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Peer Cities Analysis - Salt Lake City, Utah

By:

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Submitted To:

Ken Schroepel, AICP

URP 5510- Planning Methods I, Fall 2006
College of Architecture and Planning
University of Colorado at Denver



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Section 1.

Introduction:

The purpose of this report is to compare the downtown Salt Lake City area to the downtown Denver area. This report endeavors to define the downtown characteristics and definitions by providing descriptions and maps of the location of the downtown Salt Lake City area. It will delineate boundaries derived from official sources and include the urban elements that define these boundaries along with its total land area.

Characteristics of this area have numerous activity centers and landmarks that can be discerned on the provided maps. The Salt Lake City downtown has light rail hubs, the Delta Center, the LDS Temple, a Convention Center, a Library, and open plazas.

This report looks at zoning within the defined downtown boundaries by the use of maps and descriptions that detail general land use patterns, building height, and density provisions.

Population data has been compiled from the U.S. Census Bureau for the area, and population projections have been calculated for 2010. Residential population changes are discussed that encompass physical, socioeconomic, and policy factors along with present and expected changes that will impact this area and its people.

Development and retail in this area will be covered concerning vacancy rates, development shifts, policy implementation, development trends, and zoning regulations. Square footage values for retail, residential, and commercial space will be discussed over the last decade in addition to anticipated economic trends.

The subject of parking is described in relationship to how parking facilities are managed, who manages them, and revenue allocation. Municipal and partnership policies concerning parking are also incorporated.

Politics and policies over the last 10 years that have affected development in the downtown area are described along with comparisons to the downtown Denver area.

This project was organized by sectioning out the various parts amongst the three members of the team. Contact information was gathered and sent to one member that was designated to mitigate questions and concerns between the group and planning professionals. This report is organized into five sections;

1. Introduction
2. Downtown Definitions and Characteristics
3. Analysis
4. Summary
5. Work Cited

Standard research methods were used to gather, calculate, and analyze information from various sources. Whenever possible, the data was gathered from reliable private and government sources. The sources were then compared to achieve a level of verifiable accuracy.

Section 2.

Downtown Definition and Characteristics:

Location.

Salt Lake City is located in north-central Utah. It sits west of the Wasatch Mountain Range and southeast of the Great Salt Lake. The expansion and development of suburbs is a dynamic force to the south of the downtown area. South Salt Lake, West Valley City, and Murray area are few of these suburbs that have merged within close proximity south of Salt Lake City.



Figure 1(Google Earth Image, Salt Lake City, Utah)

The region of north-central Utah has direct impact on the downtown area of Salt Lake City. The Wasatch Mountains to the east provide various recreational

opportunities, resulting in an international tourist destination. Eight world class ski areas are within an hour's drive of the downtown area. This nexus of excellent natural resources and proximity to an urban center contributed to Salt Lake City hosting the 2002 Winter Olympic Games. It can be said that tourism is inextricably linked to the region of the north-central Utah and Salt Lake City. The city provides the infrastructure and baseline economic vitality for growth to occur in the resort communities to the mountain east. In turn the recreational draw enables Salt Lake City to evolve as an economically successful western hub city. The existence the Church of Latter-Day Saints (LDS) should not be understated--the Mormon communities of Utah are in existence because Salt Lake City is the center of their faith. This has impacted the development and growth of the downtown area. The LDS have a vested stake in the downtown and are participants themselves as land developers and investors.

Boundaries:

The downtown area in this report is defined by the Salt Lake City Master Plan (Figure 2). Interstate 15 is the western border and 700 East is the eastern. 900 South is the southern and North/South Temple St is the border to the north. There is a jog in the boundary line delineation, which narrowly stretches north to incorporate the state capital building.

This downtown area is used for both the city master plan and the transportation plan. The area within the boundary lines are a considered a high density area when compared to the single family residential areas found outside the line. It is important to note that the downtown area is predominantly retail and office/commercial usage.

