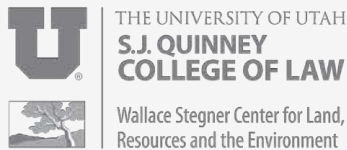


BOOM TOWN

AMENITY MIGRATION IN THE RURAL WEST
& THE RISE OF THE “ZOOM TOWN”

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- OCT. 29:** **EXPECTATIONS:** CURRENT OUTLOOKS ON AMENITY MIGRATION IN THE INTERMOUNTAIN WEST
- NOV. 12:** **ADAPTATIONS:** COMMUNITY PERSPECTIVES ON AMENITY MIGRATION
- NOV. 19:** **TRANSFORMATIONS:** A TALE OF TWO TOWNS: THE SUCCESSFUL COMMUNITIES APPROACH IN ACTION IN GARDINER AND DEER LODGE, MT
- DEC. 3:** **INNOVATIONS:** COMMUNITY PEER EXCHANGE

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GATEWAY AND
NATURAL AMENITY
REGION INITIATIVE

GNARLY CHALLENGES: GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT IN WESTERN GATEWAY AND NATURAL AMENITY REGIONS

Danya Rumore, Ph.D.

GNAR Initiative Amenity Migration Series

October 15, 2020



**GATEWAY AND
NATURAL AMENITY
REGION INITIATIVE**





THE UNIVERSITY OF UTAH
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Wallace Stegner Center for Land,
Resources and the Environment



ENVIRONMENTAL DISPUTE RESOLUTION PROGRAM

Promotes a culture of collaboration around complex environmental, natural resource, and public policy issues throughout the mountain west through:

- Capacity building
- Public education
- Collaborative process design and facilitation assistance
- Academic instruction
- Research and analysis

<https://law.utah.edu/projects/edr/>



*Gateway
and natural
amenity
region
(GNAR)*

A region that surrounds state or national parks, other major public lands, scenic rivers or lakes, or is otherwise rich in natural amenities



