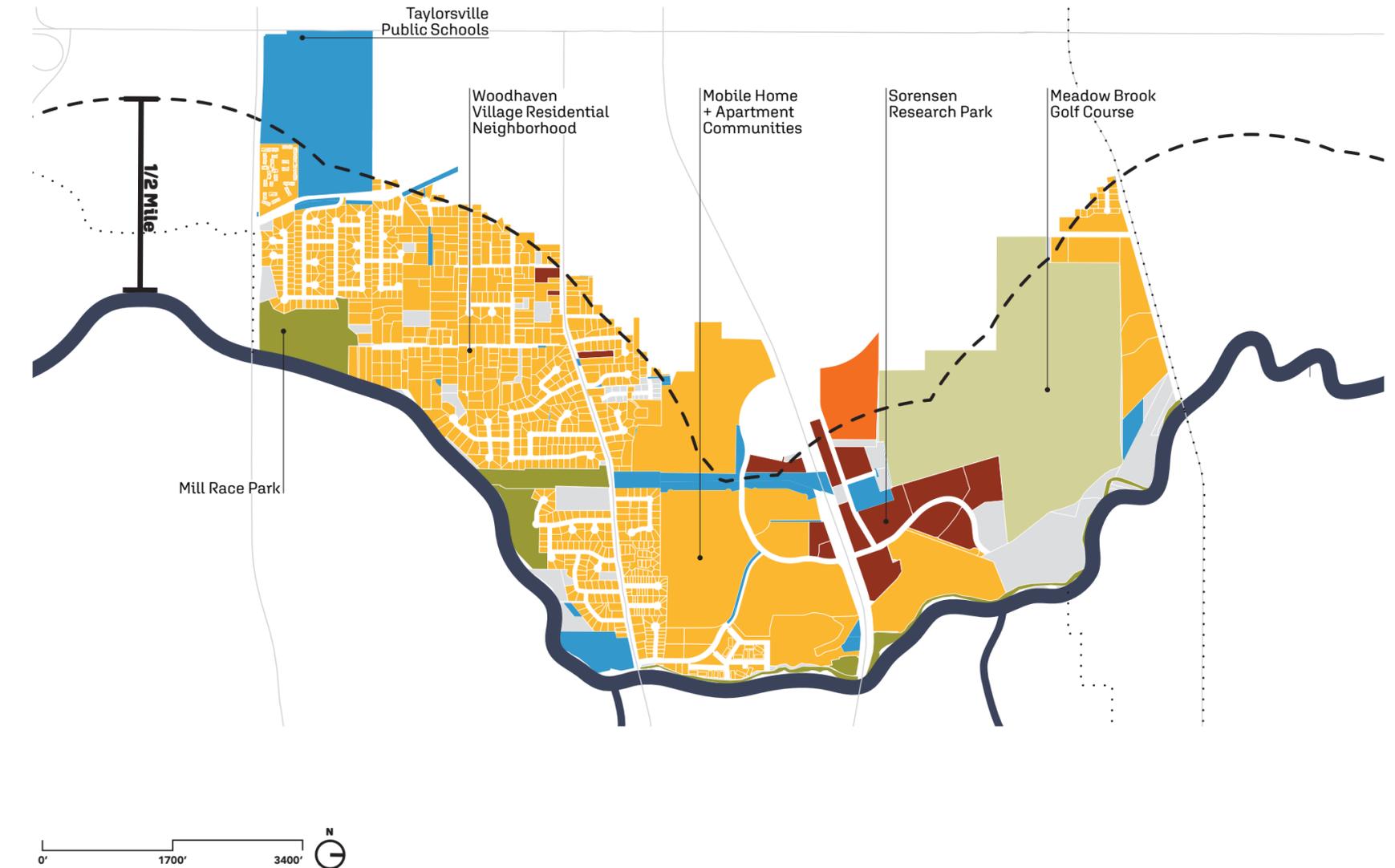
**Current Land Use:  
Millcreek**

The section of Millcreek that touches the Jordan River is quite narrow. Current land use in within ½ mile of the river is a mix of residential, industrial, commercial, and some smaller areas of institutional land use. There are no large plots of land in this area, and the only open park space is Sunnyvale Park.



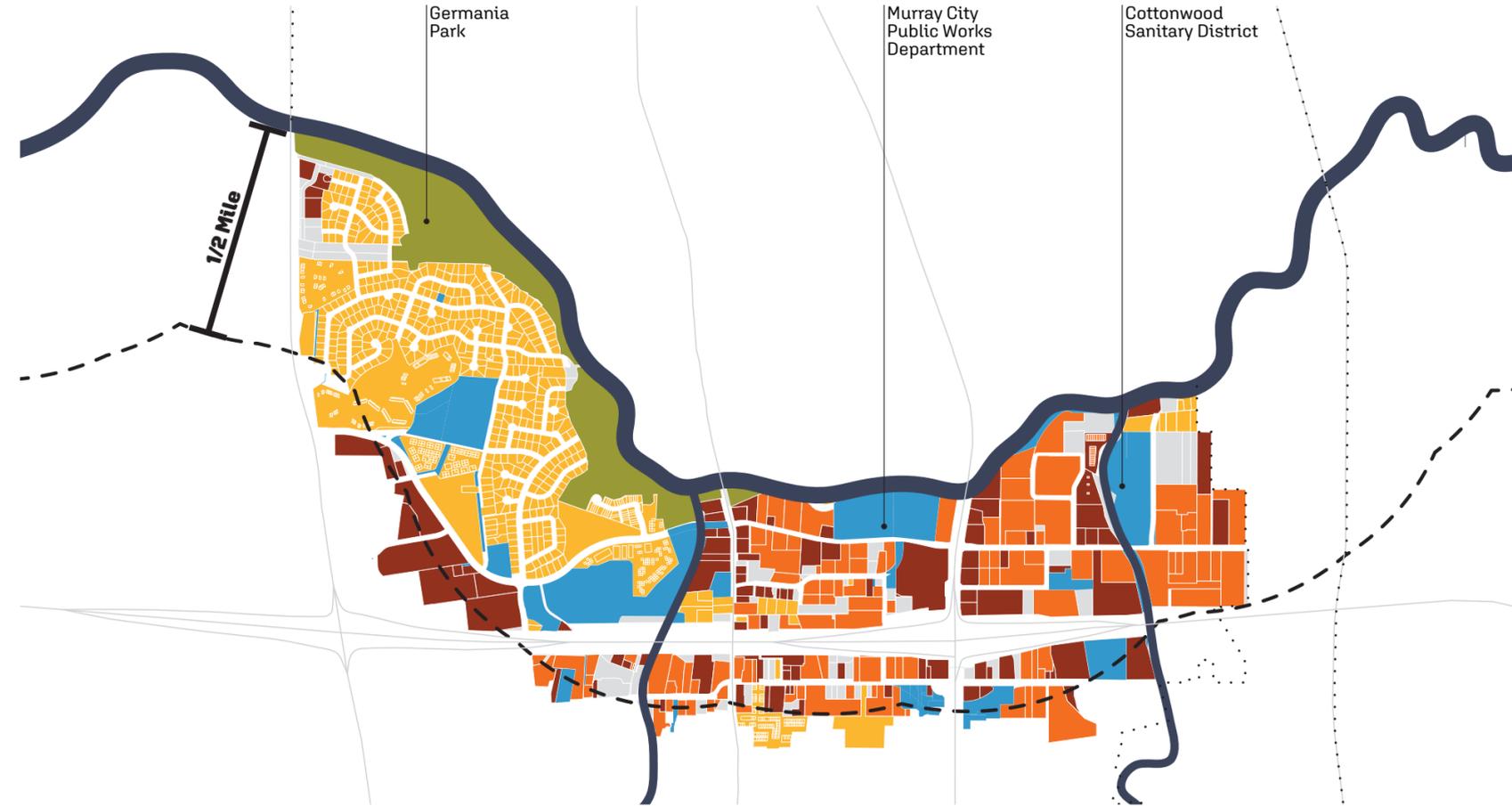
**Current Land Use:  
Taylorsville**

Current land use in Taylorsville within ½ mile of the river is majority residential. The Meadow Brook Golf Course is a large land use adjacent to the river, occupying 175 acres. Other park spaces include Millrace Park and Little Confluence Trailhead. Some of the residential area are apartments and mobile homes, but the majority are single family homes. The Sorensen Research Park is a large commercial use that occupies multiple lots within Taylorsville, and is in the process of constructing a new industrial park between Meadowbrook Golf Course and the river.

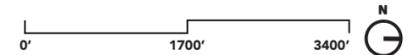


### Current Land Use: Murray

Current land use in Murray within ½ mile of the river is a mix of residential, park space, institutional, commercial, and industrial. South of Murray Taylorsville Road is primarily single family residential, while north of this is a mixed industrial and commercial area that includes the Murray City Public Works building and Cottonwood Sanitary District. Germania Park and Kennecott Nature Center create a large area of park space between Murray Taylorsville Road and 5400 S.



- Golf Course
- Park
- Industrial
- Institutional
- Residential
- Commercial
- Other
- Major Roads
- Municipal Boundary
- Waterway



LAND USE ADJACENT TO THE JORDAN RIVER



## Stewarded Community Well-Being

Working with local social service providers, alongside city and county agencies, is key to understanding the dynamics that shape both public safety and community well-being in the Central Jordan River corridor. The presence of unhoused individuals, reports of drug use, and broader public safety concerns are well-documented issues in the study area.

These issues have direct implications for how the future park will be designed and managed, as public perceptions of safety can influence how frequently the park is used and how it integrates with surrounding communities.



PAMELA ATKINSON RESOURCE CENTER  
SOURCE: AJC ARCHITECTS

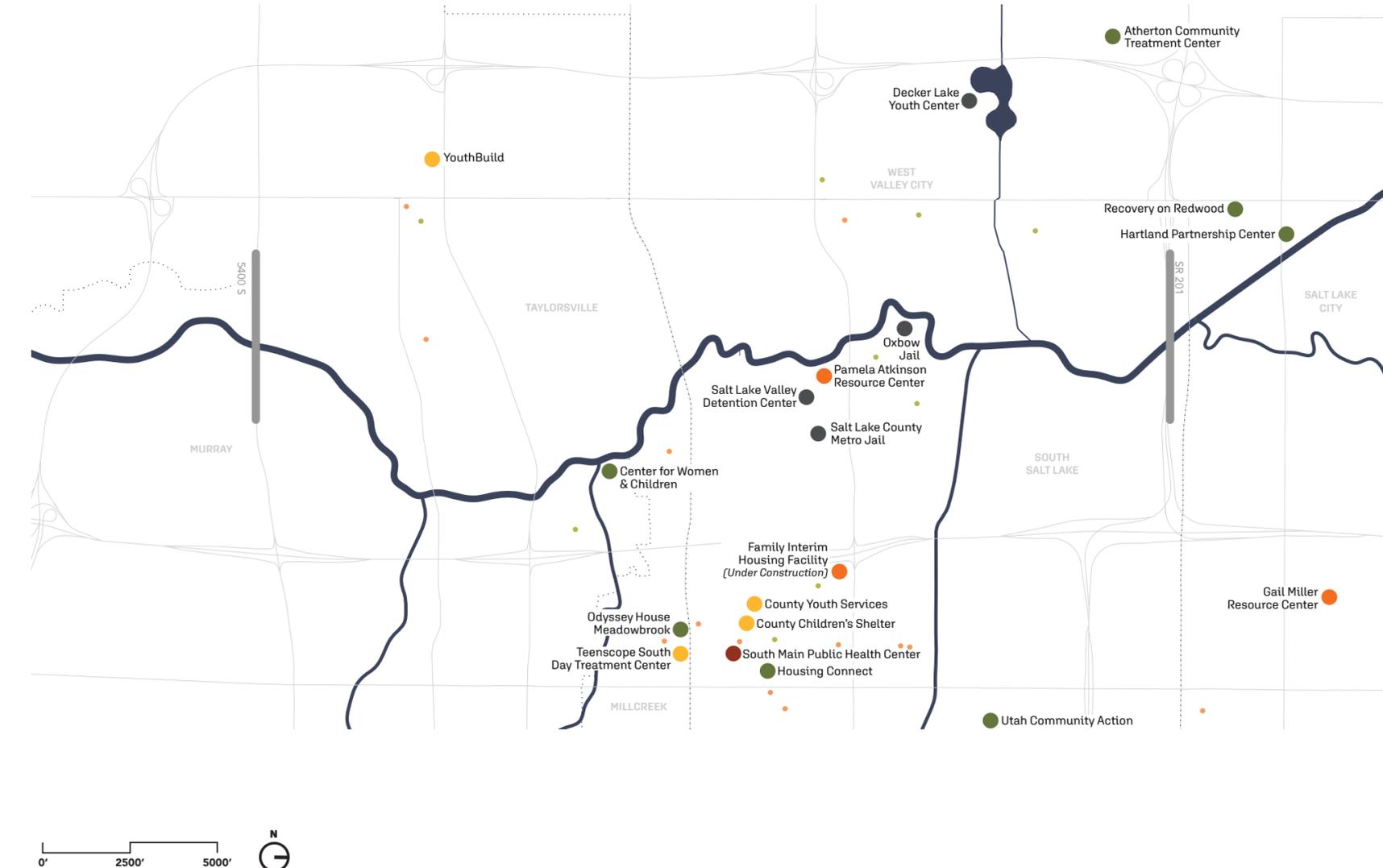


THE JORDAN RIVER WITH OXBOW JAIL IN THE FOREGROUND

### Service Providers + Resource Centers

Throughout the study area there are a wide range of types of service providers and resource centers. The Pamela Atkinson Resource Center is a valuable center for single men that is operated by The Road Home and provides crisis services such as beds, showers, meals, and connections to job development and mental health resources. As the population of unhoused people has grown, centers like this as well as long-term housing are important steps in Utah's Housing First model.

- Unhoused Resource
- Correctional Facility
- Youth Service Provider
- Public Health Facility
- Other Service Provider
- Affordable or Public Housing
- Food Bank or Pantry
- Major Roads
- Municipal Boundary
- Waterway



## Centers of Community Resources

Hubs for community resources often occupy larger plots of land and create destinations within the urban fabric. They are integral to the overall health and wellbeing of a community and can be valuable partners in the development of open space and recreative amenities for public health and wellbeing.



