

General Plan Water & Land Use Element Integration Guide

This guide will help provide context and assistance for the new water use and preservation element that is designed to be integrated into the land use section of the general plan. Working with water providers and planners to gain supply data as it relates to population growth, current water use, and development trends, current water conservation practices, etc., will help fulfill required considerations.

It is highly recommended that all planning and community development sections tasked with the water use and preservation element coordinate with their water utility(s). They will be able to provide you with the best data available on water trends and current conservation practices in your jurisdiction. It is also recommended to review your Water Conservation Plan, if one has been submitted by your water supplier, to get access to the water management data you will need for this new element. However, being able to work side by side with your public utility will produce the best result and expedite this process.

General Plan updates are required to be adopted by **December 31, 2025, for all municipalities with a population greater than 10,000 and all counties**. Please contact the Division of Water Resources at CityCountyPlanning@utah.gov for assistance regarding requirements and exceptions.

Rev. 4/26



Contact: CityCountyPlanning@utah.gov
For more information, visit Water.utah.gov/water-general-plan

Topics for your Integrated Water and Land Use Element

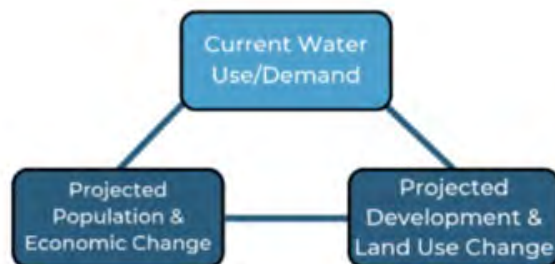
Integrating water and land use involves some commonly seen topics or elements, and these form the basis for topics that meet new legislative requirements from SB110 and SB76. Below are three categories of elements: water management, water-efficient land use, and future projections. To some degree, all of these topics have been included in general plans in the past, but the goal with much of the new legislation is to start considering them together and how they impact one another. Consider the elements below and how your community is addressing them.

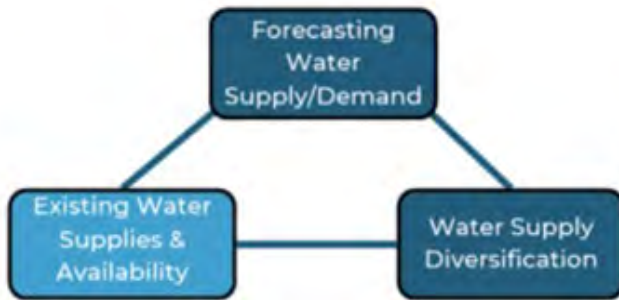
Water Management	Water Efficient Land Use	Future Projections
Existing water supplies and availability	Collaboration for land and water	Projected population and economic change
Water use and demand	Development process and evaluation	Projected development and land use change
Water infrastructure considerations	Urban form and zoning regulations	Water-related hazard mitigation
General water conservation programs	Landscaping and irrigation policies	Forecasting water supply and demand
Water and wastewater infrastructure	Building and plumbing policies	Water supply diversification
Water quality	Stormwater management and ecosystem function	Water equity

While not all of these topics are considered required for this new element, being able to analyze and evaluate these topics in the integrated water and land use section will ensure that you address the primary components that are required by legislation. Additionally, it will help your community to understand the complete picture of how water is being integrated into land use decision-making, and how your community will tackle the issues of growth, reliable water supply, and development. If you need a refresher on the primary components required in general plans, please consult our [city and county checklists](#).

Discussion Triangles

To be able to discuss these topics together is an empowering way for your community to develop an approach in tying land use and water use trends with population projections and future needs.



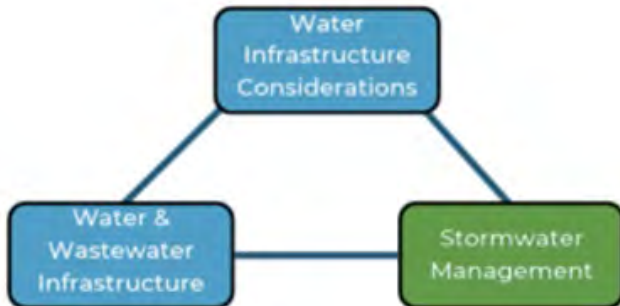


Knowing when to diversify your water supply portfolio, how much reliable water supply your community traditionally has, and how it could change with unknown environmental triggers such as droughts, are all important considerations when it comes to integrating water and land planning.

