

ENVISION CACHE VALLEY

For six generations, members of the Israelsen family have lived in Cache Valley. We have always considered this beautiful valley a great place to live. We enjoy the changing of the seasons, the diversity of scenery, the goodness of the people, and exceptional educational and civic opportunities. Our family is not unique with this assessment. Most Cache Valley residents say this is the best place they have ever lived and more people want what we have. Our quality of life is legendary and the secrets of this area have been discovered. Our population will continue to grow. No one can be blamed for wanting to live in Cache Valley.

Planners tell us that growth and change within Cache Valley will accelerate. The combination of natural increase (births minus deaths) and net migration (new move in's minus move out's) will almost double our population by 2040. We will see as much change in the next 30 years as we have since the Mormon pioneers came in the mid 1800's. Our distinct demographic profile of a younger population, larger families, and longer life spans, suggest the need for careful and thoughtful planning. Fortunately, such a process is underway.

A rather diverse group of community leaders have been meeting in recent weeks to launch a strategic planning process called "Envision Cache Valley". The Fact Sheet refers to a once-in-a-generation opportunity to explore growth-related issues and think together about what we want Cache Valley to be like in the future. The entire process is designed to reflect the values and vision of the people, but unless we hear your voices the process cannot be productive.

A public kick off of Envision Cache Valley will be held at the Logan Tabernacle on Wednesday, February 25th, beginning at 7 p.m. We think the program that evening will be fun and informative and will provide citizens the opportunity to learn about the process and to have questions answered. A series of public workshops have also been planned throughout the entire Valley where citizens can explore long-term possibilities. The workshops will begin at 6 p.m. and last approximately 2 ½ hours. Since many agricultural producers have evening chores the committee scheduled a special 2 p.m. workshop for us at the Robinson Building in Preston. We will meet there on Tuesday, March 3rd. We sincerely hope your schedules will allow you to be a participant. Decisions are always made by those who show up.

Agriculture continues to make a significant contribution to the economic and aesthetic character of this valley. Farmers own and operate much of the land and still have legal right to much of the water. Recent Census figures show that Cache Valley agriculture infused almost \$215 million into our local economy, just from direct cash receipts at the farm gate. That figure becomes even more impressive when one considers the multiplied economic activity generated by all sectors that depend on agriculture. A multitude of jobs, in all economic sectors, depend on production agriculture for their existence. Dollars of revenue raised, compared to services rendered, is another economic benefit agriculture brings to Cache Valley. Studies show that working open lands demand only 38 cents in services for each \$1.00 collected in taxes. Cache Valley agriculture is exceptionally diverse and will continue to generate strong revenue, provide steady jobs and be a stabilizing force in our Valley's economy if planners and residents encourage and support our well established agricultural industry.

That is not to suggest that agriculture is all important and that other industries are not essential to our economic success and quality of life. Our diversity and interdependence is a reality that needs to be celebrated. Difficulties arise when we forget the contribution each segment makes to our pleasant way of living. As we reach for the future we would be wise to appreciate and preserve the past as best we can, yet look forward with optimism and faith, knowing that things can never be as they were. In our efforts to press forward we need not recklessly sacrifice the very things that make us what we are. Surely, we can harness these unique qualities to shape a bright future for those who follow.

If county and municipal leaders adopt the recommendations that evolve from Envision Cache Valley (and they probably will) it will be nearly impossible to change course. Implementation committees will likely work to move decisions forward as identified by these workshops and folks who stood on the sidelines will wonder what happened. This is a unique opportunity for all citizens to come together and make recommendations that will affect current and future generations. Decisions are always made by those who show up and actively contribute. Participants will appreciate the fact that this process is grass roots, not top-down. I am convinced this opportunity must be a priority to all citizens.

I am grateful for the fantastic legacy my ancestors and their contemporaries left for me and my generation. Hopefully, we will be wise enough to pass the special characteristics that define Cache Valley onto future generations. Additional details can be found at <http://www.envisioncachevalley.com>.