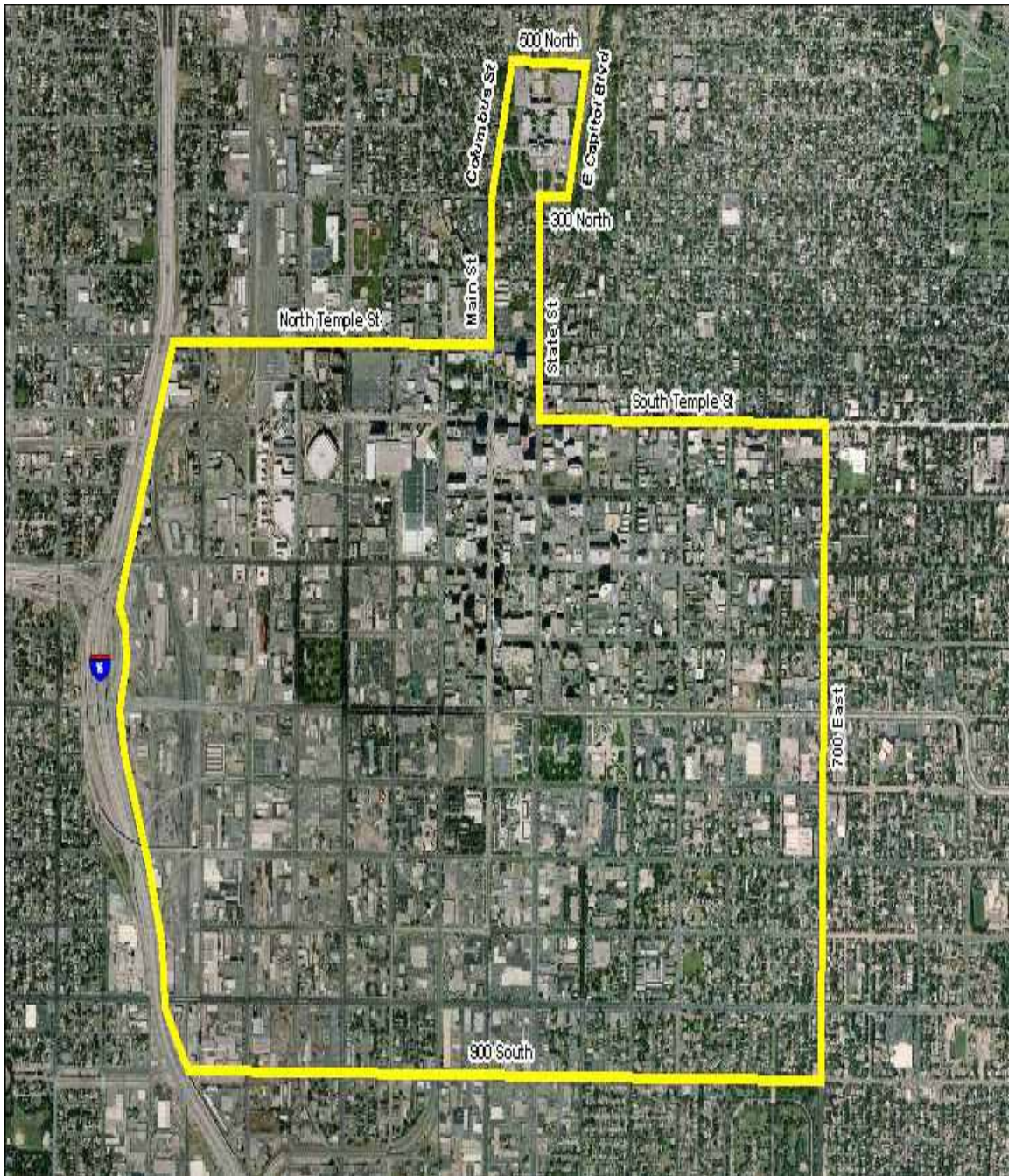


Figure 2 (Salt Lake City, Utah Master Plan)

The Neighborhoods immediately adjacent to downtown, such as The Avenues in the northeast are mostly residential. The population data in our study acknowledges the metro area and downtown areas. These differences are important when considering the

overall population picture of the area. The total acreage within the downtown boundary line is 2042.4 acres.

Characteristics:

The next step of our analysis of Salt Lake City focuses on comparisons to the Central Business District (CBD) of Denver, Colorado. In Salt Lake City's seven by nine block nexus, a considerable amount of activity is centralized. This area is the economic and office space district of the downtown, as well as the religious epicenter of the LDS Church. These blocks contain the Salt Palace Convention Center, the Delta Center, The Gateway shopping center, the LDS Tabernacle, and LDS Temple.