Park City, UT

Two National Parks
One Destination



MOAB

Where Adventure Begins

Aspen, CO



Telluride, CO



Jackson, WY



Tahoe, CA



Image source: Tahoe.com





Escalante, UT



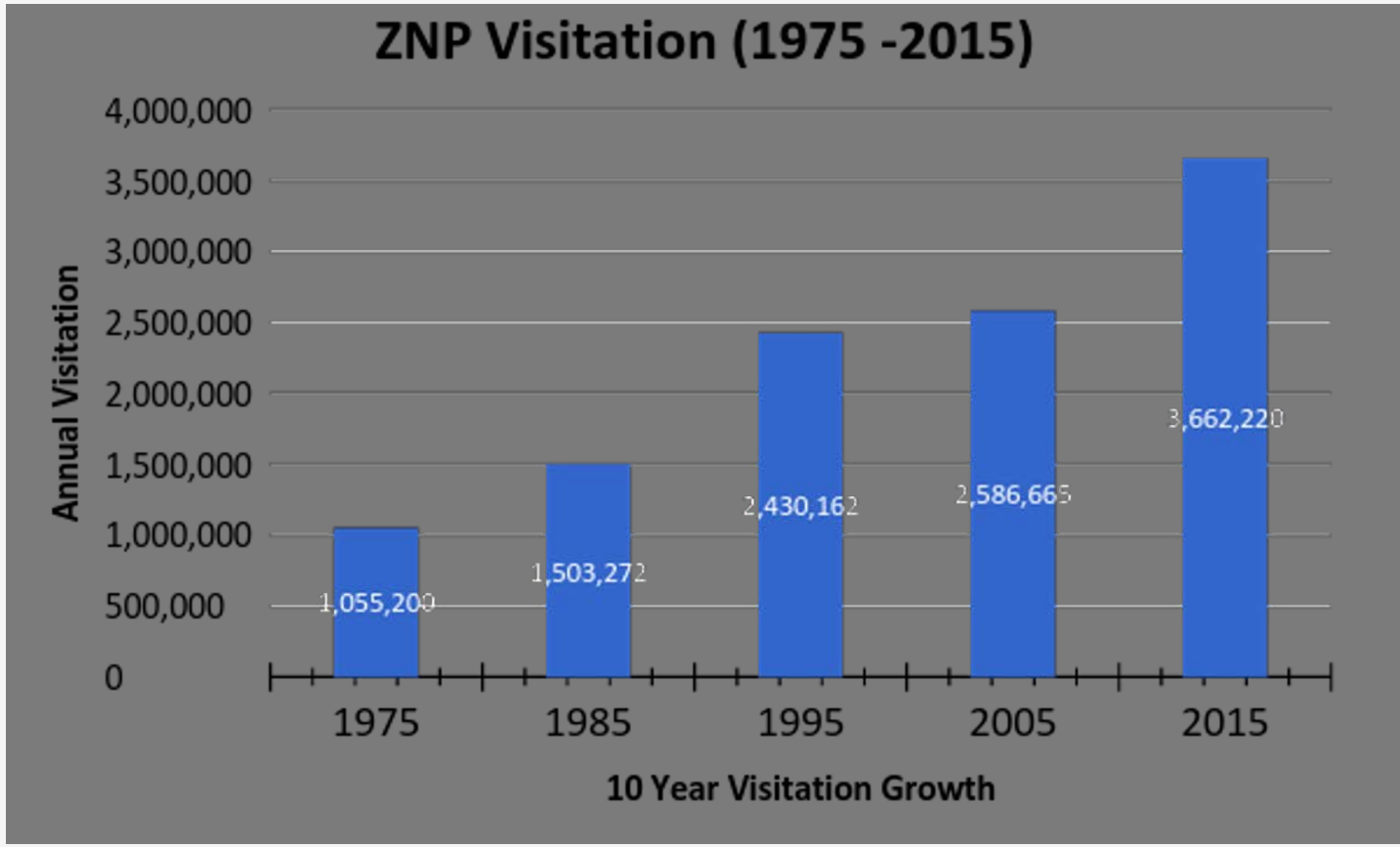
Torrey and Teasdale, UT

Question for the audience:

What GNARs or GNAR communities do you spend time in or care about?

Please make sure your chat is going to all panelists and attendees for all questions





**4.5 million
visitors in
2017**

*An opportunity
for the Zion
region...*

*...and a
challenge*



The mighty wa (Utah's nationa

By Amy Joi O'Donoghue [@amyjoi16](#)
Published: April 15, 2016 2:55 p.m.

1 of 14



Park Officials I Another Bustli Glacier

Tiny Utah town's stunning canyon draws thousands of hikers — and a potential federal buyer

By **BRIAN MAFFLY** AND **NATE CARLISLE** | The Salt Lake Tribune
First Published Jul 11 2016 08:00AM - Last Updated Jul 11 2016 03:25 pm

Superintendent: Glacier Pa
crowds again in 2016
BY **DILLON TABISH** // MAR 3, 2016 // OUT



SHOW CAPTION



(Steve Griffin / The Salt Lake Tribune) Hikers climb a ladder made from a tree at the first falls of the Kanarrville Falls hike in Kanarrville Wednesday July 6, 2016.

RELATED STORIES:

- **Glacier Park Visitation Record Settles at 2.36 Million**
- **Storylines That Could Define 2016**
- **Flathead Leads State in Visitor Spending**

Outdoor recreation » As hiker traffic overwhelms tiny Kanarrville, BLM seeks to buy private land at canyon's mouth.



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waiting to enter the popular park
ing. The traffic backed up all the
dreds of cars lined both sides of t

Kanarrville • This tiny Iron County town has a big problem that some rural Utah communities would kill for. Thousands of visitors come here, drawn to an increasingly popular [day hike to a slot canyon](#) and waterfalls up Kanarra Creek. But other than a \$10-a-car parking area, an RV park and kids' lemonade stands, Kanarrville lacks opportunities to tap these visitors' wallets. The trailhead is easily accessible off Interstate 15 south of Cedar City on Zion National Park's northern boundary. Yet there are no groceries, restaurants, gas stations or shops here.

*Big city problems
in small rural
towns and
regions...*

*and some unique
challenges*

- Affordability and availability of housing
 - Traffic/congestion/parking
 - Insufficient or overwhelmed infrastructure and public services
 - Employee attraction/retention
 - Environmental and natural amenity impacts
 - Economic vulnerability and need for diversification
 - Loss of community character
 - Questions about the role of tourism and tourism marketing
 - Reduced quality of visitor experience
 - Climate change vulnerability/adaptation
 - Unique social-cultural-political dynamics
 - Challenging local-regional-state-federal relationships
- 

*2018 Study:
Planning and
development
challenges in
western GNAR
communities*

- How pervasive are these issues across the western GNAR communities?
- How are GNAR communities experiencing and dealing with these issues?

