

INTEGRATING WATER AND LAND USE PLANNING IN UTAH FRAMEWORK FOR COMMUNITY ACTION

The State of Utah is simultaneously one of the most arid and fastest-growing states in the country. In 2021, with precipitation only 56 percent of average, almost 70 percent of the state is in the “Exceptional Drought” (most severe) category. Meanwhile, the 2020 U.S. Census identified Utah as the fastest-growing state in the country. There is broad consensus that optimizing and reducing demand for municipal, institutional, and industrial (M&I) water use is critical to ensuring that Utah’s limited water supply can equitably meet the needs of people, agriculture, business, and nature. Over the years, the Great Salt Lake Advisory Council has commissioned influential studies and reports that highlight the importance of reducing demand and optimizing M&I water use. Changing the dynamic of M&I water demand, particularly in the face of increasing population and economic growth, is seen as an important step that can indirectly preserve water flows for the Great Salt Lake.

Integrating water and land use is a promising way to change the dynamic of M&I water demand. However, integration is not an easy or straightforward process, as it involves breaking down the traditional silos between water management and land use planning. This document presents a framework to help communities foster collaboration between agencies and act to integrate water and land use planning. This framework is applicable to all towns, cities, and counties that are preparing to integrate water and land use planning.

This framework contains four stages:

-  **1. Form a Core Water and Land Use Planning Team** to ascertain local conditions and guide the integration process.
-  **2. Assesses Local Conditions** to understand water and land use data, scenarios, opportunities, and risks in the present and future.
-  **3. Identify Local Points of Impact** that represent your community's best opportunities to catalyze land and water integration.
-  **4. Take Action** to implement your points of impact for integrating water and land use planning and utilize available resources.

Technical and implementation resources (funding, technical assistance) are provided in this framework to help communities kick-off integration work.

Stage One: Form a Core Water and Land Use Planning Team

The first step of integrating water and land use planning is to create a land and water planning team from diverse disciplines to develop and inform the effort. At a minimum, this team should consist of land use planners and water providers that serve the community. Elected officials and members of planning boards and

commissions are also crucial additions to the team. The team should be spearheaded by a champion within the community, who is seen as a leader and who has the authority to bring a multidisciplinary team together.

Building a land and water planning team may require land use planners and water providers to establish a new working relationship. For a community served by multiple water providers, this may be complicated and time-consuming. It may not be possible to have total participation for a variety of reasons—the number of water providers in a service area or willingness to participate—but it is critical that all providers be invited and encouraged to join the team.

The efforts of the land and water planning team can be strengthened by commitment and direction from upper management, such as senior staff, city or town councils, planning commissions, county supervisors, or water provider boards. It may be appropriate for senior leadership from the planning department or the water provider to serve as committee leaders or chairs. The team should communicate, meet, and share data throughout the integration process.

The Babbitt Center and Western Resource Advocates have developed a [Stakeholder Checklist](#) to aid communities in forming their Core Team as well as considering additional stakeholders to involve as the integration process evolves. The Stakeholder Checklist document provides instructions for how best to fill out and use the checklist.

Stage Two: Assess Local Conditions

Self-assessments help communities understand their water issues and determine the level of land and water integration they have already achieved. The Core Team should endeavor to understand its current conditions and policy enabling environments as an initial activity of coordinated planning. This self-assessment is designed to guide communities through a process that will help inform their integrated water and land use planning efforts/actions.

The Babbitt Center and Western Resource Advocates have prepared a [Community Self-Assessment](#) for Utah communities. As well as being a guide for understanding the current state of land and water integration in the community, the included links to best practices, guidebooks, reports, and case studies provide communities the opportunity to continually learn as they walk through the self-assessment process.

Stage Three: Identify Local Points of Impact

The Community Self-Assessment presents a crucial opportunity to identify local points of impact. Based on the Core Team's responses in the Self-Assessment, the answers to the questions below, among others, may become clear:

- What gaps can be filled to integrate land and water?
- Are certain policies, plans, codes, or regulations due for an update?
- Are there sectors that use more water or land use areas that are anticipated to see high rates of growth?
- Which best practices or examples from other communities can be adopted or emulated?

Completing the Self-Assessment with these questions in mind will begin to demonstrate where integrated activities may be most impactful.

The following table summarizes different points of impact for integrating water and land use planning. Specifics about each impact point are included in either the Community Self-Assessment or the Technical Resources Section below.