Developing new zoning codes or landscaping policies are an effective way to drive water conservation, whether it is for new developments coming into your community or post-occupancy programs like Localscapes or a rebate program.



Achieving major water savings cannot be done with conservation alone; communities must also consider aging infrastructure needs, funding for new infrastructure projects, and improving stormwater systems to maximize runoff usage in low-impact developments.



Above are some of the combinations of elements that we've seen as effective "triangles" for land use and water use

integration. When the above elements are discussed together in the same sections, paragraphs, tables, or graphs, it will naturally address the primary components that are required in the new legislation.

How to Reach Out to Your Public Utilities Department

We recommend creating an outreach schedule when it comes to working with your community water systems and irrigation/canal companies. This will allow them to provide the best feedback on the new water use and conservation component of the general plan, while not asking too much of them and slowing down the process. A schedule could be as simple as establishing a line of communication in a clear and concise manner, targeting some of the bullets listed, like the example shown below.

- Dates and timeline for information gathering.
- Plan for when you can provide the Water District with a draft of the new water element.
- A timeframe for how long the Water District can review the draft.

- A final draft or copy of the adopted general plan to ensure that they can stay up to date on the process.

Timeframe	Plan	Water System Contact	Community Development Contact	To be completed by
March 1	Establish contact with the water system and determine best contact	unknown (perhaps)	Jane Doe (111)222-3333 Community Development & Planning	Community Development / Jane
March 1 - March 25	Water System Information Gathering and Compilation	John Doe (123) 456-7890 Water District Manager	Jane Doe (111)222-3333 Community Development & Planning	Water District / John
March 25 – June 15	Developing Water Use and Preservation Element	John Doe (123) 456-7890 Water District Manager	Jane Doe (111)222-3333 Community Development & Planning	Community Development / Jane
June 15	Submit the Water Use and Preservation Element for feedback	Janet Doe (456) 789-1234 Assistant Water District Manager	Jane Doe (111)222-3333 Community Development & Planning	Water District / Janet
June 15 – July 15	Water System Review of Element	Janet Doe (456) 789-1234 Assistant Water District Manager	Richard Doe (222)3334444Assistant City Planner	Water District / Janet
July 15 – August 15	Implement Feedback	John Doe (123) 456-7890 Water District Manager	Richard Doe (222)333-4444Assistant City Planner	Community Development / Richard
September 1 and 2	Planning Commission to submit the complete General Plan to the legislative body for review	John Doe (123) 456-7890 Water District Manager	Jane Doe (111)222-3333 Community Development & Planning	Community Development / Jane
September 15	General Plan adoption and copy sent to Water System with new Water Use and Conservation Element included	John Doe (123) 456-7890 Water District Manager	Jane Doe (111)222-3333 Community Development & Planning	Community Development / Jane

Note: Notice in the example that flexibility is factored into the plan for who the best contact is at various times throughout the year. Being able to afford this kind of flexibility but maintaining accountability ensures that a project can stay on track with backup personnel if the primary project leaders are unavailable.

Questions to Consider Between a City Planner and a Utility Manager

1. Do you have a current Water Conservation Plan that you can use to help build your integrated water and land use element in your General Plan?
2. How much water does your community currently use?
3. How much development can you support with your current water supplies?
4. Is it necessary to develop new water sources to sustain upcoming development?
5. Does the Water Utility have any water supply availability projections?
6. What are the growth projections and land use assumptions and how might those impact water supply?
7. Are there zoning codes or ordinances in place that would help reduce water demand currently or in the future?
8. Are there water conservation strategies employed currently in your community with post-occupancy programs (conservation education), stormwater management plans, or green infrastructure considerations?
9. Are there water-related considerations that are currently made in your community when making development decisions, infrastructure investment decisions, and budget expenditures?
10. Does your community have plans in place to ensure that proposed-project rezonings, development approvals, and permits do not adversely affect water supplies and resources?
11. Do you have water-efficient landscaping programs?
12. How diverse is your water supply? If a source did fail, would there be others to meet the community's needs.