*2018 Study:
Planning and
development
challenges in
western GNAR
communities*

- Database of western GNAR communities
- Interviews with public officials in 25 western GNAR communities
- Survey of public officials across all western GNAR communities

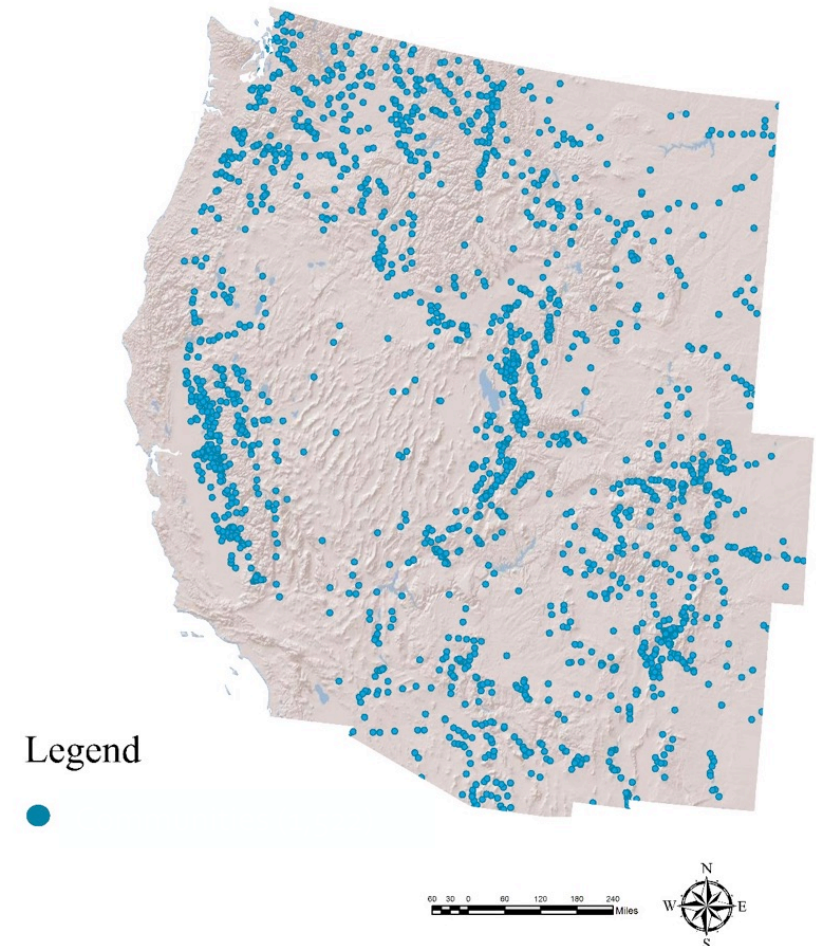
What defines a GNAR community?

- Small town
 - 150-25,000 people
- Proximity to natural amenities
 - Within 10 miles of a national park, state park, national forest, lake, scenic river, etc.,
- Not in an urbanized area
 - Further than 15 miles from an urbanized area by road

GNAR community database

- 1,522 GNAR communities
 - 821 incorporated cities
 - 701 Census designated places
- 30.6% of Mountain West communities
- 61.1% of “small” Mountain West communities

Final City Selection



*Interviews
with public
officials in a
range of
GNAR
communities*

- 30 public officials (planners, town managers, mayors, etc.) in 25 GNAR communities
- Communities were selected to represent diversity of:
 - States
 - Populations
 - Levels of development
 - Amenity types
- 2 individuals representing regional organizations working with GNAR communities