POINTS OF IMPACT SUMMARY

POINTS OF IMPACT	TOOL	PURPOSE
Planning and Policy Making	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Water Conservation Plans ● General Plans ● Capital Improvement Plans ● Economic Development Plans or Goals 	Establishes goals and objectives for managing the intersection of natural resources and the built environment.
Pre-Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Water Adequacy Requirements ● Conservation Tap Fees 	Links new development to water supply planning.
Development Review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Zoning and Subdivision Regulations ● Annexation Policies ● Planned Development Policies ● Development Agreements 	Determines what water resource management, conservation and efficiency requirements are applied to development.
Building and Construction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Building, Plumbing and Landscaping Codes 	
Post-Occupancy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Water Conservation Rate Structuring ● Conservation and Efficiency Incentives ● Outdoor Watering Restrictions ● Water Budgets and Auditing 	Empowers and incentivizes homeowners and renters to reduce water consumption.

Stage Four: Take Action

After the Core Team has identified potential local points of impact, the next step is to take action. The nature of the action will depend on the community itself, and involve factors such as resources, political readiness, urgency, capacity, and goals. Potential action steps include:

- **Identify resources** - perhaps more is needed before the Core Team and relevant stakeholders can work to integrate water and land use planning. This action step involves the Core Team taking stock of existing resources available within the community that can be expanded to aid in the integration of

water and land use planning, or for the Core Team to find new resources to aid in this goal. Both technical and implementation resources are included in the following sections of this document.

- **Prepare and apply for a stakeholders' workshop** - a workshop will take the Core Team through concerted strategic planning, resulting in a 12-month action plan with discrete implementation steps and necessary resources, for the community to act upon. The workshop should include follow-up funding and technical assistance to help communities achieve the goals described in their action plans.
- **Action planning** - the Core Team may be ready to form a strategic plan for integrating water and land use planning or may utilize a general plan or water conservation plan process to do such action planning.
- **Policy updates** - the community may be poised to update codes and regulations to integrate water and land use planning. Low-hanging fruit for this action item includes adopting model ordinances or using a routine update to the building code to apply more sophisticated water conservation standards.

Examples, best practices, model policies, case studies, and guiding principles in the [Community Self-Assessment](#) may help target specific actions that a community may easily or quickly take.

Technical Resources

These resources offer excellent guidance on specific tools that you may want to explore more deeply as your core team identifies its local points of impact. More resources are included in the [Community Self-Assessment](#).

GENERAL

- [Growing Water Smart Metrics Report](#): Guidance on how to measure progress on water/land use integration.
- [Integrating Water into Comprehensive Plans](#): Best practices on development of a comprehensive plan.
- [Integrating Water Efficiency into Land Use](#): Comprehensive review of nearly all tools for integrating water and land use.
- [Equitable Integration of Water and Land Use](#): Guidance on how to include equity when integrating water and land use planning.
- [Guiding Principles for Equitable Engagement in Coordinated Planning](#): Guidance for creating an equitable planning process when integrating water and land use planning.
- [Colorado River Basin Map](#): provides detailed information on the Colorado River Basin.

UTAH

- [Public Water Supplier 40 Year Water Requirement Plan Standards](#): serves as a reference for the requirements of 40 Year Water Plans.
- Utah DWR [Water Conservation Plan Resources](#): outlines three steps for water conservation plan success.
- [Utah's Regional M&I Conservation Goals](#): recommends regional goals and practices for municipal and

industrial (M&I) water conservation.

- Utah DNR [Drought Management Toolkit for Public Water Suppliers](#): guidance to help public water suppliers better prepare for and manage future droughts.
- Envision Utah [Water Strategy Recommendations](#)
- Utah DWR [Conserve Water](#): resources for water conservation practices.
- Utah State University [Center for Water Efficient Landscaping](#): a research and outreach center designed to improve the efficient use of water for landscape irrigation.
- [Utah Water Savers](#): demonstrates available cash rebates and programs.
- Western Resource Advocates [Wasatch Front Land Use & Water Integration Webinar Series](#): a two-part webinar series on water and land use planning integration.
- Utah League of Cities and Towns [Land Use Academy of Utah](#): supports training and education in land use for local elected and appointed officials.
- Jordan Valley Water Conservancy District [Water Conservation Programs](#): robust conservation programs.
- Weber Basin Water Conservancy District [Conservation & Garden](#): information about waterwise landscaping, drought, water audits, and secondary water use.
- Central Utah Water Conservancy District [Conservation](#): conservation programs and best practices.
- Washington County Water Conservancy District [Conservation](#): conservation programs, including information about rebates, events, and best practices.

OTHER COLORADO RIVER BASIN STATES

- **Arizona**
 - [Resources for Water Conservation Planning](#): serves as a reference for state legal requirements, model codes for water waste and indoor and outdoor efficiency.
 - [Regulatory Authority Outside Active Management Areas](#): summarizes, at the state and local government levels, the regulatory authorities, and tools available to manage water resources and land.
 - [Local Land Use Planning Toolbox](#): from Friends of the Verde River, provides many aspects of how water can be integrated in the land use planning and development process.
- **Colorado**
 - [Colorado Growing Water Smart Water/Land Use Nexus Guidebook](#): overview of water saving toolboxes that include goals, strategies, case studies, and additional resources.

