

Staff Report Memo



To: Mayor and Council / Planning Commission

From: Mike Johnson, CED Director

Date: July 20, 2022

Re: General Plan Joint Work Session Discussion

Introduction

The primary purpose of this joint work session discussion with the City Council and Planning Commission members is to provide a general overview of the ongoing General Plan process as staff continues to prepare a full draft for formal public input and consideration in the following months.

While the Plan will contain numerous chapters and elements, the focus of this work session will be on two critical ones: Land Use and Housing. Managing and properly planning for projected growth and its impact on Cottonwood Heights and developing long-term strategies to provide a variety of housing types in the city, will be of the utmost importance over the next 20 years (which is the visioning horizon for this plan).

Input and participation by the public and by city leadership is important prior to preparing a complete draft plan for consideration. Staff has utilized public input received to date to shape the recommendations in the enclosed staff report and partial work draft. The attached staff report provides a summary of what a General Plan is and its role in local government and planning, as well as helpful information to consider regarding land use and housing. The attached General Plan working draft is a partial draft (excludes land use, housing, and implementation) that will continue to be reviewed and updated throughout the entire General Plan process. It is important to stress that the attached materials are simply a well-researched starting point.

Most of the joint work session will be spent completing a guided district-by-district analysis of current and future land use designations, and discussion of priorities and recommendations by Council and Planning Commission members that will be used as important guidance in the development of a draft Plan for public review.

Attachments:

- General Plan Staff Report
- 70% Working Draft Plan



CITY COUNCIL & PLANNING COMMISSION JOINT WORK SESSION STAFF REPORT

Cottonwood Heights Tomorrow – General Plan Update
Meeting Date: July 20, 2022



Introduction

Cottonwood Heights Tomorrow is a comprehensive update to the Cottonwood Heights General Plan. A general plan is the overarching visioning document that a city uses to guide decisions about a variety of functions, such as land use, transportation, economic development, housing, etc. The general plan is a high-level plan, meaning it does not typically narrow in on site-specific design details, instead focusing on the scale of the entire city. A general plan is also not the law, but rather a tool to be used by City leaders as they make policy decisions about the future of Cottonwood Heights. General plans are long range plans that look 20-30 years into the future.

Existing Long-Range Plans

The City adopted its first general plan shortly after becoming a city in 2005. Since that time, the City has adopted additional long-range plans related to specific topics and areas. The general plan update seeks to incorporate the ideas of past plans into one consolidated, up-to-date document.

- [Cottonwood Heights General Plan](#) (2005)
- [Bicycle and Trails Master Plan](#) (2016)
- [Fort Union Area Master Plan](#) (2017)
- [Wasatch Boulevard Area Master Plan](#) (2019)
- [Affordable Housing Plan](#) (2019)
- [Bonneville Shoreline Trail Access Master Plan](#) (2020)
- [Interlocal Sustainability Action Plan](#) (2021)
- [Parks, Trails, and Open Space Master Plan](#) (2021)

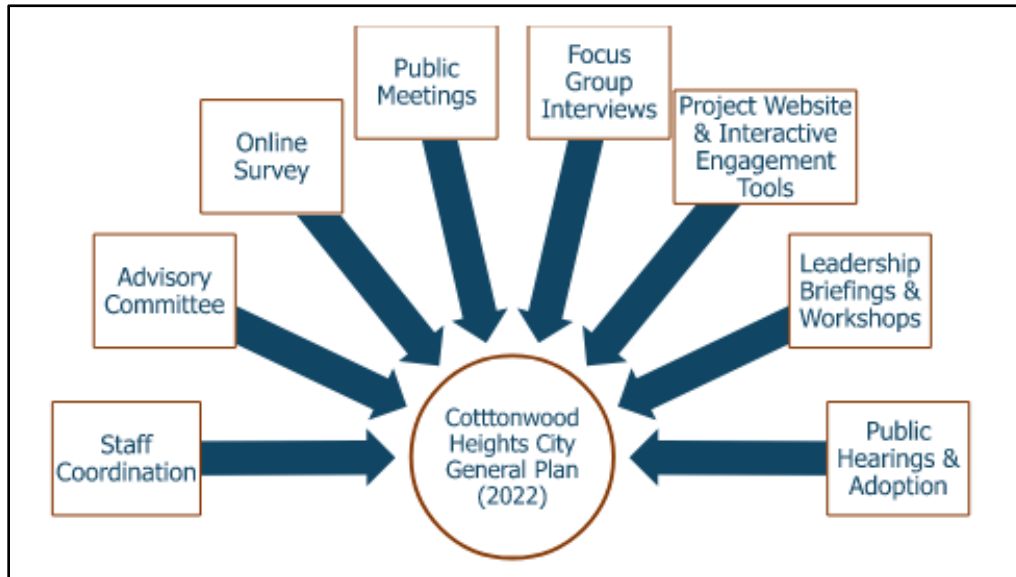
State of Utah Requirements

The state of Utah requires municipalities to [prepare a long-range general plan](#). State law also requires certain elements to be included in all new general plans:

- General plans are required to include a land use element, a transportation element, and a moderate-income housing element
- Cities must facilitate a reasonable opportunity for a variety of housing to meet the needs of people of various income levels
- Cities must analyze how the city will provide a realistic opportunity for the development of moderate-income housing within the next five years
- Cities must have a plan to implement moderate income housing strategies
- The state will review each city's affordable housing plan and may withhold transportation funding from cities that do not comply

Public Engagement

This general plan update has been informed by a community engagement process that provided a range of opportunities for members of the public to provide comments, review, and input. Residents will have opportunities to remain involved with the project as the process continues. More information about past public input can be found on the City website [here](#).



Project Overview

This general plan update is a partnership between elected and appointed officials, city staff, community members, and various project consultants, including Landmark Design, Township + Range, VODA, and GSBS. The proposed draft plan includes the following chapters, which will be updated based on the ongoing public engagement process:

1. Overview & Introduction
2. Land Use
3. Housing
4. Transportation
5. Economic Development
6. Parks & Recreation
7. Sustainability
8. Implementation & Action Plan

Planning for Future Growth

According to the [2020 US Census](#), the fastest growing state since the 2010 Census was Utah (up 18.4% to 3,271,616). The [University of Utah Kem C. Gardner Policy Institute](#) reports that 35% of new growth in Utah is due to net migration and 65% of new growth due to natural increase (births minus deaths).

An important question that this plan seeks to address is how Cottonwood Heights should respond to the rapid growth rate being experienced throughout the state and region. Cottonwood Heights is a mature community with limited growth and development opportunity. Less than 7% of the city is undeveloped, and most of that is concentrated in the 200-acre gravel pit that is situated at the base of Big Cottonwood Canyon.

Different Approaches to Growth

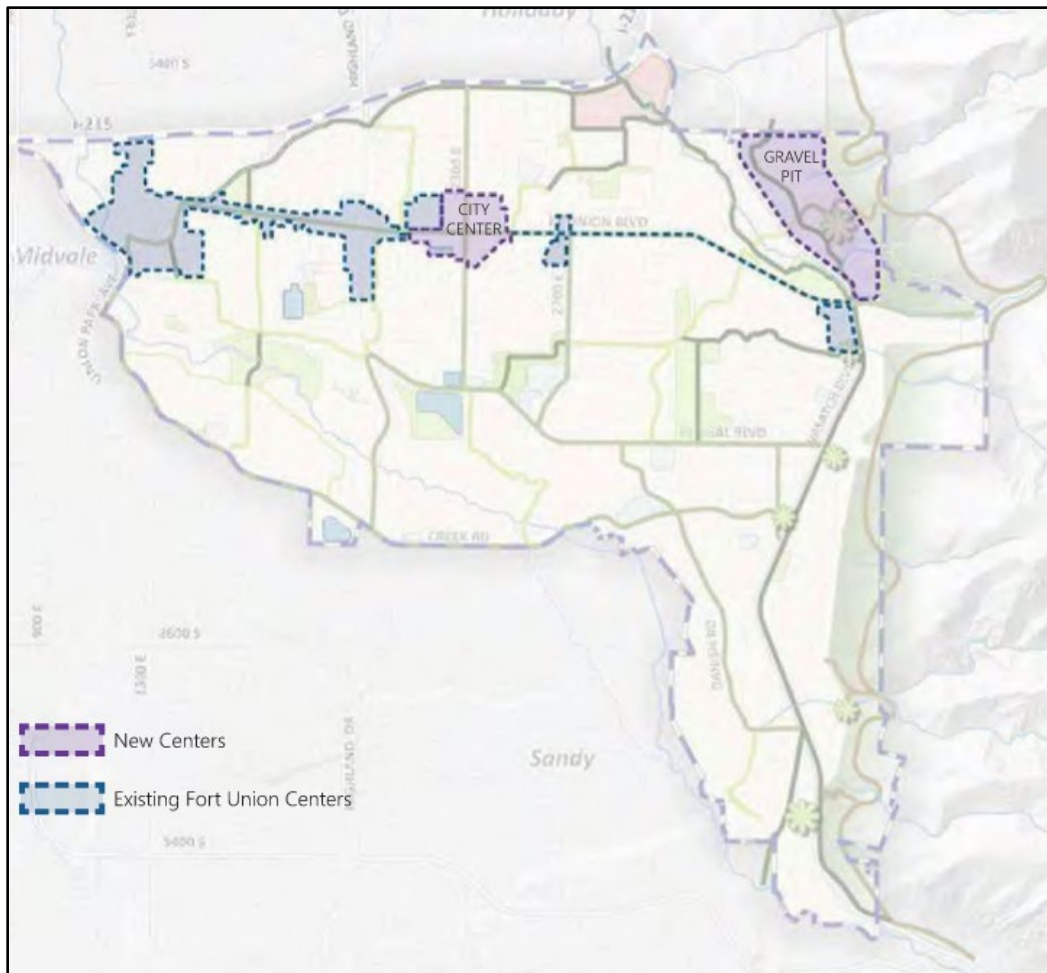
Cottonwood Heights is required by State law to have a plan for future growth and its impact on the community, but the specific strategies and methods for responding to that growth are up to the City to decide. Staff will facilitate a discussion during the joint meeting that focuses on different options and approaches to growth and housing types in Cottonwood Heights. Rather than focusing on detailed demographic projections or plans for specific projects throughout the city, the discussion will focus on broader questions. For example:

- Should the City plan to keep pace with regional growth? Should we look to the growth projected throughout Salt Lake County, or more closely try to match neighboring cities?
- Wasatch Front Regional Council (WFRC) is the metropolitan planning organization for the Wasatch Front region. WFRC provides professional demographic projections prepared using data from the Census, projections from the Kem C. Gardner Policy Institute, employment data from the Department of Workforce Services, land use data from the municipalities and the county, and traffic data from the regional Travel Demand Model. Should these projections be used as a baseline?
- Should the City utilize the recommendations of current policies and master plans to inform growth management and preferred housing types?

Growth Management Scenarios

While there are numerous ways to accommodate growth, this work session discussion will focus on two conceptual scenarios. The concepts in these scenarios were informed by the public feedback received so far. These scenarios will be discussed extensively in the work session.

Future Housing Focused at New Centers and Established Fort Union Centers

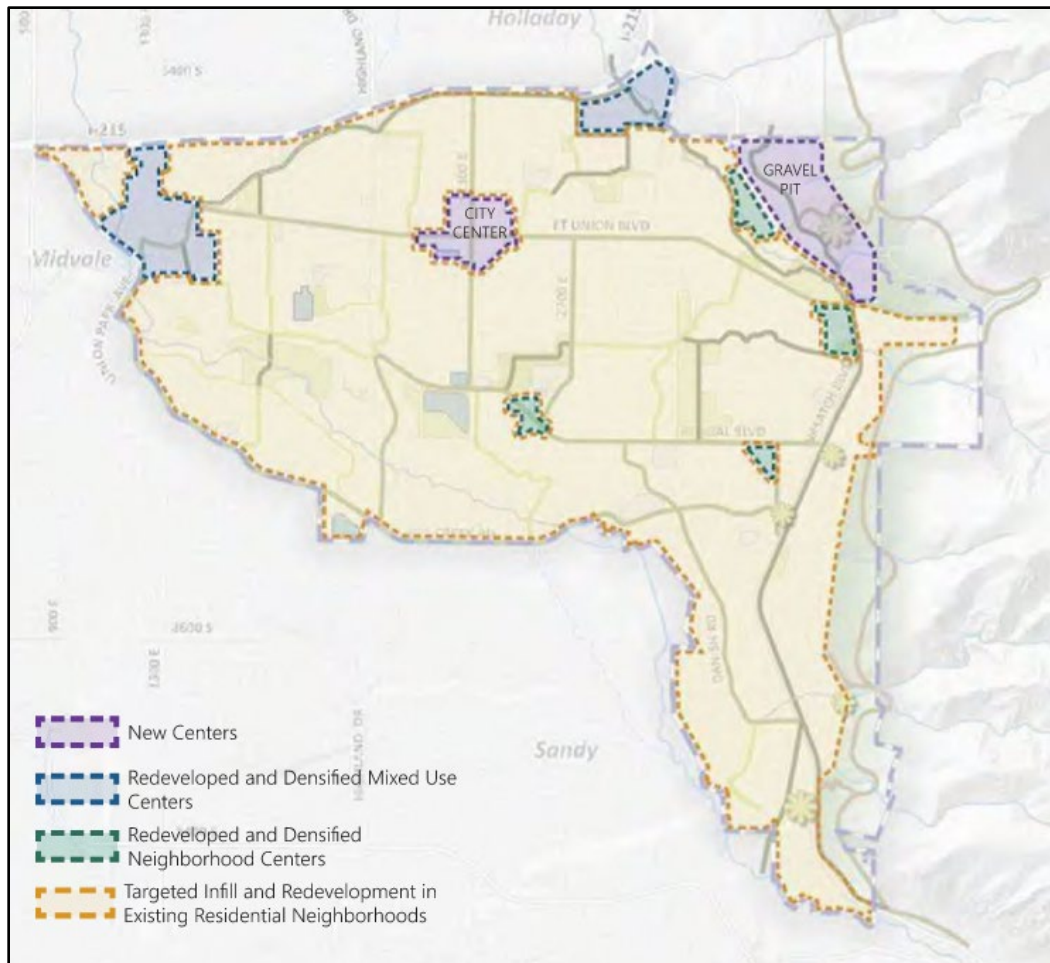


This scenario envisions the bulk of future housing to be focused at a new City Center at the Fort Union Blvd. & 2300 East intersection and in the gravel pit at the base of Big Cottonwood Canyon. The remaining growth will be located along Fort Union as part of mixed-use infill and redevelopment at existing commercial centers.

Some strengths and weaknesses to this approach include:

- The adopted Fort Union Main Street Corridor Area Plan was supported through extensive community participation by city residents, business interests, community leaders and city staff.
- The Gravel Pit is positioned to serve as a gateway into the community – first class development would set the tone and could serve as a distinguishing feature within the region.
- Most of the anticipated residential growth can be accommodated at the new City Center and Gravel Pit where density is already anticipated (does not envision changes directly within existing residential neighborhoods).
- The Fort Union area is already built out, increasing the challenge and cost of redevelopment.
- Increased congestion along Fort Union Boulevard and adjacent roadways.

Future Housing Focused at New Centers with Remaining Units Spread Throughout the City



In this scenario, the bulk of future housing projected for Cottonwood Heights in the long term will be focused at the City Center and Gravel Pit, with the remaining growth targeted at existing neighborhood centers and in existing residential neighborhoods citywide.

Some strengths and weaknesses to this approach include:

- Targeted policy and zoning changes to facilitate limited growth and change in established neighborhoods spreads the potential impact in an equitable manner.
- Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs) could provide additional residential units in a way that's distributed throughout the city, rather than focusing growth in limited higher density areas.
- Some established neighborhoods may be resistant to changes of use within or near established neighborhoods.
- Small scale, neighborhood services, retail and restaurants enhance walkability and reduces reliance on vehicles.
- New construction is difficult without demolition and reconstruction of established centers or eliminating surface parking for mix-use construction.

Housing

As required by Utah Code, Cottonwood Heights has prepared an Affordable Housing Plan, which is updated each year. As part of this plan, the City is required to identify at least three strategies to increase the availability of moderate-income housing within the community. The strategies that have been approved by the City Council are:

1. Allow for higher density or moderate-income residential development in commercial and mixed-use zones, commercial centers, or employment centers.
2. Implement zoning incentives for low to moderate income units on a long-term basis.
3. Utilize a moderate-income housing set aside from a community reinvestment agency, redevelopment agency, or community development and renewal agency.

The general plan update seeks to explore the existing housing conditions in Cottonwood Heights to align them to community goals and strategies which identify a pathway towards creating affordable, attainable, and diverse housing. Some of the strategies proposed in the draft plan include:

- Apply mixed use zoning to targeted areas in the city to allow for higher density residential development in commercial and mixed-use zones, as well as commercial or employment centers.
- Explore alternative housing opportunities such as ADUs as a strategy for increasing available units and affordability.
- Implement zoning incentives for low to moderate income units on a long-term basis.
- Improve housing attainability by offering a diversity of housing sizes and types for a range of household sizes, income, and household abilities.

Next Steps

City staff will use the feedback received from the joint work session and future community outreach to prepare a preferred scenario and a full draft plan for public review. After a full draft plan has been prepared, the City will hold an open house to receive additional comments before preparing a final draft of the plan. The final draft must be reviewed and recommended by the Planning Commission and adopted by a majority vote of the City Council.