**SOUTH MAIN PUBLIC HEALTH CENTER**  
SOURCE: UNIVERSITY OF UTAH HEALTH



**THE UTAH FOOD BANK**  
SOURCE: MILL HOUSE MEDIA



**THE HUB OF OPPORTUNITY**  
SOURCE: ENVISION ENGINEERING

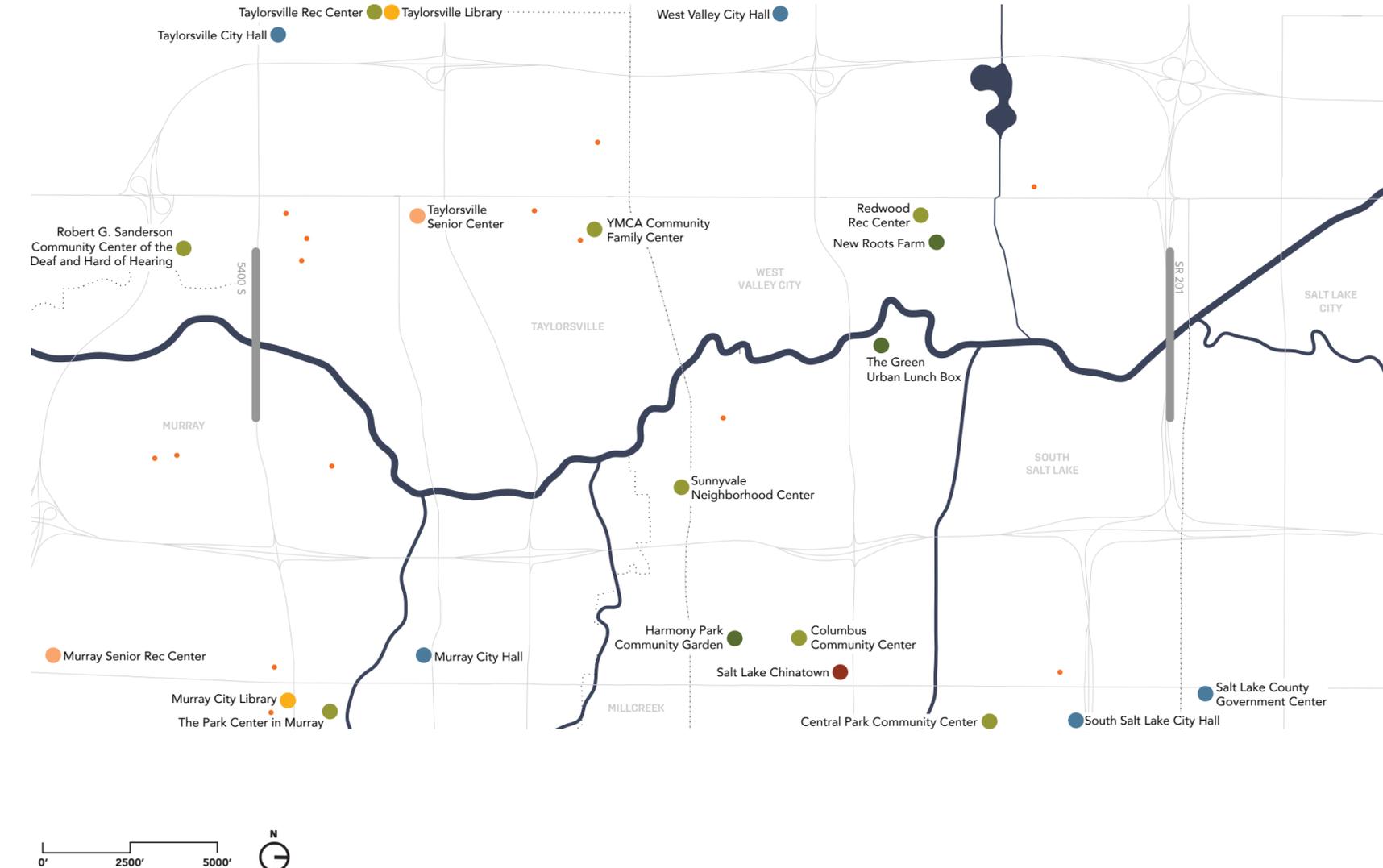


**GAIL MILLER RESOURCE CENTER**  
SOURCE: SHELTER THE HOMELESS

## Community Resources

Local places for community gathering are an important part of the urban fabric. Libraries, rec centers, senior centers, community gardens and other county, city, and independent institutions provide valuable programming and services. These spaces can serve as anchoring institutions with a community and help to foster connection. Redwood Recreation Center and New Roots Farm are two providers that are directly linked to the Central Jordan River Study Area.

- Local Government
- Community/Rec Center
- Senior Center
- Library
- Community Garden
- Community Group
- School
- Major Roads
- Municipal Boundary
- Waterway



## Stewarded **Public Perception**

The Central Jordan River evokes mixed perceptions among Salt Lake County Residents. Often, the river and adjacent trail are seen as being a great natural resource that provides green space, habitat, and an urban respite for visitors. However, perceptions abound that the river is unclean and unsafe. In some places within the study area the limited maintenance has led to overgrown vegetation (particularly invasive vegetation) that limits sightlines and increases feelings of unease for visitors. In other areas the lack of trashcans along the trail and the presence of debris in the river reinforces the idea that this is a highly impaired and dirty landscape. Since lighting is not present along the entire length of the trail many users limit their activities to daylight hours for fear of safety concerns. The presence of an unhoused population residing along the river further increases safety concerns for some visitors.

All of these concerns compound to create a perception that for some, means that the river is not safe or is not worth visiting. Tackling these conditions and changing the often long-held public perceptions about the river will require sustained investment, outreach, and education.



A TOY CAR IN THE JORDAN RIVER ON THURSDAY, SEPT. 26, 2024.  
SOURCE: RICK EGAN | THE SALT LAKE TRIBUNE



BEND IN THE RIVER PARK'S POOR MAINTENANCE IS PICTURED ALONGSIDE THE JORDAN RIVER IN SALT LAKE CITY ON THURSDAY, SEPT. 19, 2024.  
SOURCE: FRANCISCO KJOLSETH | THE SALT LAKE TRIBUNE

## News Coverage

News coverage of the Jordan River gives an insight into how Utahns view the Jordan River and its adjacent trail. While some news coverage might sensationalize the issues present along the trail, these conversations are part of the public dialogue about how the river is cared for and maintained. Throughout the majority of articles, there is a clear message that residents would like to see the river better cared for.

### **The Jordan River Trail isn't living up to its potential. The Tribune's 'Trail of neglect' series explores why, and what might change.**

The river and its trail play host to unsheltered homelessness and rampant drug activity in Salt Lake City, but new ideas are on the table that could change how residents interact with the corridor.

*The Salt Lake Tribune | Jose Davila IV | Nov. 1, 2024, 8:00 a.m.*

### **Utahns want a cleaner, more wild Jordan River, with improved safety.**

A survey taken as more Utahns enjoy the Jordan River during the coronavirus pandemic shows they want the urban waterway cleaned up and made more accessible.

*The Salt Lake Tribune | Tony Semerad | Oct. 5, 2020, 10:28 a.m.*

### **Increasing number of garbage islands forming on Jordan River.**

Environmental advocates, along with golfers at a Salt Lake City course, have noticed more and more "garbage islands" forming on the Jordan River recently.

*Fox13 News | Jenna Bree | Sep. 18, 2023, 11:58 p.m.*

### **Salt Lake City parks are getting new funding. But can upkeep stay on top of new assets?**

Residents often criticize the city's maintenance of its existing parks, but new funding is coming.

*The Salt Lake Tribune | Jose Davila IV and Jordan Miller | Sep. 29, 2024, 8:00 a.m.*

### **The Jordan River Trail is a bit nicer south of Salt Lake City. Why is that?**

The Jordan River Trail runs for over 46 miles, 35 of which lie south of Utah's capital.

*The Salt Lake Tribune | Jose Davila IV | Oct. 21, 2024, 5:00 a.m.*

## Sightlines Along the Trail

In many areas of the trail underpasses, dense vegetation, fences, or other physical barriers decrease visibility along the trail. The lack of visibility in these areas can increase feelings and perceptions of the trail being unsafe.



DARK UNDERPASSES, FENCES AND HIGH VEGETATION LIMIT VISIBILITY ALONG THE JORDAN RIVER TRAIL.



PEDESTRIAN BRIDGES OFFER SAFE ROAD CROSSINGS AND BETTER VISIBILITY COMPARED TO TUNNELS AND UNDERPASSES.



HIGH VISIBILITY NEAR RESIDENTIAL AREAS.

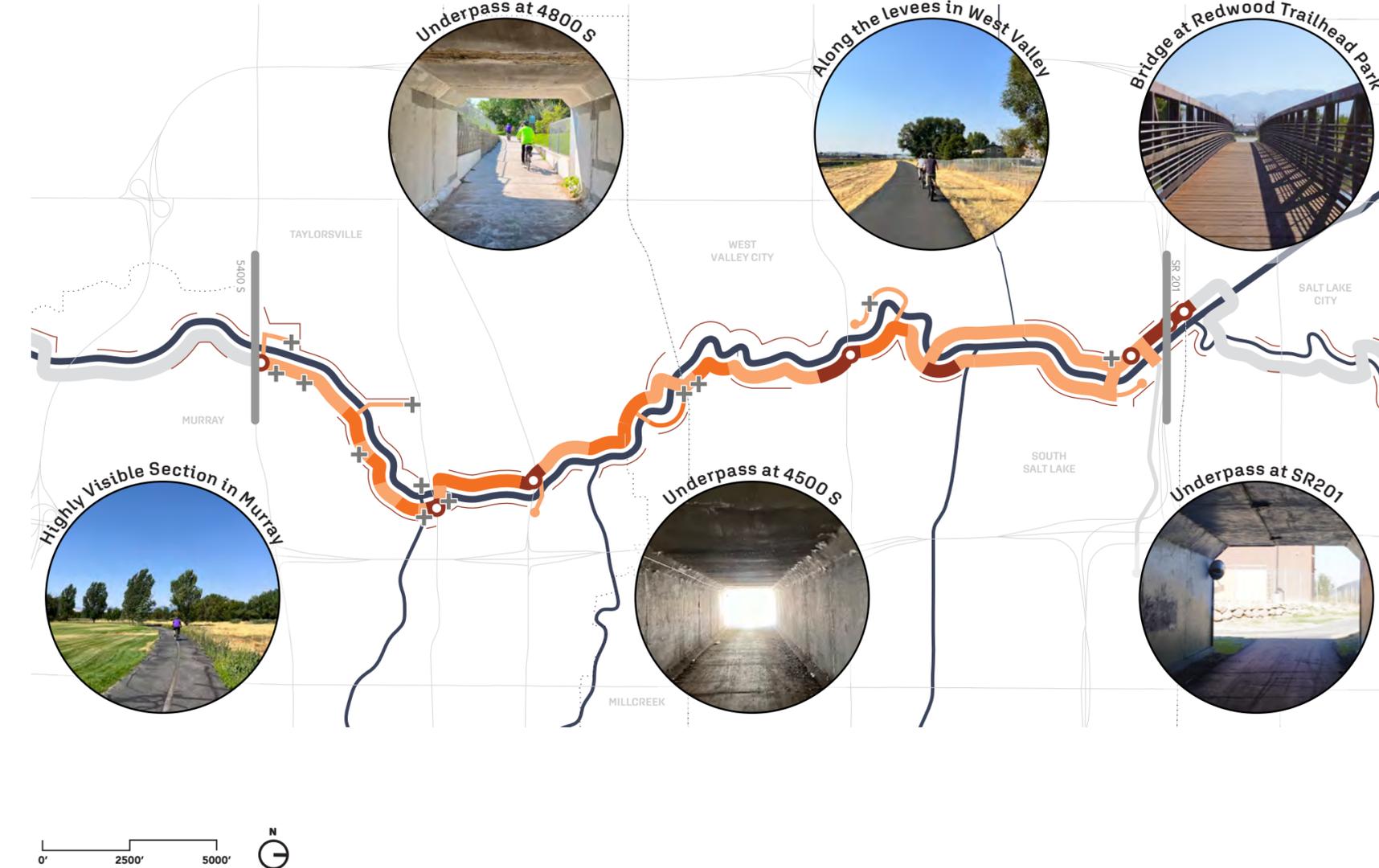


FENCING BETWEEN THE TRAIL AND PRIVATE PROPERTY RESTRICTS ACCESS AND LIMITS SIGHTLINES FROM NEARBY DEVELOPMENTS.

## Visibility Along the Trail

The graphic to the right classifies segments of the Jordan River Trail based on the visibility along these segments. Low visibility areas are often coupled with areas of enclosure like underpasses and fences, while high visibility areas typically have mid to low height vegetation, and have more space on either side of the trail.

- Underpass
- + Trailheads
- Open Visibility
- Moderate Visibility
- Low-Visibility/High Enclosure
- Other Trails
- Adjacent Fences
- Major Roads
- Municipal Boundary
- Waterway



## Lighting Along the River

The Jordan River Trail is unlit, except for areas that run through existing city or county parks. This limits the use of the trail to daytime hours, and particularly impacts people who do or might use the trail as a commuting corridor.



SOLAR POWERED LIGHTING ALONG PATHS IN PIONEER CROSSING REGIONAL PARK.



PARKING AREAS LIKE REDWOOD TRAILHEAD PARK ARE EQUIPPED WITH LIGHT POLES, THOUGH NOT ALL ARE OPERATIONAL.



MANY STRETCHES OF THE TRAIL LACK ANY LIGHTING, WITH WOODED AREAS RECEIVING ONLY MINIMAL SPILLOVER FROM NEARBY DEVELOPMENTS.



TRAIL TUNNELS AND UNDERPASSES ARE COMPLETELY UNLIT, CREATING PINCH POINTS WITH VERY LOW VISIBILITY.

## Trash + Debris Along the River

Debris and trash within and along the river corridor has long been an issue, and increases the perception that the river is not cared for. The river has historically been used by industries as well as individuals as a dumping ground, and the legacy of that is still event in some places today.



TRASH VISIBLE WHILE KAYAKING ALONG THE RIVER



FREQUENTLY TRASH GETS CAUGHT IN THE WOODY DEBRIS ALONG THE RIVER BANKS



TRASH STUCK IN RIPARIAN VEGETATION CAN BE DIFFICULT TO ACCESS AND CLEAN UP



THE JORDAN RIVER COMMISSION ORGANIZES CANOE CLEAN UPS ALONG THE RIVER

## Stewarded **Conclusion**

The Central Jordan River is a vital natural resource that offers both ecological and recreational benefits, but its stewardship and perception are complicated by ongoing challenges. While it provides green space, habitat, and a much-needed urban respite, areas of the river and its adjacent trail suffer from limited maintenance, overgrown vegetation, trash, and debris. These conditions contribute to the perception that the river is unclean and unsafe, with issues such as poor visibility, a lack of lighting, and the presence of an unhooded population further deterring potential users. These challenges are particularly prominent in certain areas, where safety concerns and the need for consistent upkeep have made the trail less inviting.