- [NWCCOG QQ Water Savings Resource Guide](#): model code provisions for adequate water supply and outdoor and indoor water efficiency.
- [Municipal Water Efficiency Plan Guidance Document](#): serves as a reference tool for water providers and local governments for developing State-approved local water efficiency plans.

Implementation Resources

Funding, help with grant applications, direct assistance, and networking are available to support communities in integrating water and land use planning.

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE WITH GRANT APPLICATIONS

RESOURCE	APPLYING FOR U.S. BUREAU OF RECLAMATION GRANTS
PROVIDER	WaterNow Alliance
DESCRIPTION	<p>WaterNow is available to provide Utah water providers with pro-bono, hands-on assistance to apply for the Bureau of Reclamation's (USBR) WaterSMART funding opportunities. WaterNow's organizational mission is to help communities make tangible progress in bringing sustainable water management approaches to scale and they currently provide application support for five WaterSMART grant opportunities: Water & Energy Efficiency Grants (WEEG), Small Scale Water Efficiency Grants (SWEP), Drought Resiliency Projects (DRP), Drought Contingency Planning (DCP), and the Water Conservation Field Services Program (WCFSP).</p> <p>Support services include (but are not limited to): 1-on-1 calls to discuss grant opportunities; targeted research tasks related to your application; guidance on USBR grant submission processes, application, and budget templates; and editing and detailed review of your application.</p>
NOTES	
ELIGIBILITY	Eligible entities include states, Indian tribes, irrigation districts, water districts or other organizations with water or power delivery authority in the Western U.S. Nonprofit conservation organizations that are acting in partnership with an entity listed above are also eligible. Applicants must be able to commit to 50 percent or more cost-sharing of total project costs and projects must be completed in two to three years.
WEBSITE	www.usbr.gov/watersmart/index.html
CONTACT	Georgia Beesemyer, gb@waternow.org

DIRECT ASSISTANCE

RESOURCE	GENERAL DIRECT ASSISTANCE
PROVIDER	Babbitt Center for Land and Water Policy
DESCRIPTION	Connect to resources, case studies, best practices related to land use planning; assist communities with scopes of work, RFPs, convenings, comprehensive planning, scenario planning, and serve on technical advisory committees.
NOTES	
ELIGIBILITY	Any Utah Community
WEBSITE	www.babbittcenter.org
CONTACT	Faith Sternlieb, fsternlieb@lincolnst.edu

RESOURCE	GENERAL DIRECT ASSISTANCE
PROVIDER	Western Resources Advocates + WaterNow Alliance
DESCRIPTION	Working with communities to identify specific water and land use planning programs or policies and support them, from creation to implementation. This includes assisting communities with specific policy updates, code changes, landscape regulations, comprehensive planning, and other related efforts. Also, presentations to educate elected officials to build political support for the policy or program can be arranged. This support is free of charge, courtesy of grant funding to provide this technical assistance.
NOTES	
ELIGIBILITY	Utah towns, cities, and counties
WEBSITE	westernresourceadvocates.org/land-use-planning-for-water-efficiency/
CONTACT	John Berggren, John.berggren@westernresources.org

RESOURCE	PROJECT ACCELERATOR PROGRAM
PROVIDER	WaterNow Alliance
DESCRIPTION	<p>Twice a year, WaterNow Alliance selects several sustainable water projects to receive professional hands-on support, and technical and program assistance. WaterNow Alliance expertise ranges from deep water policy guidance to support and advice on communications strategies.</p> <p>Selected Project Accelerators receive up to 250 hours of professional support in six to nine months (valued at \$25,000 each).</p>

NOTES	Occurs twice a year
ELIGIBILITY	Cities, towns, and other municipal water providers
WEBSITE	waternow.org/our-work/our-work-projects/project-accelerator/
CONTACT	Amy Weinfurter, aw@waternow.org

NETWORKING

RESOURCE	GROWING WATER SMART PEER-TO-PEER EXCHANGE
PROVIDER	Sonoran Institute
DESCRIPTION	This peer-to-peer network will be available for you to meet peers from other communities in other states, foster dialogue, and serve as an exchange of information and resources.
ELIGIBILITY	Past Growing Water Smart participants from Colorado and Arizona and subject matter experts/resource providers
WEBSITE	TBD - In development
CONTACT	Waverly Klaw, climateresilience@sonoraninstitute.org