Regional survey

Survey was sent out to 1,278 GNAR community public officials

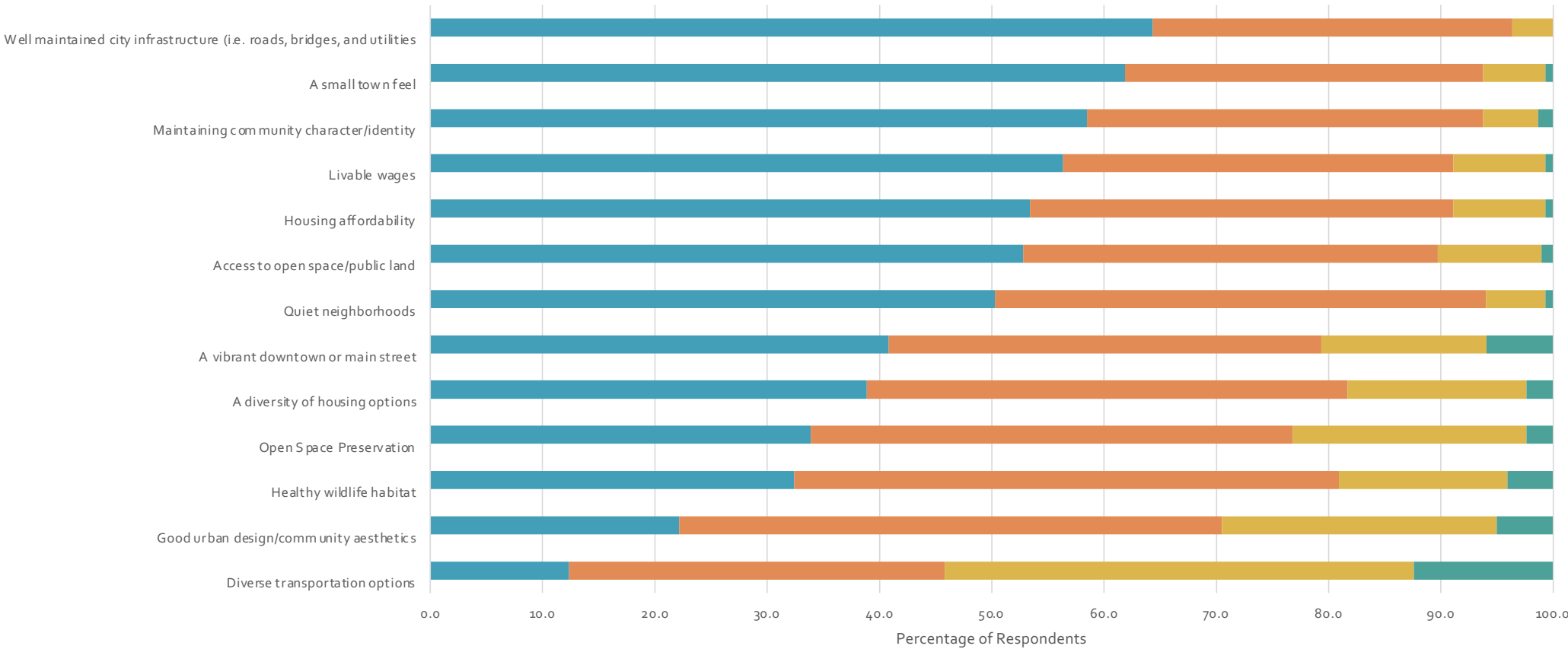
- Completed by 333 public officials in **264** communities
 - Average population of represented communities was **4,895**

As of 2018, these communities:

- Were growing (**8.2%** average growth rate between 2013-2018)
 - Had an average per capita income of **\$27,206**
 - Rural west average was **\$26,141**
 - Had an average rent of **\$880**
 - Rural west average was **\$789**
 - Were seeing higher than the national average rates of housing unit and rental unit growth
 - Were becoming more popular places to visit:
 - **82%** of respondents said the number of tourists visiting their communities increased in the last 10 years
 - **42%** said this increase was substantial
-

Important community characteristics

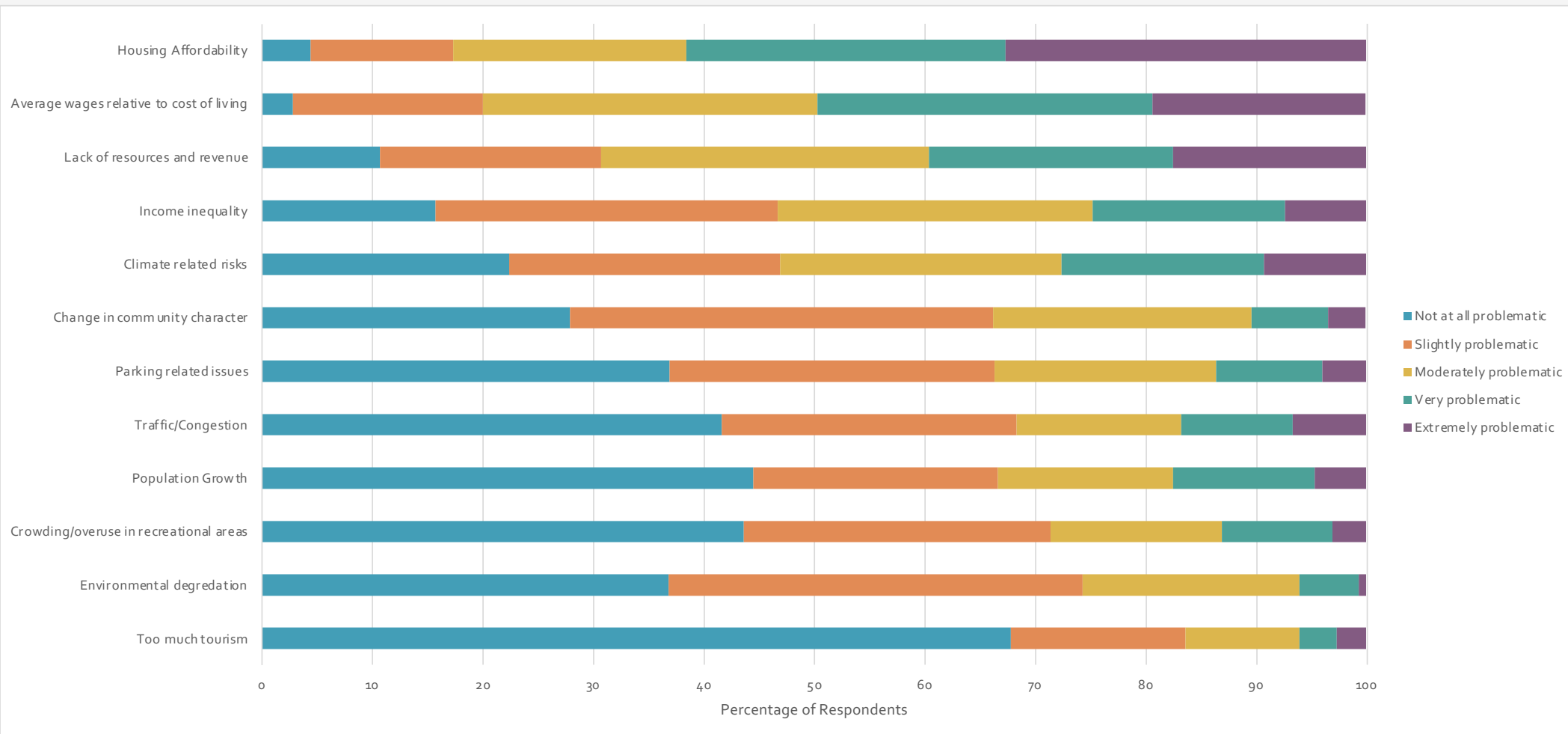
■ Important for the entire community
 ■ Important for more than half of the community
 ■ Important for less than half of the community
 ■ Not important