This planning study aims to improve the river's condition to address these issues through enhanced maintenance, better safety measures, more collaboration amongst stakeholders, and engagement with the communities surrounding the river. However, the success of this initiative depends on long-term collaboration across multiple agencies, municipalities, organizations, and stakeholders. A unified approach is needed to ensure that the river is accessible, safe, and well-cared for, with policies that protect both the natural environment and the well-being of local communities. With continued investment and coordination, the Central Jordan River can become a cleaner, safer, and more inviting space for all to enjoy.



DREDGING OF THE CHANNEL AT LITTLE COTTONWOOD CONFLUENCE



ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION ALONG THE RIVER  
SOURCE: SEVEN CANYONS TRUST



VIEW ALONG THE TRAIL IN GERMANIA PARK





**SL** SALT LAKE COUNTY  
PARKS & RECREATION

**port**

with:  
Rio ASE  
Ecosystem Services  
PROS Consulting  
PSOMAS  
Horrocks Engineers  
Zions Public Finance

DRAFT

*Central Jordan River*  
**RECONNECT**

# ENGAGEMENT

Draft Report

December 2024 | Prepared by PORT



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The Central Jordan River Reconnect is built on

# **ENGAGEMENT**

The Central Jordan River Reconnect project spans seven miles of river, crossing five cities—South Salt Lake, West Valley, Millcreek, Taylorsville, and Murray—each with its own unique identity, priorities, and challenges. This multi-jurisdictional context presents a wicked challenge, requiring coordination across municipalities, agencies, and community groups. Transforming the Jordan River into a cohesive, regionally significant park demands collaboration on every level, from local government to residents living near its banks.

From the start, we recognized that community engagement would be central to the project's success. To navigate this complexity, we launched a phased engagement strategy designed to reach a broad and diverse audience, ensuring that all voices are heard. Engagement began with pop-up events in parks and public spaces, building awareness and inviting residents to share their personal experiences of the river. This evolved into public workshops in each city, offering deeper conversations about ecological restoration, recreation, access, and safety.

This report documents our engagement efforts so far — highlighting key events, community insights, and emerging themes that will guide the development of a shared, community-driven vision for the future Central Jordan River Regional Park.



POP-UP EVENT AT THE WEST VALLEY CITY FARMER'S MARKET



PUBLIC WORKSHOP AT TAYLORSVILLE LIBRARY



POP-UP EVENT WITH INTERACTIVE SITE MAP AT MILLCREEK COMMON

Engagement

## Desired Outcomes

### 1. A Collective Vision Rooted in Community Values

Through collaborative engagement, we aim to develop a well-defined, community-driven vision for the future Central Jordan River Regional Park. This vision will reflect the core values, aspirations, and goals shared by residents, stakeholders, and local municipalities, shaping a park that meets both environmental and social needs.

### 2. Shared Ownership and Long-Term Stewardship

By involving the community at every stage, we seek to cultivate a sense of shared ownership over the park's development. Residents, stakeholders, and civic leaders will be empowered to champion the park's realization, ensuring continued advocacy, participation, and stewardship throughout the design, implementation, and long-term management phases.



POP-UP EVENT AT SOUTH SALT LAKE CRAFTOBERFEST

## Four-Phase Engagement Process

Our engagement process is designed to create a shared vision for the Central Jordan River Regional Park through a four-phase engagement process that builds awareness, gathers input, and shapes a collaborative plan for the park’s future. Each phase plays a critical role in cultivating community-driven goals while fostering shared ownership of the park’s development.

### 1. Connecting (Early Oct 2024)

We began by raising awareness about the project, getting to know the study area, and listening to stories from the communities along the river through pop-up events and on-the-ground outreach.

### 2. Imagining (Late Oct - Nov 2024)

During this phase, we worked with community members to define shared goals and guiding principles, explore future possibilities, and understand community priorities through public workshops in each municipality.

### 3. Alternatives (Spring 2025)

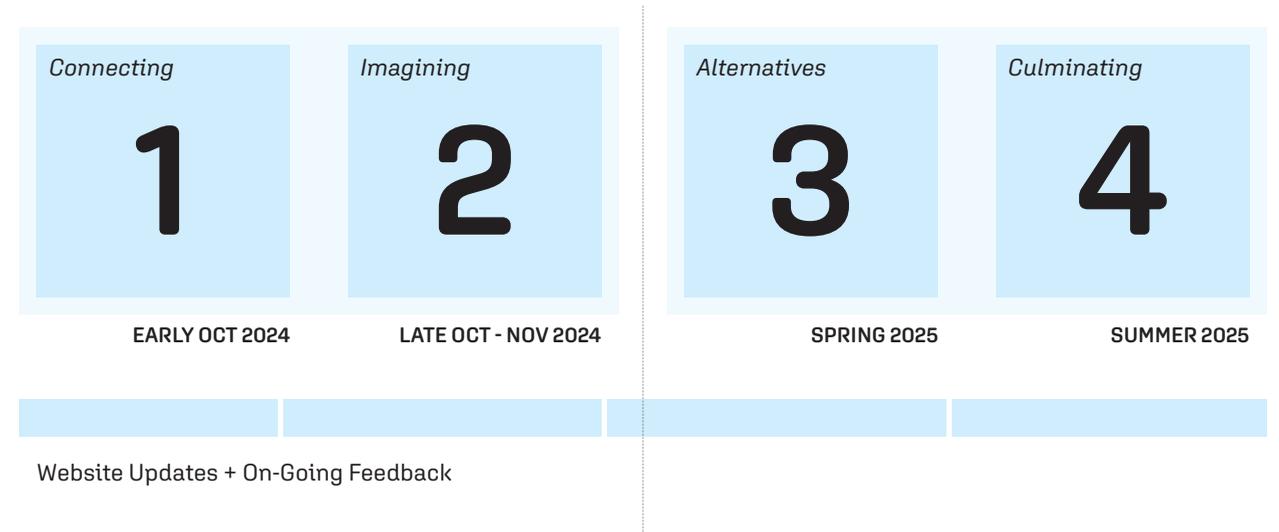
As design options take shape, the community will be invited to review alternative concepts and provide input on preferred features, ensuring that proposed ideas reflect both individual and shared aspirations.

### 4. Culminating (Summer 2025)

We will present the final master plan, inviting public comments and generating excitement for the park’s realization and long-term stewardship.

### Throughout the Project Timeline:

We will maintain ongoing engagement through project website updates, surveys, and continuous opportunities for feedback.



# Engagement Methods + Feedback

Engagement with the community has been central to the Central Jordan River Reconnect project, ensuring that the voices and priorities of local residents are reflected in the planning process. To reach a diverse audience and gather meaningful input, we implemented a range of outreach methods:

## 6 Pop-Ups

at community events like farmers markets and festivals

## 5 Public Workshops

one in each city in the study area

## Website Surveys

allowing digital feedback collection

## Social Media Posts

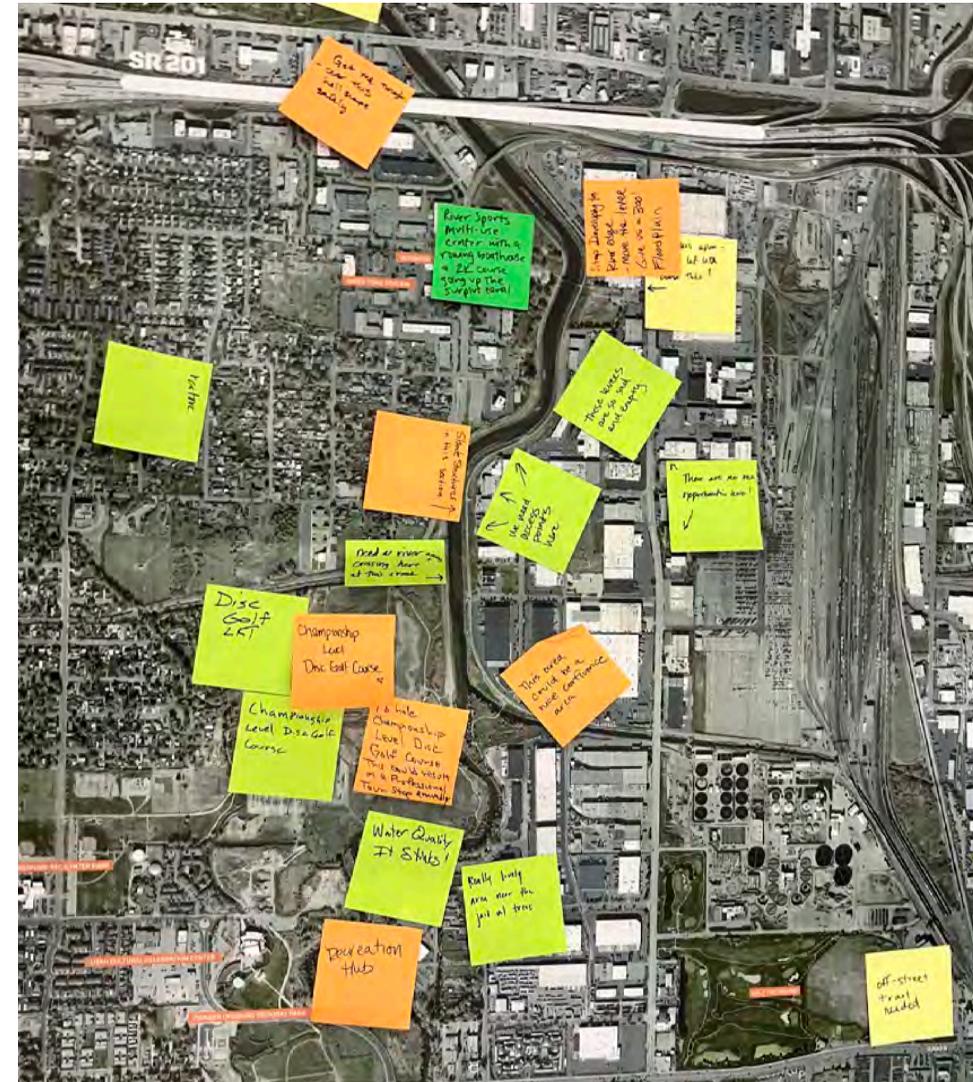
on Facebook, Instagram, and email campaigns

## Trail Signs

posted along the Jordan River Trail

## City Journal Ads

paid advertisements publicized the project and events



WE COLLECTED OVER 900 POST-IT NOTE COMMENTS FROM COMMUNITY MEMBERS AT OUR POP-UPS AND PUBLIC WORKSHOPS

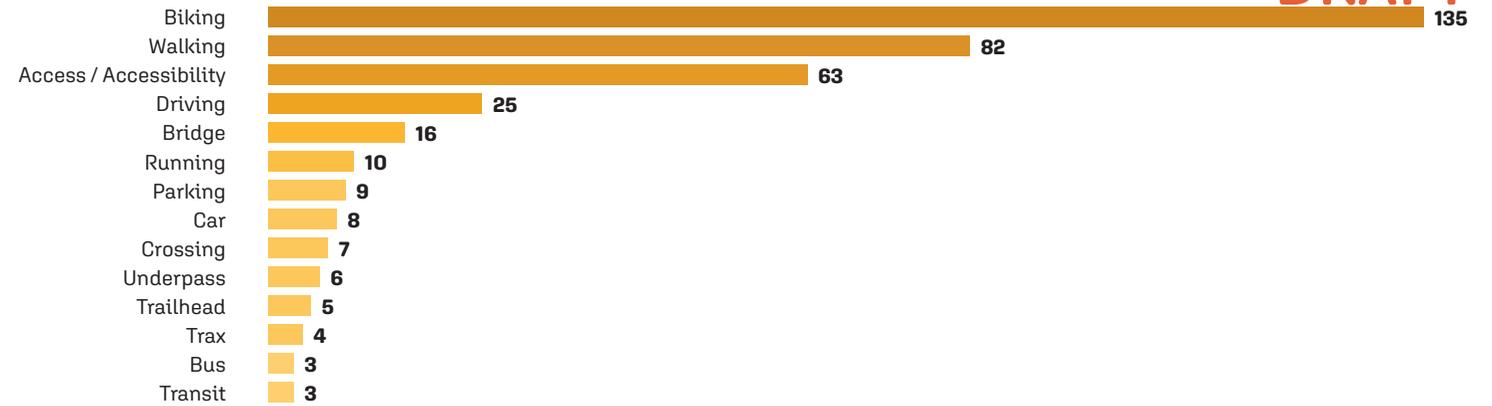
## Community Input Analysis

Feedback collected so far has been categorized into the project’s four key themes: Connected, Ecological, Active, and Stewardred. A detailed analysis of responses highlights emerging community priorities and areas of lower interest. For example, within the “Connected” theme, terms like biking and walking appeared frequently, emphasizing the community’s desire for enhanced active transportation options to and along the park. In contrast, terms like bus and transit appeared only a few times, suggesting that public transit access is less of a priority for residents.

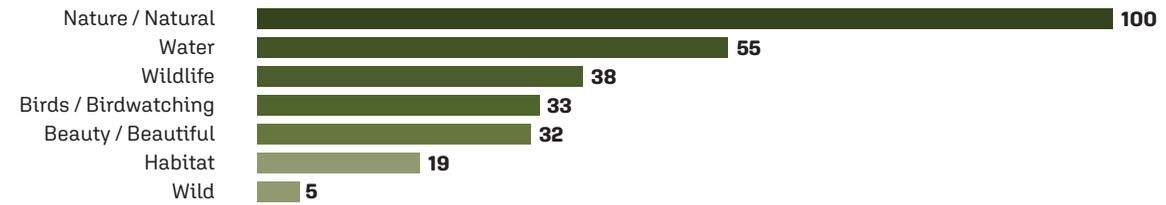
Under the “Stewardred” theme, concerns about safety and cleanliness emerged as significant, with frequent mentions of the need for improved safety measures, addressing homelessness, and maintaining clean and welcoming spaces. Feedback under the “Ecological” theme prioritized the importance of preserving wildlife habitats, maintaining the river’s natural beauty, and improving water quality. For the “Active” theme, terms related to recreation—such as playgrounds, dog walking, and kayaking—received significant attention, while activities like concerts or large-scale events were mentioned far less frequently.

This analysis helps us better understand what the community values most and identifies where further exploration may be needed as we refine the vision for the Central Jordan River Regional Park.