Impact to Great Salt Lake, Colorado River, and Watershed

Why is it Important?

Watersheds play a crucial role in our lives and the environment. They supply us with drinking water and support the ecosystem and climate regulation. Protecting watersheds ensures sustainable water resources and maintains environmental health for both humans and the diverse ecosystems they support.

Considering Great Salt Lake in Land Planning

As part of new legislation, it is now required to consider the impact of your community's water use and land planning on the Great Salt Lake or Colorado River, if applicable. Some communities may find that they are intimately tied to the lake or Colorado River, and others may find that they have much less hydrological tie to these bodies of water. If we can identify the ways in which our water use and land use decisions impact watersheds, it will contribute to a greater sense of statewide community. The intended goal of the legislation is to connect all communities to their watersheds.

By including a description of how your community contributes to or considers the Great Salt Lake, Colorado River, or your watershed, you should easily meet the requirements

Potential Considerations

- Identify how your community is hydrologically (or otherwise) tied to the Great Salt Lake. If not tied to the Great Salt Lake, please consider your watershed, or the Colorado River, if applicable.
- Does your community have conservation efforts that allow for more water to remain in streams and rivers?
- Does your utility quantify any percentage of return flows or recharge?
- Are there any other projects that your community participates in or contributes to the education about the Great Salt Lake, Colorado River, or watersheds?

Regional Conservation Goals

Utah’s previous statewide conservation goal of reducing per-capita use by 25% by 2025 was introduced by Gov. Gary Herbert during his 2013 State of the State address. (Gov. Mike Leavitt first set a target to use 25% less water by the year 2050 back in 2000.) Utahns were making significant progress on the water conservation front, so Herbert challenged Utahns to cut the time in half. The regional goals are designed to continue to improve the state’s conservation efforts.

The Division of Water Resources first gathered public input to formulate the regional water conservation goals. During fall 2018, over 1,650 people participated in a water conservation survey, and eight open houses across the state were held. After public input was tallied, a team of water providers, members from the Governor’s Office of Management and Budget, and Water Resources staff worked with a third-party consultant to provide input on the region-specific goals.

Cities and Counties should work with their water providers to understand their goals and align their water use and preservation elements to meet these requirements. Please contact the Division of Water Resources at CityCountyPlanning@utah.gov for assistance regarding specific conservation metrics.

Other Resources

Title	Theme	Source	Resource Type
UT DWR Climate Change, Water Resources, and Potential Title Adaptation Strategies in Utah	Climate	State of Utah	Report
Utah Growing Water Smart: The Water-Land Use Integration Guidebook (2023)	Integrating Water & Land Use	Western Resource Advocates/Babbitt Center for Land and Water Policy	Guidebook
Strengthening Collaboration	Integrating Water & Land Use	Sonoran Institute	Video

Title	Theme	Source	Resource Type
Incorporating Water into Comprehensive Planning	Integrating Water & Land Use	Babbitt Center for Land and Water Policy	Manual
Model Landscaping Standards	Integrating Water & Land Use	Sandy City, UT	Webpage – code
Model Landscaping Standards	Integrating Water & Land Use	Salt Lake County, UT	Webpage – code
Integrating Water Efficiency into Land Use Planning in the Interior West: A Guidebook for Local Planners	Water Conservation, Integrating Water & Land Use	Western Resource	Guidebook
Utah Water Savers	Water Conservation	State of Utah & State Water Conservancy Districts	Webpage – programs and rebates
Utah's Regional M&I Goals	Water Supply and Demand, Water Conservation	State of Utah	Report
Water Conservation Plan Database	Water Supply and Demand, Water Conservation	State of Utah	Webpage
Summary Memo for Integrating Water and Land Use Planning Project in Utah	Integrating Water & Land Use	Western Resource Advocates/Babbitt Center for Land and Water Policy	Summary Memo with Extended Resources Guide

Note: For a complete list of useful resources, review pages 11-14 in the Summary Memo for Integrating Water and Land Use Planning in the last row of the above table. Resources ranging from climate stressors, land & water integration techniques and tools, water conservation resources, and more can be found in this complete resource section.