Questions for the audience:

How important is a small-town feel for the GNAR communities you're familiar with?

Key community challenges



Questions for the audience:

What are a few key challenges in the GNAR communities you are familiar with?

Housing

- 82.7% of survey respondents said that **housing affordability is moderately to extremely problematic** for their community
 - 32.7% said it is extremely problematic
 - 26 interviewees representing 24 of the 25 communities in our interviewee sample identified housing affordability as a **key issue** for their community
 - 49% of survey respondents said their community is **not doing enough** to address housing affordability
 - Only 8% said their community is **definitely doing enough** to address housing affordability
-

*Growth,
tourism,
and
development*

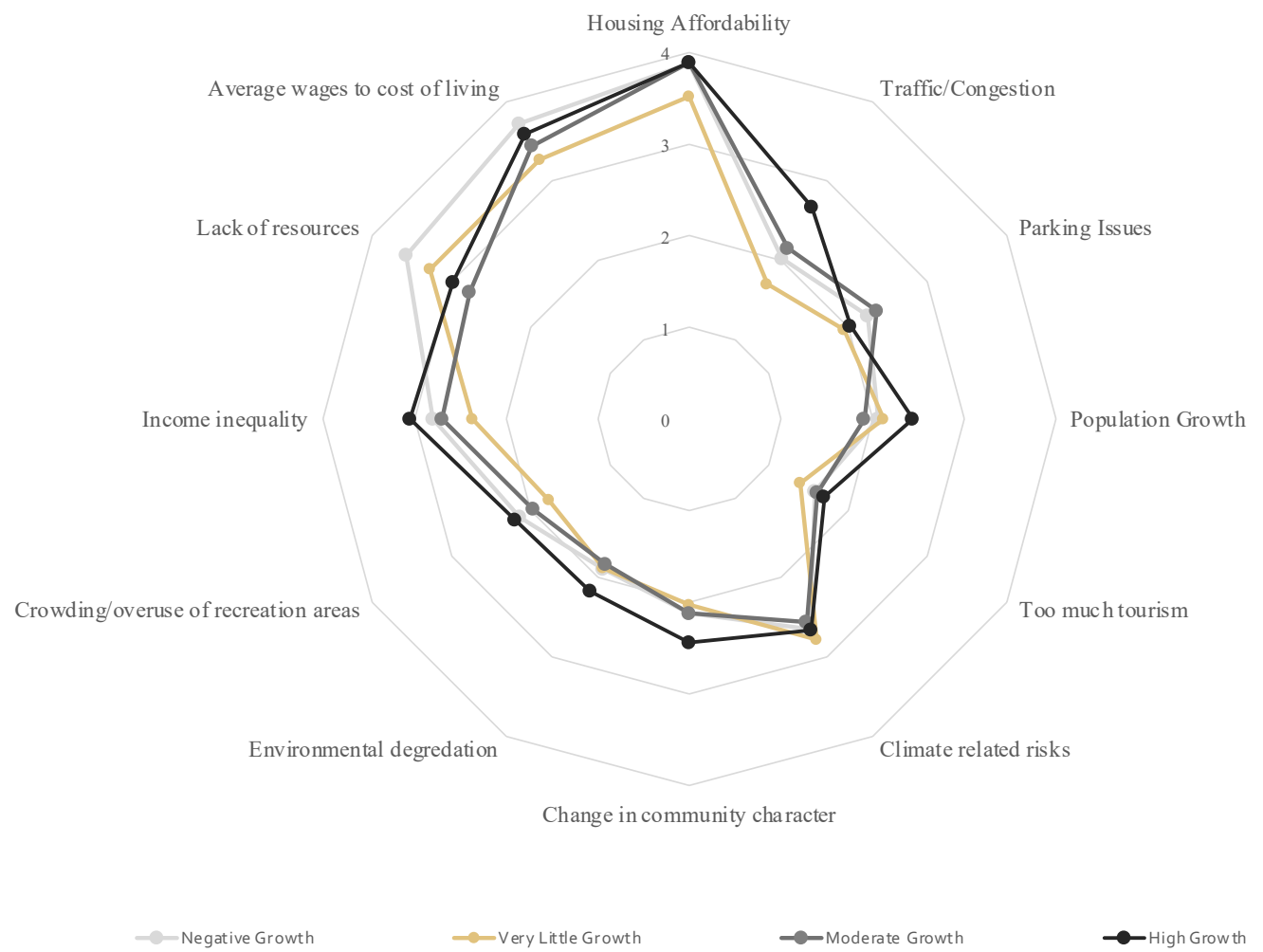
Observation tells us that:

- **Certain issues seem to come to the fore as GNAR communities develop**
 - Communities often quickly go from not being concerned about short-term rentals to being quite concerned, sometimes due to acute shortages of long-term rental stock
 - Tensions between residents and tourists seem to appear once tourism reaches a certain level – or if the community attracts certain kinds of tourists
 - Many of these communities experience tensions between “old timers” and “newcomers”
- **Certain kinds of GNAR communities tend to have certain kinds of issues (and don’t have other issues)**
 - Geographic constraints may exacerbate housing issues, but also tend to prevent concerns about sprawl
 - Transportation issues are a predominant concern in some, but not all, highly developed GNAR communities—e.g., Springdale and Moab, UT

*Growth,
tourism,
and
development*

- 34% of survey respondents said that **growth** is moderately to extremely problematic for their community
 - In contrast, only 16% of respondents said that **too much tourism** is moderately to extremely problematic
- 30.7% said **tensions between long-time residents and recent residents** is a moderate to extreme issue
 - Less than 20% said **tensions between residents and tourists** is a moderate to extreme issue

Relationship between growth rate and reported severity of challenges



*Growth,
tourism,
and
development*

Growth appears to be **as much a or more threat** to community character and livability as increasing tourism.

However, **tourism development still presents challenges.**

- Again, 16% of survey respondents said that too much tourism was moderately to extremely problematic for their communities
- 4% said it is extremely problematic

“**[Tourism] is a love/hate relationship.** Everyone realizes to some degree that we’re reliant on it, but that doesn’t stop people from hating tourists. We don’t really have the infrastructure in place to deal with high-demand weekends, so in those times it feels like we’re being bombarded.”

“ I think **[tourism] is the double-edged sword.** We need the tourism dollars, but at the same time, during the peak days, we do get complaints about the tourists. There’s the frustration with tourists who are renting out single-family homes as though they were hotels. That’s a new trend. There’s the frustration that they’re loud, obnoxious. They do what they want and it’s impacting the neighbors and other residents.”

*Growth,
tourism,
and
development*

A lot of GNAR communities say they don't want to be like:

- Vail, Aspen, or Breckenridge, CO
- Jackson, WY
- Moab, UT

Or to be:

- "A tourist trap"
- A big city
 - Many say they want to maintain their "small town-ness"

On the other hand, some are concerned about becoming:

- "An abandoned small town"

Questions for the audience:

What are your reactions to these findings about growth, tourism, and development in GNAR communities?

*A need for
proactive
planning,
additional
capacity,
and
planning
support*

Common themes from interviews:

- Importance of proactive planning
- Importance of planning at a regional scale
- Challenges associated with local resistance to planning and local political tensions
- Feeling overwhelmed and/or in need of additional resources and capacity
 - 40% of respondents said lack of resources or revenue is very or extremely problematic for their community
 - Another 30% said it is moderately problematic
 - “We don’t have the staff capacity to deal with major crises.”