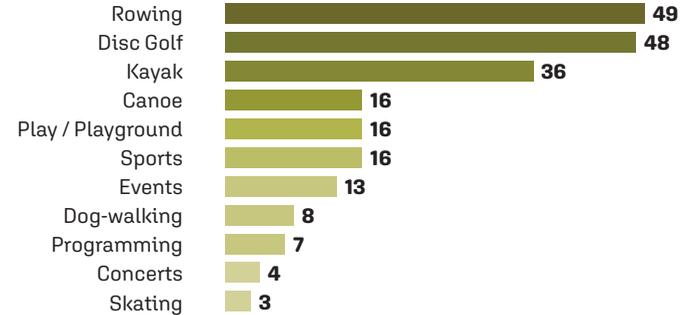
CONNECTED



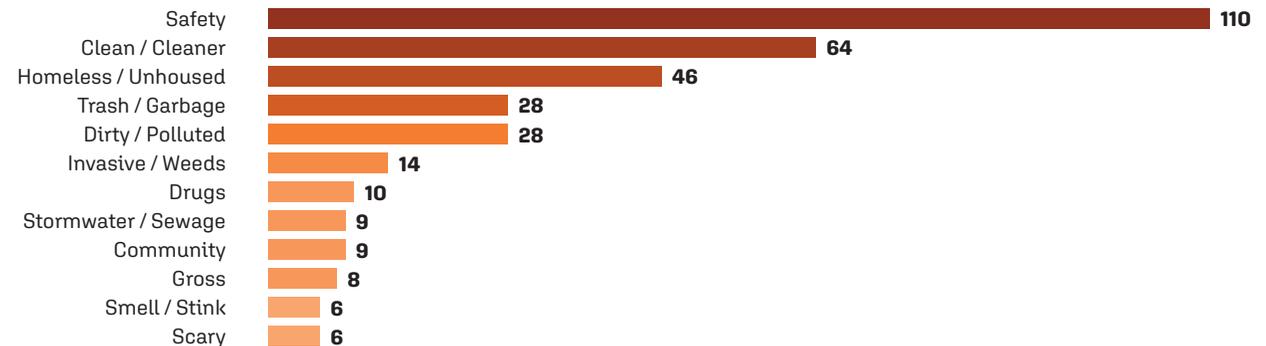
ECOLOGICAL



ACTIVE



STEWARDED



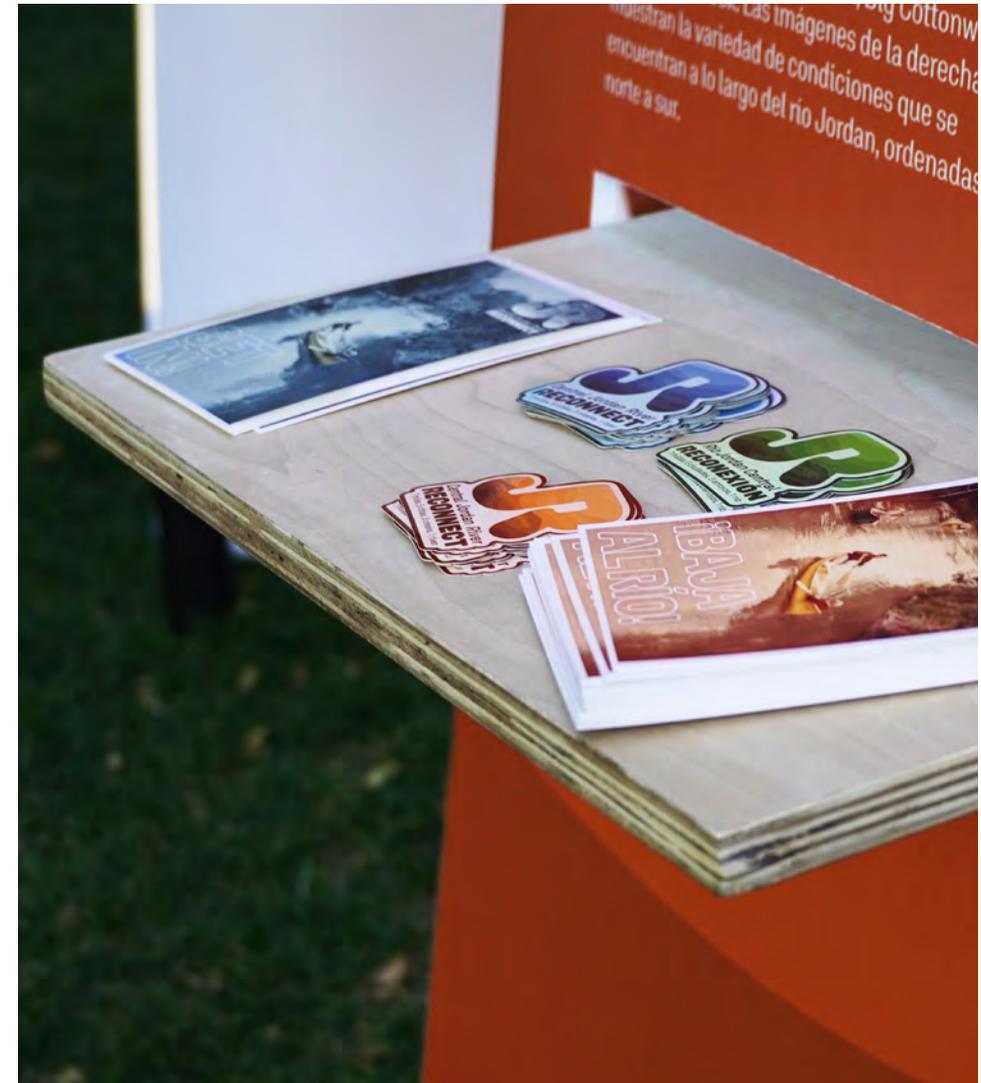
## Engagement

# Printed Materials

Hundreds of custom-designed stickers and postcards were distributed through September, October and November. The Jordan River Commission handed out postcards at their Get to the River Month events at the end of September. Then, the postcards were left at community hubs, including local libraries, town halls, and rec centers within the study area cities. Finally, postcards and stickers were handed out at each of our pop-up events and workshops.

The stickers had the project name and logo and came in a set of six, three Spanish and three English in each blue, red and green.

The postcards contained a short introduction of the project including a site map, the dates and locations of all the following public workshops, and the website url and qr code so people could stay in touch. Postcards were developed in both English (blue) and Spanish (red).





**Central Jordan River RECONNECT**  
7 miles, 5 cities, 3 creeks, 1 river

**Help shape a new regional park along the Jordan River!**

Get involved at a workshop this fall to share your ideas

- October 28 at Granite Library
- October 29 at Wheeler Farm Activity Barn
- November 12 at Redwood Rec Center
- November 13 at Taylorsville Library
- November 14 at Millcreek Community Center

Stop by anytime between 4:30 and 7:00 pm

Be on the lookout for updates and more ways to engage at [CentralJordanReconnect.com](http://CentralJordanReconnect.com)



**Río Jordan Central RECONEXIÓN**  
7 millas, 5 ciudades, 3 arroyos, 1 río

**¡Ayuda a dar forma a un nuevo parque regional a lo largo del río Jordan!**

Este otoño participa en los talleres para compartir tus ideas

- 28 de octubre en Granite Library
- 29 de octubre en Wheeler Farm Activity Barn
- 12 de noviembre en Redwood Rec Center
- 13 de noviembre en Taylorsville Library
- 14 de noviembre en Millcreek Community Center

Pasa en cualquier momento entre las 4:30 y las 7:00 pm

Sigue las actualizaciones del proyecto y descubre más formas para participar en [CentralJordanReconnect.com](http://CentralJordanReconnect.com)



QR CODES ON OUR POSTCARDS AND POP-UP BOARDS DIRECTED COMMUNITY MEMBERS TO MORE INFORMATION AND SURVEY QUESTIONS ON THE PROJECT WEBSITE

## Engagement Digital Outreach

At the start of the engagement process a custom website was created as the digital home for updates, feedback, and questions about the project throughout the 14-month planning process.

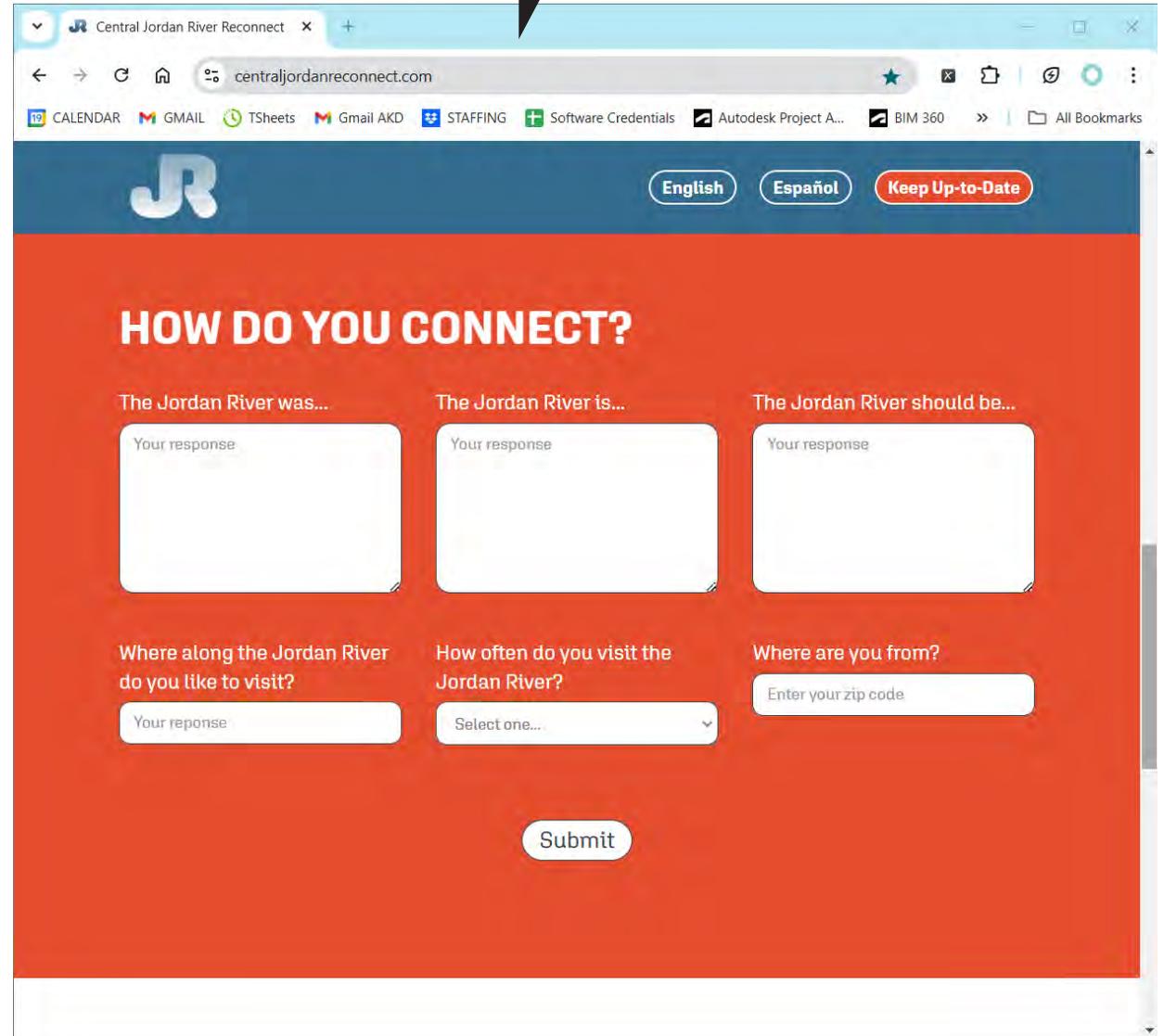
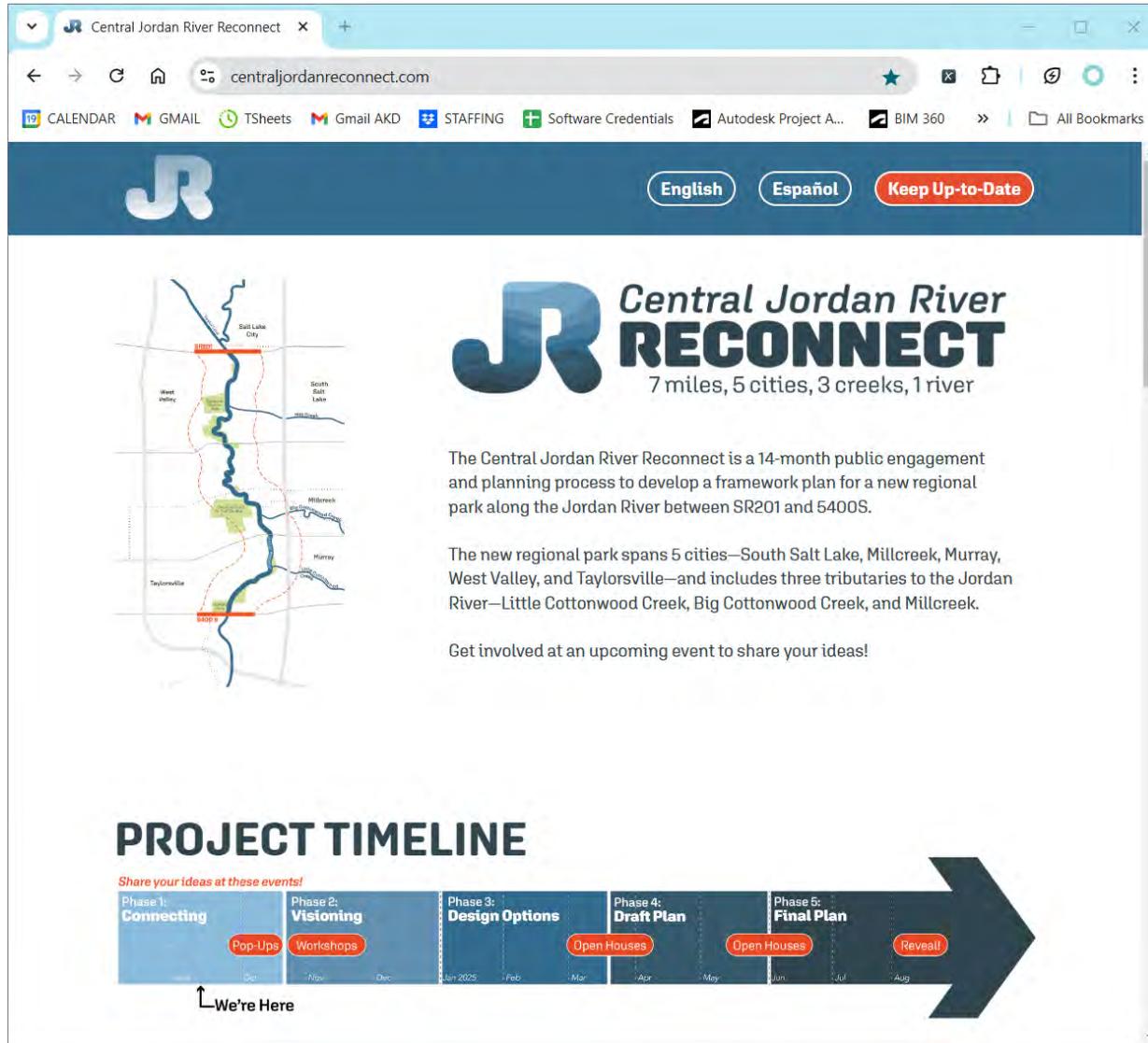
The website was designed to contain introductory information about the project extents and timeline, information about upcoming events, and a link to the county newsletter to stay involved. The website also contained survey questions that matched the questions used at the public workshops so that community members could provide feedback in person or online. The website was developed fully in both English and Spanish, and integrated accessibility features like image descriptions.

