

# Check out the 2022 GNAR Initiative Highlight Reel!

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Dear Friends,  
Well, 2022 has come and gone, and it was quite the year! Like many of you, we're looking back on what we accomplished over the last twelve months and looking hopefully toward 2023.

Despite being a small program, we kept very busy and are excited to share our 2022 highlights below. Keep scrolling to find links to our webinars, our 2022 GNARly Blog posts, two new (and one complete revamped!) toolkit pages, research updates, news articles, and more!

We'd also like to take a moment to say **Thank You!** Through your generous support, collaborative efforts, and offers of help and on the ground insights, the GNAR Initiative was able to keep being a resource and hub for communities, researchers, experts, and those passionate about helping these incredible communities preserve what makes them special and thrive into the future. As 2023 get underway, please consider [donating](#) to the GNAR Initiative below, so we can continue to provide assistance to gateway communities across the West.

If you would like to get involved in our work in other ways, please contact our GNAR Initiative Coordinator, Elizabeth Sodja ([liz.sodja@usu.edu](mailto:liz.sodja@usu.edu)). We can't do this without your support, so thank you!

We wish all of you the best, and happy 2023!

Warmly,  
The GNAR Initiative Team

## Webinar Recordings



### **THE RED EMERALD RESILIENCE TRAINING PROGRAM:**

A partnership between the Institute of Outdoor Recreation and Tourism (IORT) and the Utah Office of Tourism led to the creation of the 9-part [Red Emerald Resilience Training Series](#) this past year. While officially an IORT Project, the GNAR team was excited to contribute to both the content and the execution of the series.

Though targeted at a Utah audience, across all 9 sessions, we had over 300 attendees from 16 states and 4 countries! Since the completion of the series, session recordings have received a combined 600+ views on YouTube.

**You can check out the recordings of each session below:**

- [Developing an Effective and Responsive Online Presence \(Mar 2\)](#)
- [How to Educate New-to-Nature Tourists About Responsible Recreation \(April 6\)](#)
- [How to Prepare for the Return of More International Guests and Visitors \(May 3\)](#)
- [How to Find Funding Resources to Alleviate any Negative Impacts Caused by COVID-19 \(June 7\)](#)
- [Tools and Resources to Understand Tourism in Your Community \(July 6\)](#)
- [Primer on the Utah Office of Tourism, its Programs, and the Resources the Office Provides \(Aug 2\)](#)
- [Strategies for Providing Affordable Housing for Tourism Industry Employees \(Sep 6\)](#)
- [Creating Pathways for High School and College Students to Work in the Tourism Industry \(Oct 4\)](#)
- [How to Effectively Partner with Local and Regional Governments on Issues that Impact the Tourism Industry \(Nov 8\)](#)



### Planning for a GNARly Future Online Learning Series:

After the conclusion of the Red Emerald series, we dived into our latest online learning series: **Planning for a GNARly Future: Reimagining Planning to Empower Your Community.**

Our goal for this series is to create a line-up of virtual, informative and engaging sessions that bring together leading practitioners, organizations, and scholars. These speakers will share community experiences, introduce cutting-edge practices, and/or discuss principles relevant to research-identified topics important for gateway community planning and development. We have a long-term vision to build on these sessions and create future online training modules and certifications for these and other topics of interest to gateway communities.

Our first two sessions were attended by over 80 participants and the recordings have already been viewed 120+ times on YouTube. We are stoked to continue the series in the Spring, and hope to continue to provide high quality hard-hitting content for communities.

**PLANNING FOR A GNARLY FUTURE**  
ONLINE LEARNING SERIES

**REIMAGINING PLANNING TO EMPOWER YOUR COMMUNITY**

<b>OCT 27</b> 2:00-3:30PM MT	<b>REFOCUS: Values as Vision</b> Rally the community around a shared identity to guide the future
<b>NOV 17</b> 2:00-3:30PM MT	<b>REFRAME: Focus on Assets, Not Deficits</b> Reframe challenges into "problemtunities," and tap into existing resources
<b>JAN 26</b> 2:00-3:30PM MT	<b>REENGAGE: Mobilize Community Through Proactive Engagement</b> Shake up public outreach efforts and brainstorm with other communities
<b>FEB 23</b> 2:00-3:30PM MT	<b>REDEFINE: Solutions Beyond Boundaries</b> Craft regional solutions for regional problems

**MAR 30** 2:00-3:30PM MT **REIMAGINE: Planning, Not Plans**  
Navigate an uncertain future and increase resiliency

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INTERESTED IN SPONSORING? CONTACT LIZ.SODJA@USU.EDU

You can check out the recordings of our October and November Sessions below:

- **REFOCUS:** Values as Vision (Oct 27)
- **REFRAME:** Focus On Assets, Not Deficits (Nov 17)

You can also register the upcoming 2023 sessions below:

- January 26 - **REENGAGE:** Mobilizing Your Community Through Proactive Engagement
- February 23 - **REDEFINE:** Solutions Beyond Boundaries
- March 30 - **REIMAGINE:** Planning, Not Plans

### The GNARly Blog at a Glance



The **GNARly Blog** had a banner second year! It continued to increase in both readership and content. In 2022, we published 11 blogs, highlighting innovative ideas and projects from four different GNAR communities and seven research and resource highlights from some great GNAR community partners. Not familiar with our blog? The **GNARly Blog** is a new way the GNAR Initiative hopes to spur inter-community communication and share stories and best practices from communities addressing challenges and innovating on the ground. These posts can be about lessons learned, case studies, model ordinances, new programs, or opportunities for collaboration within communities. We are always looking for new topics and bloggers, so if you have an idea you'd like to share, check out our [blog guidelines](#) and/or email [liz.sodja@usu.edu](mailto:liz.sodja@usu.edu). 2023 is already shaping up to be another great year for our blog, so if you haven't already, sign up for the GNAR email list below and stay tuned!

**Here's a complete list of all 2022 GNARly Blogs:**

- **Feb. 2 - Crap Rolls Downhill:** how a crisis in infrastructure can usher in development

- **Mar 16** - Bringing the Public Up to Speed on Land Use Planning with a Story Map
- **Mar 31** - Can Outdoor Recreation Development Strategies Save Rural California?
- **Apr 12** - A Dive into the Rural Economic Development Toolkit from the Outdoor Recreation Roundtable
- **May 12** - "Where There is No Vision, the People Perish": The Importance of Having a Community Vision
- **May 25** - How to Map Your Workforce Commutershed in ArcGIS Online
- **June 7** - The GNAR Research Network: Connecting Researchers with Each Other and GNARly Research Needs and Opportunities
- **July 14** - Why a Glamping Ordinance Was a Good Idea in Garfield County, UT
- **Aug 17** - When it Comes to Wildfire Resiliency, Community Preparation is Key
- **Sept 27** - How to Develop and Strengthen Billboard Ordinances (And Why It Matters)
- **Oct 12** - Seeing the Forest for the Trees: The importance of working with humans to achieve coexistence with animals on working lands.

**If you have an idea for a toolkit page, or a resource you think we should be aware of, please email [liz.sodja@usu.edu](mailto:liz.sodja@usu.edu).**

### Research Project Updates



#### **THE GNARLY CHALLENGES, GNARLY SOLUTIONS STUDY UPDATE:**

In 2021, with initial funding from the National Institute for Transportation and Communities, in 2021 we launched a flagship multi-year study to explore interconnected housing, transportation, and land use issues in GNAR communities.

By the end of 2022, the GNAR Initiative wrapped up our massive community survey and was able to complete four in-depth community case studies. 200+ communities responded to our survey, and we're excited to move forward in processing and disseminating the data that came out of it.

### Two New (and One Revamped!) Toolkit Pages!

The [GNAR Initiative Toolkit](#) is one of our most important and utilized projects. We are always striving to build new pages and update existing ones as we learn and become aware of new cutting edge resources and examples for communities to utilize. In 2022, we were excited to add two new toolkit pages:

- [The Wildfire Preparedness Toolkit Page](#)
- [The Visitor Use Management Toolkit Page](#)

In addition to these toolkit pages, our existing [Dark Sky Toolkit Page](#) got a major overhaul and update, with even more resources for both communities and community and/or astrotourism practitioners to take advantage of.

### GNAR Staff in the News

Finally, our staff were interviewed and/or quoted in NINE different news articles this year across local, national, and international publications! Check them out below:

- **January 21 (NPR)** - The ramifications of exploding interests in small-town living during the pandemic
- **January 25 (BBC)** - The small cities and towns booming from remote work

- **June 1 (UPR)** - Outdoor recreation in Utah with Jordan Smith on Wednesday's Access Utah
- **June 27 (University of Utah Magazine)** - A Delicate Balance: The search for sustainable tourism and resource preservation in the American West
- **June 28 (High Country News)** - How growing Western rec towns might hold onto their futures
- **July 4 (Planetizen)** - Initiative Brings Capacity Building to Booming Rural Towns
- **Sep 2 (USA Today)** - Zoom towns are booming across America
- **Nov 22 (St. George Magazine)** - Utah's tourism industry strives to reduce its environmental impact on communities
- **Nov 22 (Outside Magazine)** - How to Throw Bombs, Save Lives, and Raise a Family in Paradise on \$22 an Hour

SUPPORT OUR WORK

**The GNAR Initiative is only made possible through donations, sponsorships and grants. Help us continue to help GNAR communities through donating or sponsoring today!**

To sponsor the initiative or one of our projects, please contact Elizabeth Sodja at [liz.sodja@usu.edu](mailto:liz.sodja@usu.edu). You can donate using the PayPal button below. It will show as you donating to Utah State University, however all donations through this site are marked for GNAR purposes. Please let us know if you need any sort of official notice of your donation.