“We’re in this **big growth period, but we didn’t have design guidelines in place**.... From a municipal standpoint, **we need to get ahead of the curve** so we can prepare for what’s coming, but we need the time and staff and resources in order to do that.”

“The way that the city is **trying to be forward-thinking in planning isn’t really welcome**. [County] residents and commissioners are significantly more conservative than city residents, not just in a partisan political sense but in their attitude toward any change at all.”

*Help
wanted!*

GNAR communities want assistance with their planning, development, and sustainability issues

- Strong interest in:
 - Model ordinances
 - White papers on key topics
 - Case studies and lessons learned
 - Best practice guidelines for GNAR communities
 - Help with charrettes and design workshops
 - Models for regional collaboration
 - Information about different funding options
 - Forums (in person, webinars, etc.) for peer-to-peer learning and sharing innovative ideas
 - 95% say an online toolkit to support planning in GNAR communities would be helpful
-

Questions for the audience:

What are your reactions to these findings about proactive planning, additional capacity, and planning support?

Questions for the audience:


What tools, resources, and capacity do you think would be most helpful for GNAR communities to help them plan proactively and at a regional scale?

*“Big city
innovations
in small
towns” and
learning
from each
other*

GNAR communities are innovating and experimenting

- “Pop-up” intersection treatments and experimental traffic calming measures
- E-bike share programs
- Tiny house ordinances

And they want to learn from each other and share their lessons learned



Questions for the audience:

What innovative things have you seen
GNAR communities try?

*Information on specific communities and efforts are
welcome so we can follow up to get more information!*

Enter COVID-tastrophe...



NEWS DESK

WHY AN IDAHO SKI DESTINATION HAS ONE OF THE HIGHEST COVID-19 INFECTION RATES IN THE NATION

By Michael Ames

April 3, 2020





FEATURED ARTICLES

CAN TOURIST TOWNS LIKE MOAB SURVIVE THE CORONAVIRUS?

by Jon Du Pre / April 27, 2020 /  4.2k /  13 comments

"I immediately started sobbing," says Ariel Atkins, expressing how she was overcome with emotion when she got the news that the coronavirus pandemic was forcing her family business to close.

Robert Gehrke: Utah towns near national parks want tourists to visit, but hope they do so responsibly



(Photo courtesy Zion National Park) In this photo posted to the Zion National Park Facebook page on March 25, 2020, hikers stand and walk along a trail in the park. Rangers have encouraged visitors to practice social distancing to reduce coronavirus infections.