Project information was also distributed by Salt Lake County Parks & Recreation through email newsletters and posts on Facebook and Instagram. The Jordan River Commission posted information about the project and upcoming events on their Instagram and on their newsletter.



INSTAGRAM POST FROM SALT LAKE COUNTY PARKS & REC

Over 70 people gave feedback through our website forms



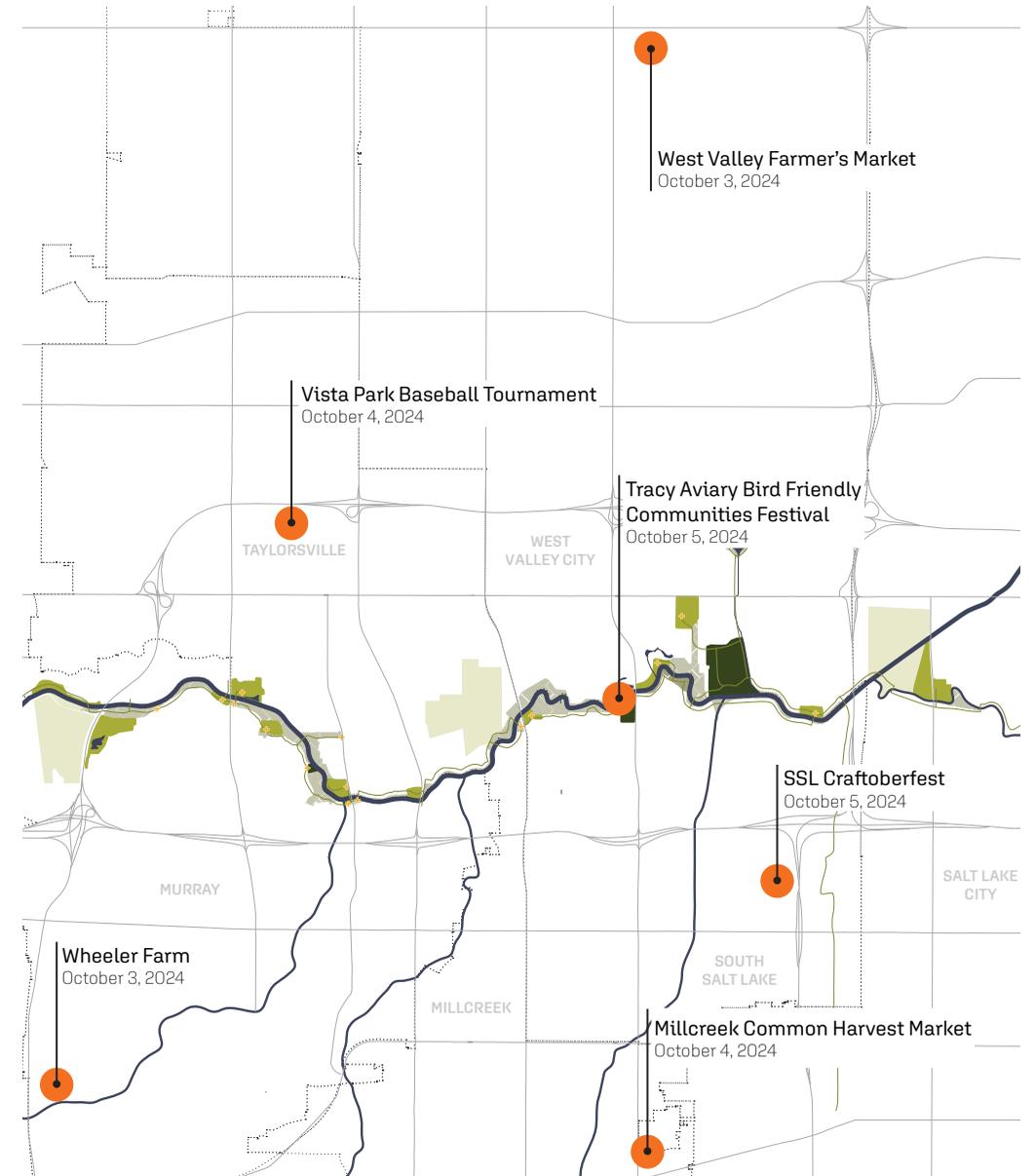
WEBSITE SCREENSHOTS SHOWING PROJECT SUMMARY AND SURVEY QUESTIONS

## Engagement **Pop-up Events**

Our initial round of engagement programming took place at popular community events across the study area, strategically chosen to reach a broad audience and meet residents where they already gather. These pop-up events served to raise awareness about the project, invite people to share their experiences with the Jordan River, and begin building excitement for its future.

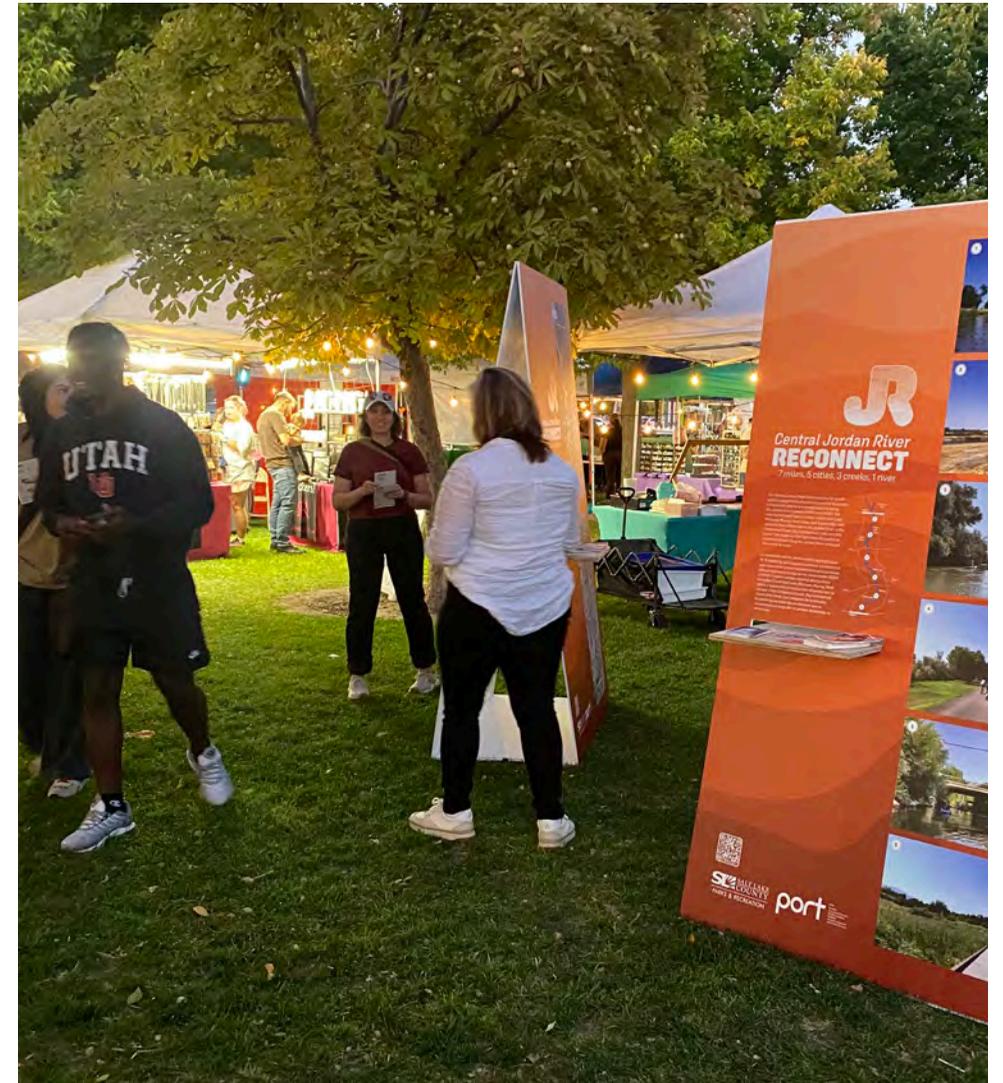
By attending vibrant local events like farmers markets, festivals, and sports tournaments, we connected with a diverse cross-section of community members. These interactions provided an opportunity to hear firsthand what residents value most about the Jordan River and its surrounding spaces, as well as their aspirations for a regional park that meets the needs of all five cities.

These events provided a foundational layer of input for the engagement process, setting the tone for deeper conversations in public workshops and online feedback platforms.





OUR MOBILE POP-UP BOARDS WITH INTERACTIVE MAPS AND PROMPTS ALLOWED US TO MEET COMMUNITY MEMBERS AND GATHER FEEDBACK ACROSS OUR STUDY AREA



## Interactive Pop-Ups—The Big River Boards

To engage the community in a memorable and impactful way, we created a series of 7-foot-tall interactive A-frame units, affectionately dubbed the Big River Boards. These eye-catching displays were designed to spark curiosity, invite participation, and provide key information about the project. Placed at each pop-up event, the Big River Boards helped familiarize community members with the project's extent, goals, and the opportunities for shaping the future of the Jordan River corridor.

Each board featured maps, site images, and bold, thought-provoking questions about the river's past, present, and future conditions. They provided ample space for participants to leave comments directly on the boards via sticky notes or answer prompts with pens provided on-site. Built-in shelves held physical takeaways, like project postcards, that visitors could take home to learn more.

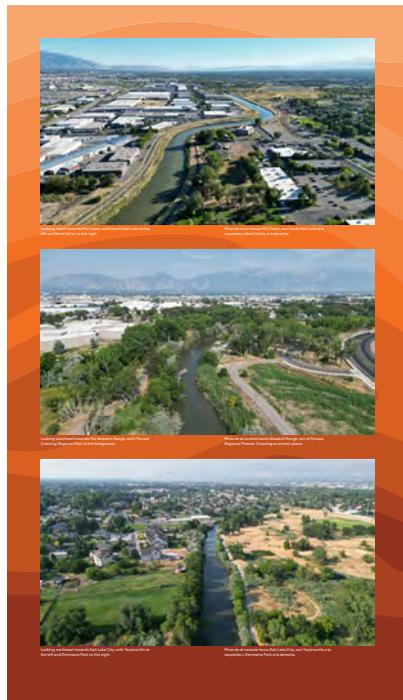
The Big River Boards acted as mobile engagement hubs, encouraging residents to think deeply about what the Jordan River means to them and how it can evolve to serve their communities better. These units served not only as an educational tool but as a tangible way for the public to interact with and contribute to the project vision.



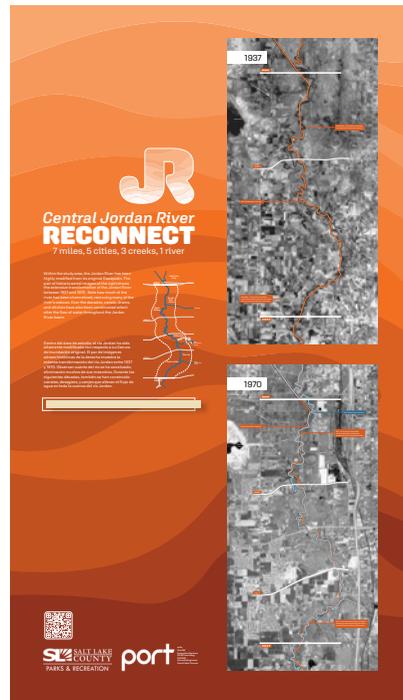
POP-UP EVENT AT WHEELER FARM



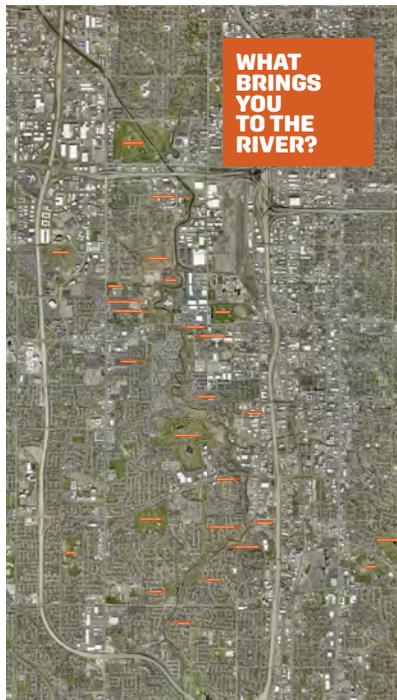
SIGN 1: PROJECT OVERVIEW



SIGN 2: HISTORIC AERIALS



SIGN 3: QUESTIONS



THE BOARDS CONTAINED A VARIETY OF AERIAL AND GROUND LEVEL SITE PHOTOS, AS WELL AS HISTORIC AERIAL IMAGERY

## ***Interactive Pop-Ups—Community Feedback***

To guide meaningful conversations about the future of the Jordan River, we asked community members to reflect on three big questions: **What the Jordan River was, what it is today, and what it should be in the future.** These questions were featured on the Big River Boards at our pop-up events and on our website, sparking thoughtful responses that captured both the challenges and aspirations people associate with the river.

The feedback we received paints a vivid picture of the Jordan River’s past, present, and future:

- **The Jordan River Was...** an oasis of natural beauty, a critical habitat, and an essential waterway. But many also reflected on its history of misuse, pollution, and the impacts of urban development.
- **The Jordan River Is...** valued as a sanctuary for recreation and wildlife, but concerns about pollution, safety, and homelessness are widespread.
- **The Jordan River Should Be...** a clean, thriving ecosystem that is safe, accessible, and well-cared for, serving as both a recreational hub and a refuge for wildlife.

This approach revealed deep connections to the river, alongside a strong community desire to restore its health, safety, and vitality for generations to come.

## **THE JORDAN RIVER WAS...**

“An oasis in the desert, a home for wildlife, the lifeblood of the Great Salt Lake”

“A meandering natural flowing river when the pioneers settled”

“A place of natural beauty that was misused and polluted”

“The emerald belt of the Salt lake Valley hosting diverse flora and fauna and acting as a natural filter for water quality”

## THE JORDAN RIVER IS...

“A source of life, a sanctuary for animals, birds and humans. A place for recreation, relaxing and rejuvenating”

“An absolute gem and nature oasis for the community which should be protected and preserved”

“Polluted. It smells even worse than it did 20 years ago. I don’t feel safe there with my family”

“Starting to become overrun with homeless people, drugs, and feels unsafe in certain parts”

## THE JORDAN RIVER SHOULD BE...

“Safe, carefully stewarded, as natural as possible, consistently cared for, accessible to all.”

“A hub for recreation and a transportation spine throughout the valley”

“A healthy and thriving ecosystem that supports native wildlife and plants and provides opportunity for learning and interaction with nature”

“Clean enough to swim in and a hub for adventure, recreation, community connection, and a refuge for wildlife”

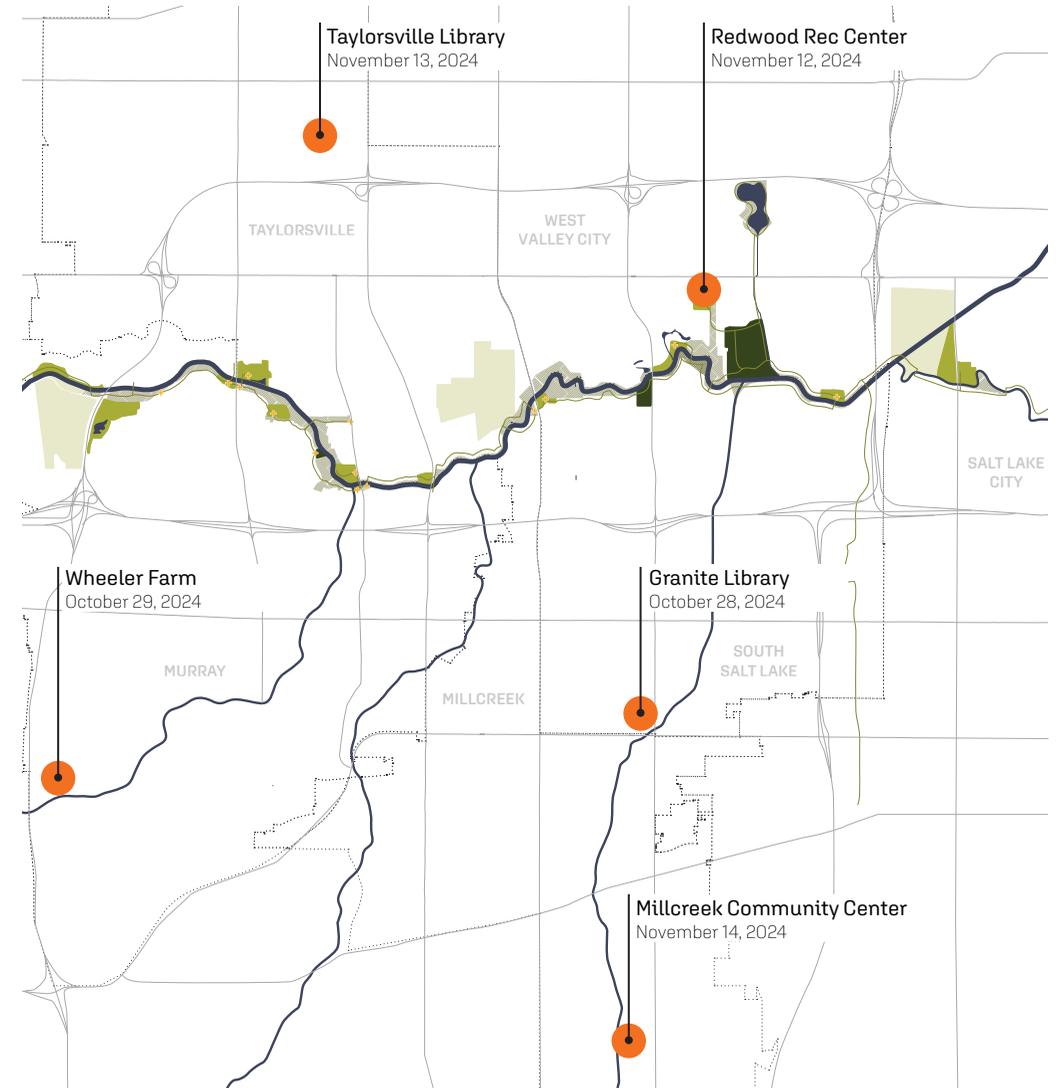
## Engagement Public Workshops

Building on the success of our mobile pop-up events, the Public Workshops offered residents an opportunity to dive deeper into the topics shaping the future of the Central Jordan River. Each workshop was designed to be interactive, informal, and accessible, welcoming residents to drop in at their convenience. Through discussions, maps, and activity boards, participants explored the Jordan River’s ecological, recreational, and cultural significance, helping to shape a vision for the future park.

The workshops built on the initial engagement phase by focusing on:

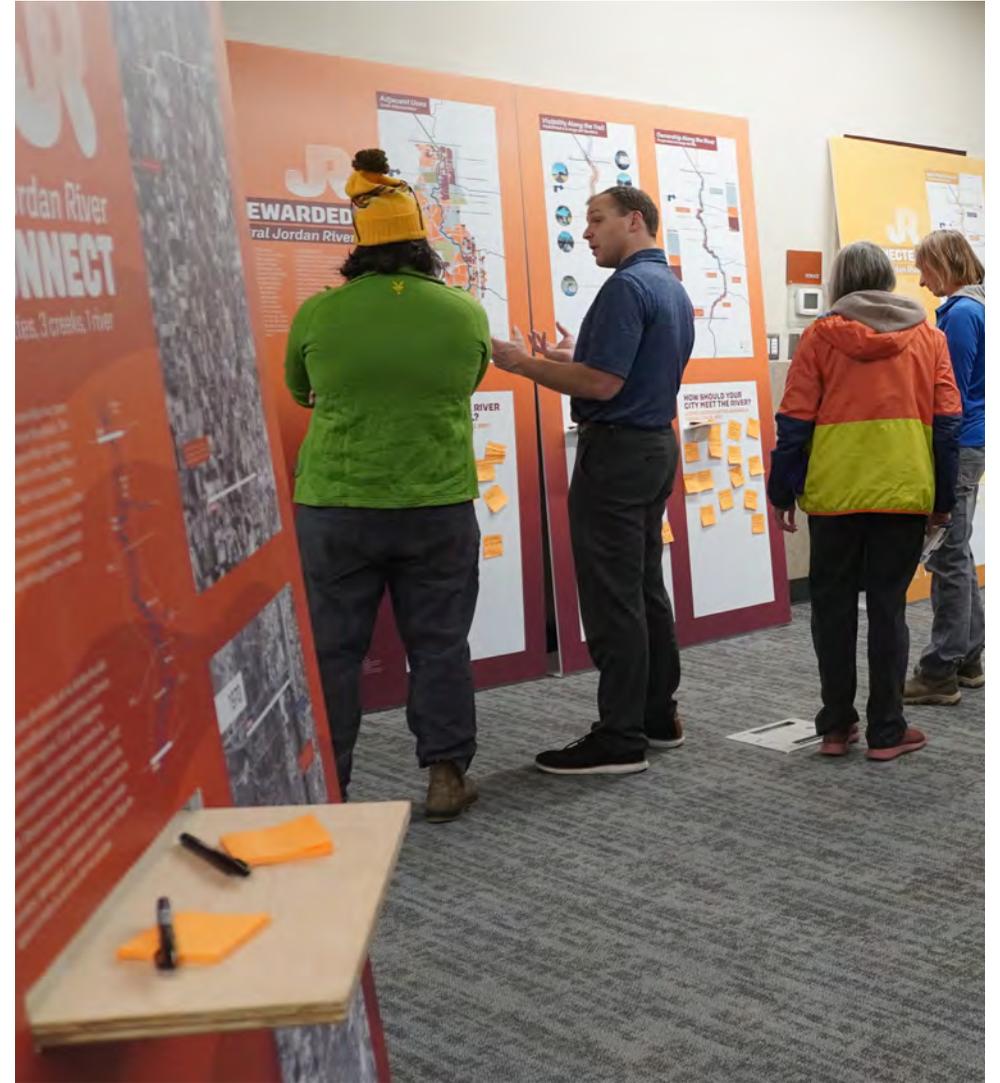
- **Understanding Community Needs:** Identifying what residents value most about the river and what improvements they hope to see.
- **Guiding Principles:** Refining goals for the park’s design based on community input.
- **Visioning Together:** Exploring opportunities for recreation, conservation, and connectivity.

Through a combination of Big River Boards, site images, and a large scale map of the study area participants were invited to explore site-specific and theme-specific comments. Through conversations and the written feedback, community members shared their vision for access, conservation, recreation, and community along the Central Jordan River.





COMMUNITY MEMBERS PLACED LOCATION-SPECIFIC COMMENTS ON OUR OVERSIZED MAP TABLE AT OUR PUBLIC WORKSHOPS



Public Workshops—Big River Boards

CONNECTED BOARDS

EACH BOARD CONTAINED A TEXT DESCRIPTION OF THE THEME, A SERIES OF SITE ANALYSIS MAPS, AND THREE QUESTIONS

ECOLOGICAL BOARDS

ACTIVE BOARDS

**ACTIVE**  
Central Jordan River

**Recreation Opportunities**  
Oportunidades Recreativas

**Trails & Amenities**  
Senderos y Servicios

**Destinations**  
Destinos

**WHAT DO YOU DO ALONG THE RIVER?**  
¿QUE HACES A LO LARGO DEL RIO?

**WHAT WOULD BRING YOU TO THE RIVER?**  
¿QUE TE ATRAERIA AL RIO?

**WHAT DO YOU NOT WANT ALONG THE RIVER?**  
¿QUE ES LO QUE NO DESEAS A LO LARGO DEL RIO?

SALT LAKE COUNTY PARKS & RECREATION port

STEWARDED BOARDS

**STEWARDED**  
Central Jordan River

**Adjacent Uses**  
Usos Adyacentes

**Visibility Along the Trail**  
Visibilidad a lo largo del Sendero

**Ownership Along the River**  
Propiedad a lo largo del Río

**HOW DOES THE RIVER MAKE YOU FEEL?**  
¿CÓMO TE HACE SENTIR EL RIO?

**WHAT WOULD CHANGE HOW YOU FEEL?**  
¿QUE CAMBIARIA COMO TE SIENTES?

**HOW SHOULD YOUR CITY MEET THE RIVER?**  
¿COMO DEBERIA ENTRELAZARSE LA CIUDAD CON EL RIO?

SALT LAKE COUNTY PARKS & RECREATION port

Engagement

## Workshop Feedback: Connected

Community feedback revealed that while the Jordan River Trail (JRT) is a valued resource for biking, walking, and commuting, significant barriers prevent many people from easily accessing the river corridor. Participants frequently mentioned the lack of safe and direct east-west connections from surrounding neighborhoods to the trail, particularly pedestrian and bike routes. The industrial and institutional uses near the river were cited as barriers that limit connectivity, and dangerous road crossings, poorly lit underpasses, and insufficient wayfinding add to the challenge of getting to the river safely. Many respondents expressed frustration about the difficulty in finding access points or parking areas and noted the need for clearer signage and improved wayfinding to encourage greater use of the trail.

Once at the river, safety remains a concern. Comments highlighted the speed of e-bikes and other trail users, creating conflicts with families, walkers, and dog owners. Respondents suggested more bridges and crossing opportunities to create safer and more engaging loops along the trail. Despite these challenges, many residents rely on the JRT as a daily commuting route, noting its positive impact on mental health and its value as a scenic alternative to busy roads.

**Feedback strongly supports efforts to improve connections from surrounding neighborhoods, enhance trail infrastructure, and create a more welcoming, accessible experience for all users.**

### *Connected—Primary Takeaways*

## Improve Ped + Bike Access

**Getting to the river safely on foot or by bike is a major barrier to people using the JRT**

## Expand East-West Connections

**Improving the safety and frequency of east-west connections are needed to improve access to the river, particularly from adjacent neighborhoods**

## Increase Awareness

**Many people aren't aware of how to access the river and the trail, either by car, bike, or foot**

**Connected—Theme-Specific Questions**

**How do you get to the river?**

“By car - would love to bike there”

“Trax to Murray Central and then bike to the trail!”

“Drive to a boat ramp, put in for kayaking”

“Run or drive to one of the parks”

**What keeps you from the river?**

“Barriers caused by huge industrial & institutional uses”

“Safety issues on the northern sections”

“The wayfinding on JRT is often absent or confusing”

“Dangerous road crossings or trail connections, car traffic”