By Robert Gehrke • Published: 2 days ago
Updated: 2 days ago

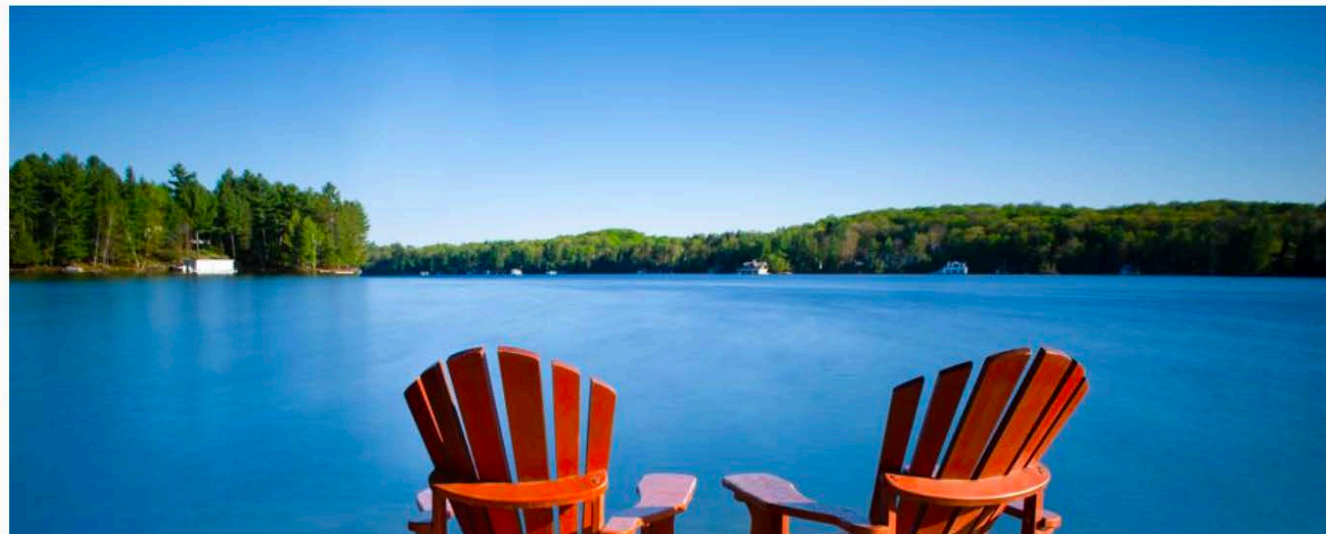
5,674 views | Sep 15, 2020, 08:10am EDT

Zoom Towns: Why Your Last Vacation Getaway May Be Your Next Home



Irene S. Levine Contributor 

Travel



*COVID-19 has
illuminated
GNAR
community
vulnerabilities*

Public health vulnerabilities

- Transient populations
 - Residents
 - Second-home owners
 - Visitors
 - Workers
- Limited health care facilities and resources

Economic vulnerabilities

- Reliance on tourism and service industries
- Lack of economic diversification

*...and maybe
some
opportunities?*

Pressure to diversify economies

Influx of remote workers and amenity migrants

Planning for resilience

*In every challenge
there is an
opportunity...and in
every opportunity
there is a challenge*

Are GNAR communities ready for a major wave of amenity migration?

Is amenity migration the new “double-edged sword” and “love/hate relationship”?

Or even a Faustian bargain?

What can GNARs do to capitalize on the opportunities of amenity migration without losing the things that make them special?

Questions for the audience:

What key **challenges** do you think COVID-19 presents for GNAR communities?

Questions for the audience:

What key **opportunities** do you think COVID-19 presents for GNAR communities?

Questions for the audience:

What do you think GNAR communities need (or need to do) in order to effectively respond to COVID-19 related challenges and opportunities?



GATEWAY AND
NATURAL AMENITY
REGION INITIATIVE

A hub connecting people and resources to help GNAR communities and the regions around them thrive and protect the things that make them special

Research

- What are the challenges?
- What are the opportunities?
- What are communities doing to prepare and respond? And what help do they need?

Education

- Getting students out working in GNAR communities, doing research, and developing tools
- Training for public officials and community members in GNAR communities

Capacity building

- On-the-ground planning, urban design, and collaboration assistance
 - Online toolkit and related tool and resource development
 - Connecting service providers and resources with communities
 - Peer-to-peer learning forums (GNAR Network)
-

<https://www.usu.edu/gnar/toolkit>

UtahStateUniversity | Gateway & Natural Amenity Region (GNAR) Initiative

Home About Research Education Capacity Building Toolkit Contact



GNAR Toolkit

The GNAR Community Online Toolkit is designed to be a resource for planners, public officials, community members, consultants, and all others who are working in communities with access to significant natural amenities and recreation opportunities. This toolkit provides resources, case studies, model ordinances, and other tools to help GNAR communities plan for and respond to the unique planning, transportation, economic, community development, and sustainability challenges and opportunities they face. The toolkit is a living resource; it will grow and adapt in order to provide the most useful and up-to-date information possible.

Have ideas for topics we should address, thoughts about tools we should link to or develop, or suggestions for how to improve the toolkit? Let us know! Or even better: use the toolkit to share your case studies, resources, and lessons learned

All tools and resources found in this Toolkit are reviewed by members of our Technical Advisory Committee – individuals working in or closely with GNAR communities. We'd like to thank all of our partners who have contributed their thoughts and feedback in order to make this a valuable resource.

https://www.usu.edu/gnar/gnar_network

UtahStateUniversity | Gateway & Natural Amenity Region (GNAR) Initiative

Home About Research Education GNAR Network Toolkit Contact WDSC COVID-19 Resources

THE GNAR NETWORK

The GNAR Network

The GNAR Network provides a forum where representatives of gateway communities can meet, share ideas, and identify immediate and high-priority needs that would allow them to make more informed decisions as they respond to the spread of COVID-19 and mitigate its impact on the well-being of their residents and their local economies.

Join the GNAR Network Today!

Receive the latest research, resources, webinars, and networking opportunities with other GNAR Communities straight to your inbox.



Thanks to NITC for funding this research

An aerial night photograph of a mountain town covered in snow. The town's buildings and streets are illuminated with warm yellow lights, contrasting with the cool blue tones of the twilight sky and the dark, snow-covered mountains in the background. The town is nestled in a valley, with a winding road and a parking lot visible in the foreground.

Specialization in SMALL & RESORT TOWN PLANNING

More info: <http://plan.cap.utah.edu/>



GATEWAY AND
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www.gnar.usu.edu

https://www.usu.edu/gnar/research/planning_challenges

Stoker, Rumore, Romaniello, and Levine (2020) "Planning and Development Challenges in Western Gateway Communities," *Journal of the American Planning Association*.

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