**Do you cross the river? Why?**

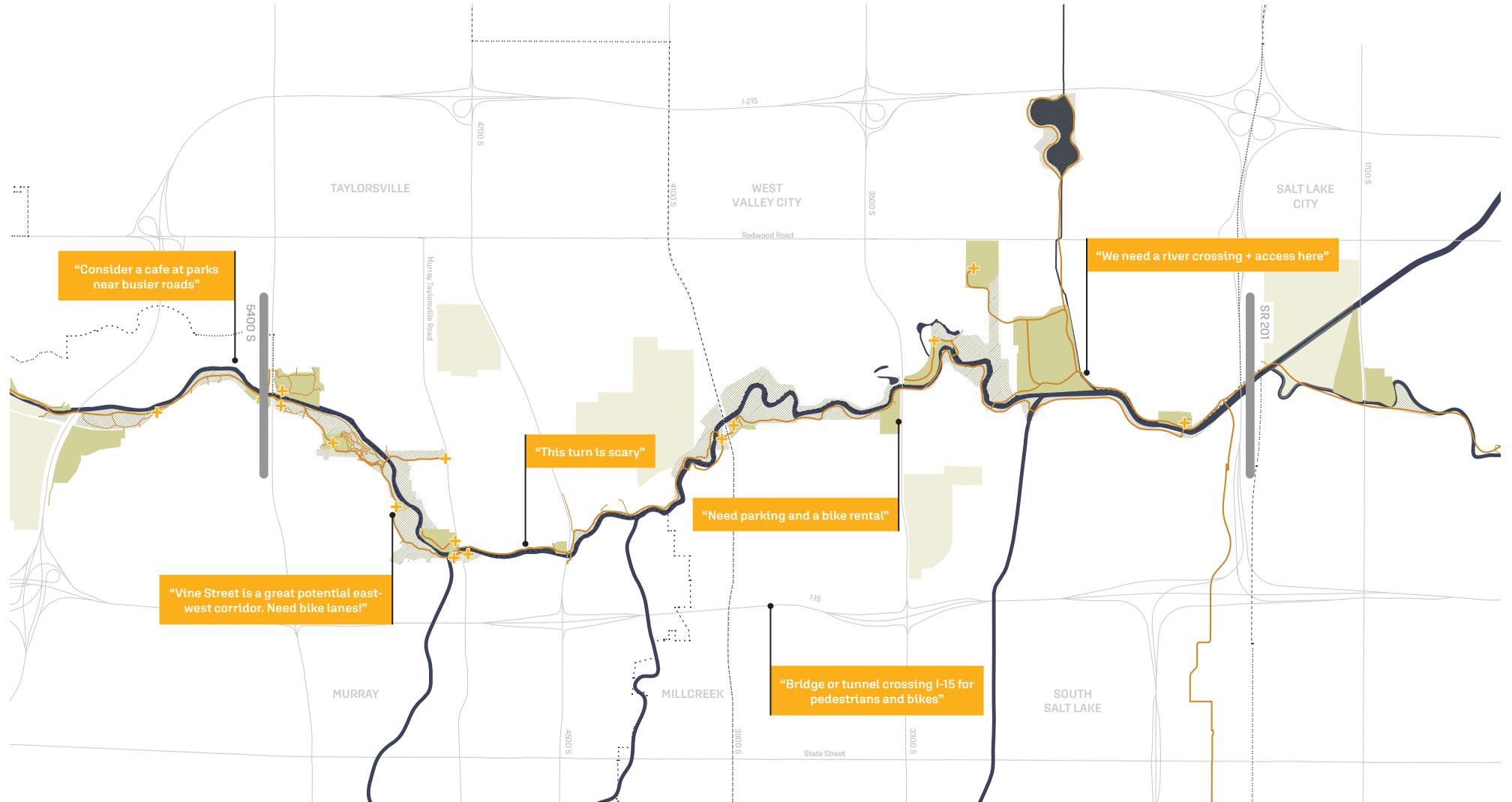
“Not usually, there aren’t many opportunities to cross back over”

“Yes, to follow the trail”

“Not usually, but I would like more bridges + interesting walking loops”

“Commuting - travel across valley”

### Connected— Place-Specific Feedback



- Parks
- Open Space
- Golf Course
- Trails
- Trailheads
- Major Roads
- Municipal Boundary



**Connected—Quotes from the Community**

Many residents rely on the JRT as a commuting route

“I just don’t know what is there + how to access it”

“More trail E-W connections to the river for safety and convenience - it feels like you can’t escape if you feel a threat”

“I ride my bike to work most days on the trail. I can take a more direct route to work but the trail and the nature there help keep my mental health on the up and up.”

“Biking along the river is fine, biking to the river is the hard part”

“Currently not enough connector bike trails and sidewalks preventing people of all ages and abilities free access to the parkway.”

“I avoid using the trails north of 1700s because of all the surface street crossings and find it easier to ride on the streets”

“My only issue was where the trail crossed over busy roads, and where underpasses were flooded or poorly-lit.”

“Our main concern is the speed of the e-bikes and bikes. A lot of families, dogs and walkers use the JRT and it’s becoming a dangerous mix.”

Engagement

## Workshop Feedback: Ecological

Community feedback emphasized the Jordan River's unique value as a natural and ecological asset. Residents deeply appreciate the river's wild and natural areas, which provide a peaceful escape from urban life, and highlighted its importance as a wildlife habitat, particularly for birds. Activities like birdwatching and experiencing the natural beauty of the river are highly valued. However, concerns about the poor water quality, pollution, and visible trash along the river were widespread, with many pointing out the negative impacts on both the environment and recreational enjoyment.

Suggestions for improvement focused on addressing water quality issues, such as reducing pollution from stormwater drainage and implementing strategies to restore the river's natural features. Restoring wetlands, removing invasive weeds, and expanding native vegetation were seen as critical for improving wildlife habitat and enhancing the river's ecological health. Community members also expressed a desire for consistent maintenance, with calls for trash clean-ups, additional waste receptacles, and better vegetation management.

**Together, this feedback underscores a collective aspiration to see the Jordan River flourish as a clean, thriving, and resilient ecosystem.**

### *Ecological—Primary Takeaways*

## **Keep the River Wild**

**Areas of the river which aren't overdeveloped and feel like an escape from the city are highly valued**

## **Mitigate Pollution**

**Water quality and the impact of pollution from stormwater drainage systems are major concerns**

## **Preserve Habitat**

**The river and its floodplain are seen as valuable habitat for birds, fish, and other wildlife**

**Ecological—Theme-Specific Questions**

**What would improve river health?**

“Less dumping, improve stormwater systems”

“Community trash clean ups ”

“More trash recepticals, restrooms or portapotties”

“Identify public lands to return wetlands along river ”

**Do you think of the river as natural? Why?**

“Yes, it doesn’t feel like you’re in the city when you’re on it”

“No - too much industry / change to environment”

“Definitely unnatural. Course has been modified by humans too much”

“Yes and no. The best areas have scrub and canopy coverage”

**What would make the river feel more natural?**

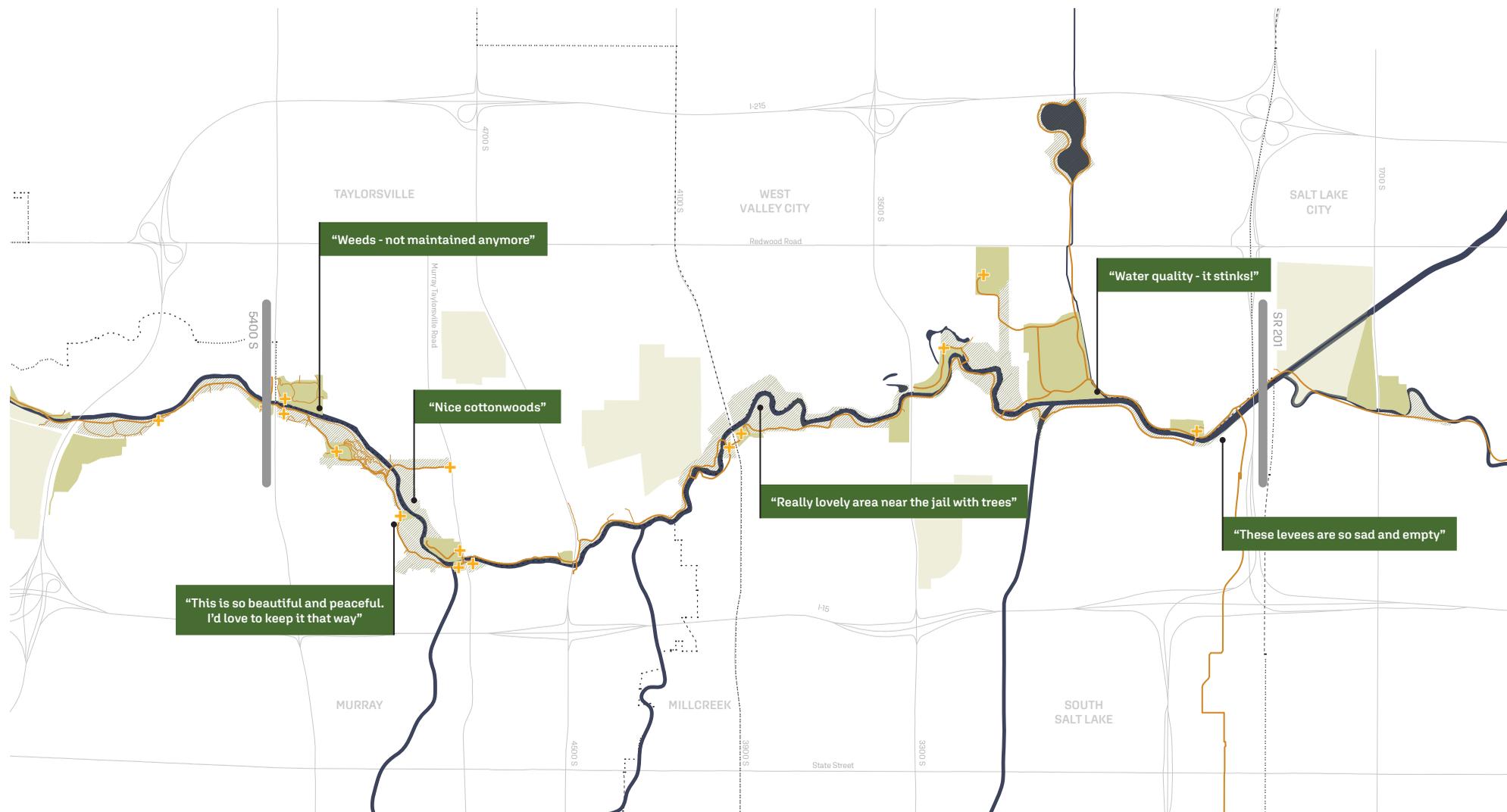
“More animals, less trash”

“Better water clarity + quality”

“Natural vegetation on banks and weed mitigation”

“Less channelization”

### Ecological— Place-Specific Feedback



- Parks
- Open Space
- Golf Course
- Trails
- Trailheads
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- Municipal Boundary



**Ecological—Quotes from the Community**

**BIRDWATCHING** is a popular activity along the JRT

“Some sections are lovely & clean & you feel very much in nature; others are dirty & industrial”

“I really love it but also wish it was better: cleaner, healthier, better utilized”

“We enjoy the deer and small animals, as well as the huge variety of birds, many that migrate along the Jordan River.”

“Drastically improve stormwater drainage systems. This would eliminate a major source of pollution and make volunteer clean-ups more effective”

“It smells even worse than it did 20 years ago. I don’t feel safe there with my family.”

“A wonderful place to encounter nature within the city limits”

“All the dirt trails, trees, wildlife and different spaces make it beautiful. I leave home early just to take the dirt trails and enjoy the scenery.”

“I think there are lots of opportunities for more “wild” spaces that allow for more natural recreational experiences incorporating unpaved trails off the main JRT trail”

Engagement

## Workshop Feedback: Active

Community feedback under the Active theme revealed a strong interest in improving recreational opportunities along the Jordan River, particularly related to biking, and water recreation. Biking emerged as one of the most popular activities, with many participants expressing a desire for more dedicated bike lanes to reduce conflicts with pedestrians. Walking, running, and dog walking were also frequently mentioned, highlighting the importance of maintaining and expanding multi-use trails. Water recreation, including kayaking, canoeing, and rowing, generated significant enthusiasm, with calls for improved paddling access points, rentals, and wayfinding. However, some participants voiced concerns about water quality due to pollution and algal blooms originating upstream.

Many respondents emphasized the need for riverside amenities to enhance their experience along the Jordan River Trail. Suggestions included cafes, restaurants, beer gardens, and gathering spaces that integrate recreation with opportunities for community connection. Participants also highlighted gaps in recreation offerings, such as disc golf, volleyball, and pickleball, and expressed a desire to target younger populations with educational and outdoor programming. At the same time, safety concerns were frequently mentioned, particularly in areas perceived as less family-friendly.

**These insights underscore the community's aspiration for a river corridor that balances active recreation, accessibility, and safety with the natural beauty of the site.**

### *Active—Primary Takeaways*

## Prioritize Biking

**Biking is a primary use of the JRT, followed by walking, running, and dog walking**

## Invest in Water Rec

**Strong desire for more water recreation facilities + rental programs – rowing, canoeing, kayaking**

## Introduce Riverside Amenities

**People want more amenities like cafes, restaurants, and beer gardens near the JRT**

**Active—Theme-Specific Questions**

**What do you do along the river?**

“Biking, walking, bird-watching, lounging”

“Lots of walking, hammocking, nature exploring”

“Bike, kayak, canoe, electric skate”

“Gather, create, write, walk, meditate”

**What would bring you to the river?**

“Bike lanes from public transit”

“More places to eat & drink & bike to”

“A disc golf course would!”

“Improved paddling access and wayfinding”

**What do you not want along the river?**

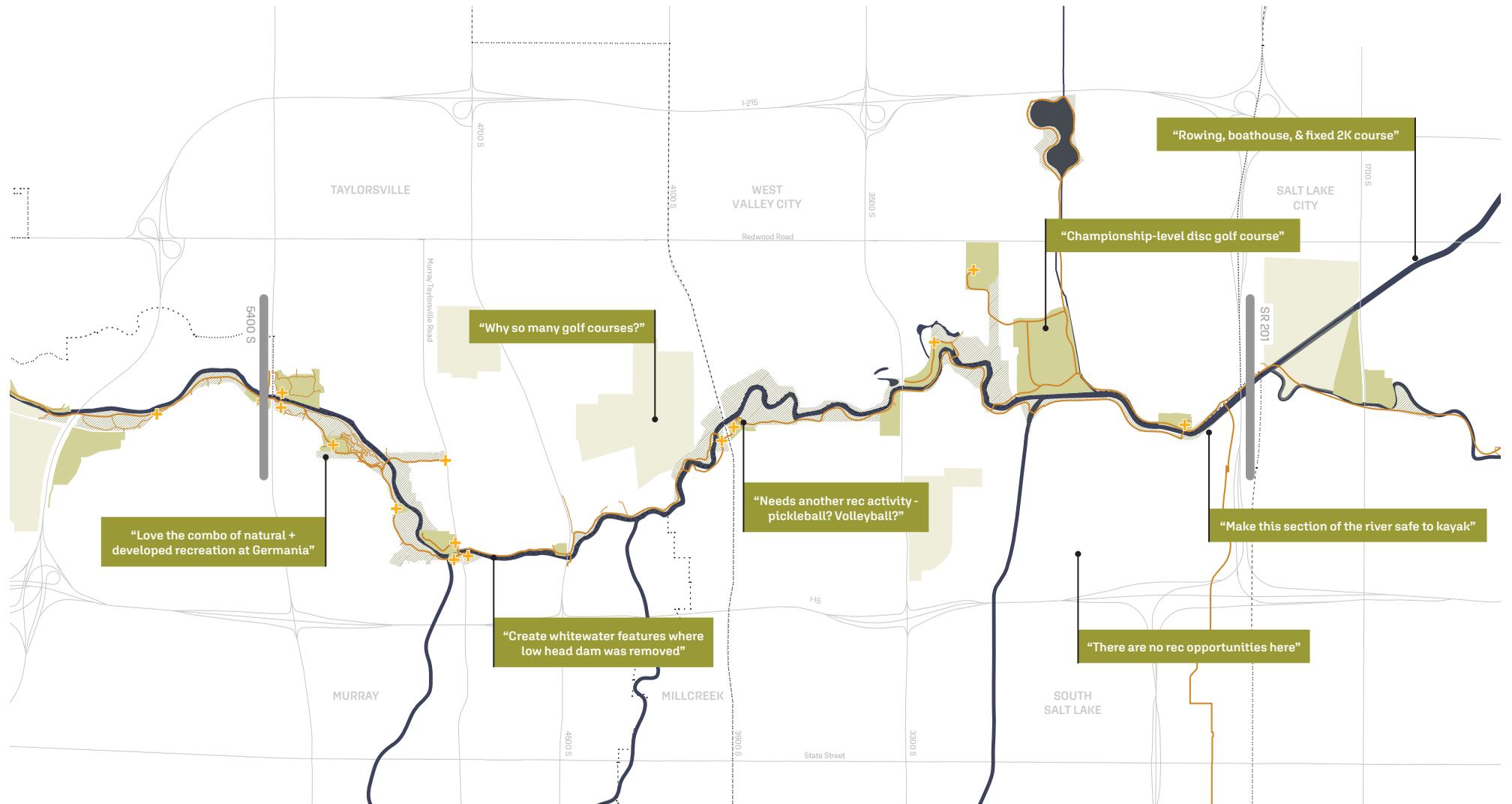
“Warehouses, industry, parking lots, concrete”

“I don’t want anymore golf courses”

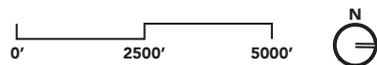
“Homeless shelters, services for people in crisis”

“I don’t want to bike past more drug deals”

**Active—  
Place-Specific Feedback**



- Parks
- Open Space
- Golf Course
- Trails
- Trailheads
- Major Roads
- Municipal Boundary



**Active—Quotes from the Community**

**BIKING is one of the most popular uses of the JRT**

“We use the JRT every day throughout the year (snow, rain, sun) to walk, run and bike.”

“I ride the trail with my kids these days frequently with stops at playgrounds, but only south of 3300 S. North of there does not feel safe for families.”

“I don’t own a bike - I would rent a bike if that was available”

“Target teen and young adult populations, esp those at risk to engage in outdoor recreation and education activities”

“I’m not sure I’d trust the river for recreation like boating or swimming - given the algal bloom problems in its source (Utah Lake)”

“I visit the Jordan River almost every day to go on walks a bike rides. I’ll also occasionally fish and kayak too.”

“I would love to have some more restaurant options along the JRT, the River to be cleaned up and usable for water recreation”

“It would be nice to have a separate bike trail as the bikes speed to fast for pedestrians.”

Engagement

## Workshop Feedback: Stewarded

Community feedback under the Active theme revealed a strong interest in improving recreational opportunities along the Jordan River, particularly related to biking, and water recreation. Biking emerged as one of the most popular activities, with many participants expressing a desire for more dedicated bike lanes to reduce conflicts with pedestrians. Walking, running, and dog walking were also frequently mentioned, highlighting the importance of maintaining and expanding multi-use trails. Water recreation, including kayaking, canoeing, and rowing, generated significant enthusiasm, with calls for improved paddling access points, rentals, and wayfinding. However, some participants voiced concerns about water quality due to pollution and algal blooms originating upstream.

Many respondents emphasized the need for riverside amenities to enhance their experience along the Jordan River Trail. Suggestions included cafes, restaurants, beer gardens, and gathering spaces that integrate recreation with opportunities for community connection. Participants also highlighted gaps in recreation offerings, such as disc golf, volleyball, and pickleball, and expressed a desire to target younger populations with educational and outdoor programming. At the same time, safety concerns were frequently mentioned, particularly in areas perceived as less family-friendly.

**These insights underscore the community's aspiration for a river corridor that balances active recreation, accessibility, and safety with the natural beauty of the site.**

### *Active—Primary Takeaways*

## Address Sources of Fear

**The presence of the unhoused population and drug use along the JRT are recurring concerns among community members**

## Keep the Trail Clean

**Garbage, dog poop, dirty water, and overgrown vegetation along the JRT make people uncomfortable**

## Add More Facilities

**Strong desire for restrooms, trash cans, lights, and bike repair stations along the JRT**

**Stewarded—Theme-Specific Questions**

**How does the river make you feel?**

“Relaxed, peaceful, proud of our city”

“Calm, like I can let go”

“All the feels - sad - glad - mad - happy & hopeful”

“At peace + rejuvenated ”

**What would change how you feel?**

“Working lights in low visibility areas on the trail + the upkeep ”

“If the riverbanks were shaded throughout”

“Visibility at underpasses”

“If it felt more safe”

**How should your city meet the river?**

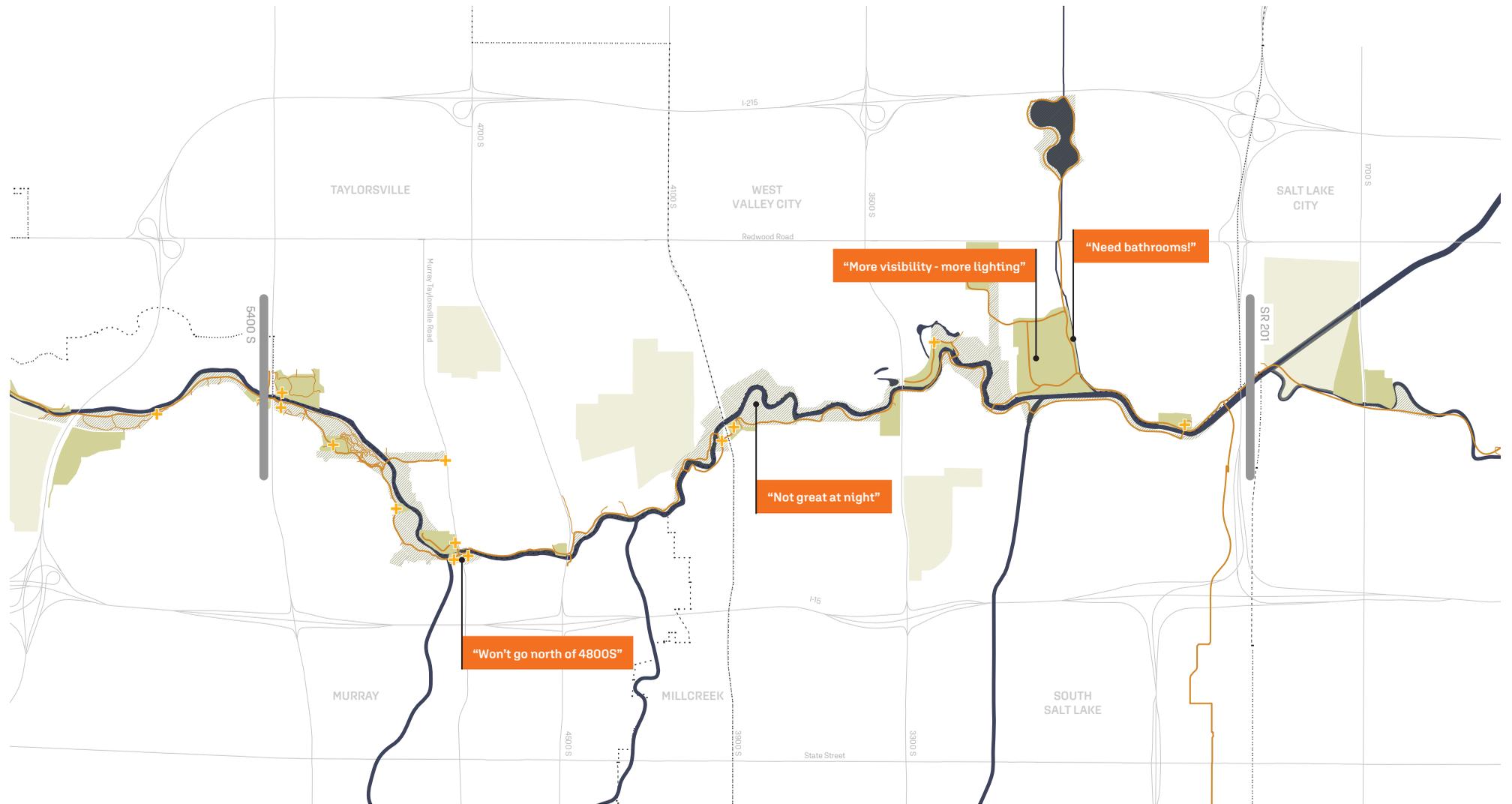
“Build in specific areas and let the in between be more wild”

“More businesses near the trail, especially food”

“Plenty of buffer zone to riparian zone ”

“Better connections to surrounding neighborhoods”

### Stewarded— Place-Specific Feedback



- Parks
- Open Space
- Golf Course
- Trails
- Trailheads
- Major Roads
- Municipal Boundary

**Stewarded—Quotes from the Community**

**SAFETY** was mentioned in over 100 responses

“If I knew what I was supposed to do along the river to care for it, I’d do it”

“It should be very family friendly so kids can grow up invested in the river and other shared spaces in their community”

“I don’t always feel safe because of the homeless people + trash”

“Gross and scary and still is in some areas but it has come a LONG way!”

“Nasty, full of sewage and pollution. Homeless encampments around made it feel unsafe for taking the kids biking.”

“Viewed as a dumping ground and some would even say it’s where our sewage goes. It is inaccessible with overgrowth of invasive plants like Russian olives”

“Sketchy in places, but beautiful in others. There are places I just don’t feel safe even in the daylight.”

“I don’t ever feel safe sending my kids (some are now teenagers) to a park nearby without me even though we live so close”

## Engagement

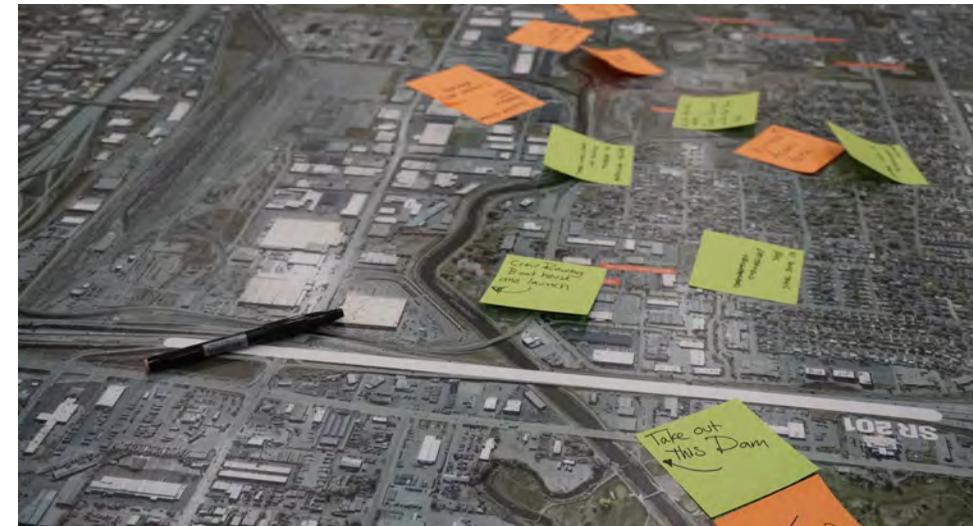
# Summary + Takeaways

The feedback gathered through pop-ups, workshops, and online engagement reveals a deep connection between the community and the Jordan River, paired with clear desires for improvement. Across all themes, one consistent message emerges: the Jordan River should be a place where everyone feels welcome, safe, and inspired. Addressing **safety concerns**, particularly related to cleanliness, lighting, and perceptions of crime, is paramount. Many participants expressed a desire for a trail and park system that fosters a family-friendly environment, free from fear, and accessible to all.

Participants emphasized the importance of both **preserving the river's natural beauty** and **enhancing recreation opportunities**. While many value the river as a wild and peaceful escape, others see untapped potential for activities like biking, kayaking, and paddleboarding. Suggestions ranged from **improving water recreation infrastructure**, such as kayak launches and wayfinding, to introducing **new riverside amenities** like cafes, gathering spaces, and event programming. Balancing recreation with conservation will be essential to ensure that the river serves as both a thriving ecosystem and a hub for community activity.

Connectivity was another major focus of the feedback. While the Jordan River Trail is a celebrated asset, significant barriers remain in terms of **access to the trail from surrounding neighborhoods**. Calls for expanded **east-west routes**, safer **pedestrian crossings**, and clearer signage illustrate the need to bridge gaps between neighborhoods and the river. Ensuring safe and seamless connections will allow more people to enjoy the river while fostering a sense of unity across the municipalities it spans.

Finally, the need for ongoing **stewardship and care** was a recurring theme. Residents voiced frustration with inconsistent maintenance, pollution, and invasive weeds but also showed enthusiasm for **community stewardship programs**. Many envisioned a future where the Jordan River is both cared for by local agencies and embraced by the community as a shared responsibility. Through cooperative management and active engagement, the river can thrive as a clean, vibrant, and well-loved space for generations to come.



PLACE-SPECIFIC STICKY NOTE COMMENTS

Summary—Primary Themes

CONNECTED	<p><b>Improve Ped + Bike Access</b></p>	<p><b>Expand East-West Connections</b></p>	<p><b>Increase Awareness</b></p>
ECOLOGICAL	<p><b>Keep the River Wild</b></p>	<p><b>Preserve Habitat</b></p>	<p><b>Mitigate Pollution</b></p>
ACTIVE	<p><b>Prioritize Biking</b></p>	<p><b>Introduce Riverside Amenities</b></p>	<p><b>Invest in Water Rec</b></p>
STEWARDED	<p><b>Keep the Trail Clean</b></p>	<p><b>Address Sources of Fear</b></p>	<p><b>Add More Facilities</b></p>

## Engagement Next Steps

As the Central Jordan River Reconnect project progresses, the next phases of work will focus on refining ideas and turning community input into actionable plans. Engagement will continue to be a cornerstone of this process, with new opportunities to participate and provide feedback as we develop alternatives and finalize the vision for the park.

What's Next?

- **Alternatives Phase (WINTER 2025):** Share your thoughts on alternative park designs, helping us identify what resonates most with the community.
- **Culmination Phase (SPRING 2025):** Review and comment on the final master plan and join us in envisioning the park's next steps toward implementation.

As our engagement strategy evolves, expect to see **interactive workshops, surveys, and digital tools** designed to reach an even wider audience. Your continued participation is essential to ensure the park reflects the diverse needs and values of the community.

Stay updated on the project's progress and future engagement opportunities by visiting our project website: <https://www.centraljordanreconnect.com>.





COMMUNITY MEMBERS AT THE PUBLIC WORKSHOP IN MILLCREEK



**SL** SALT LAKE  
COUNTY  
PARKS & RECREATION

port

with:  
Rio ASE  
Ecosystem Services  
PROS Consulting  
PSOMAS  
Horrocks Engineers  
Zions Public Finance