It is important to note the existence of the popular light rail line, which travels up from the south and turns due west towards The Gateway. The Salt Lake City Light Rail (LRT) has been a dramatic influence on the downtown area. "Installed and operated by the Utah Transit Authority (UTA), TRAX's original line runs 15.0 miles from Delta Center in downtown Salt Lake City to the southern suburb of Sandy (Figure 3, 4). LRT trains travel up to 55 mph, making the run in 38 minutes, and serving all 16 stations – at an average speed of about 24 mph."¹

"Riders have flocked onto the trains, total bus and rail ridership has surged 23% (1999-2001) – in fact, reversing a downward trend prior to the opening of LRT. Vigorous expansion of the rail system is under way."²

¹ (Utah Transit Authority)

² (Ibid)

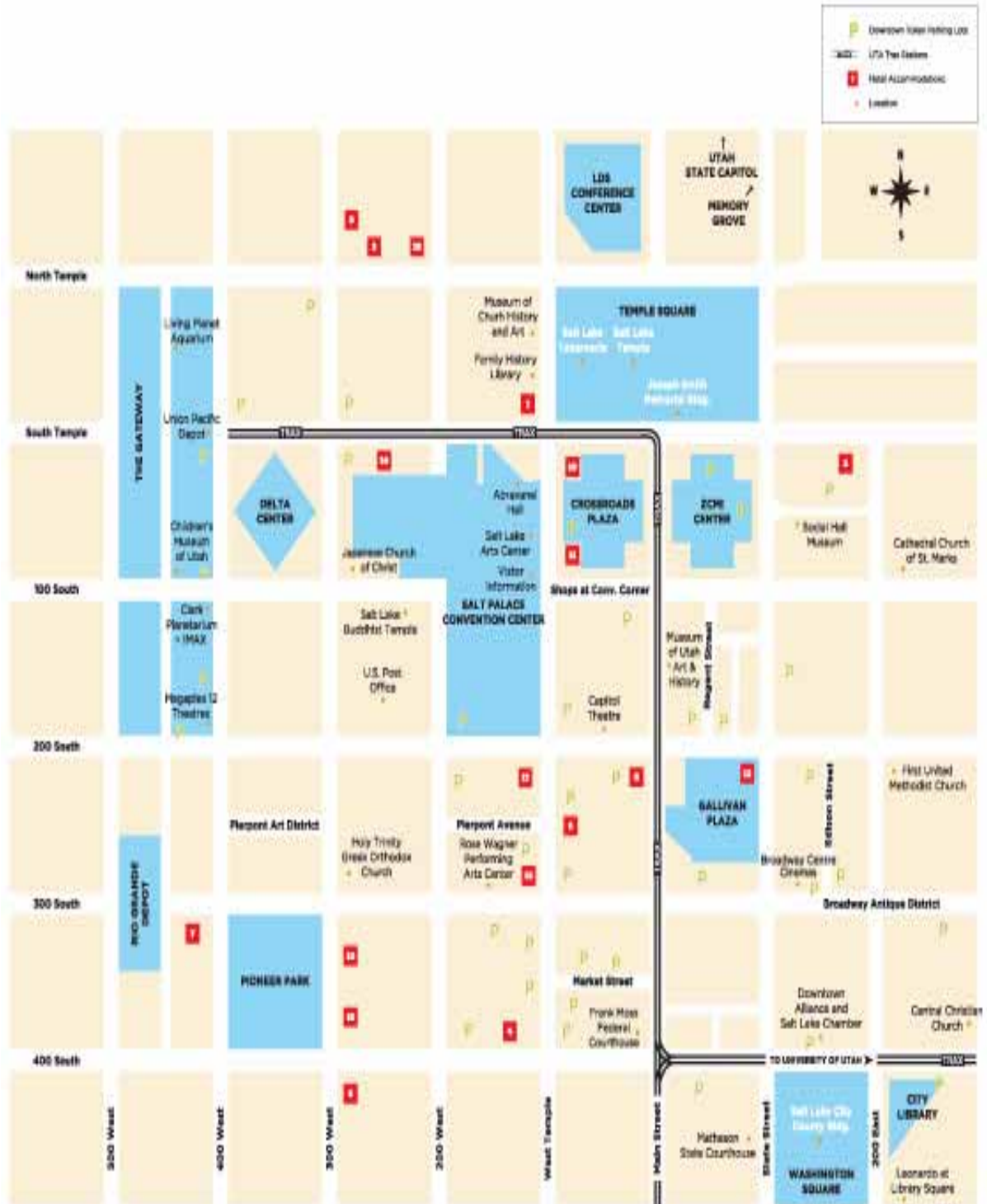


Figure 3 (Salt Lake City, Utah, Downtown Rising)

Total System Ridership

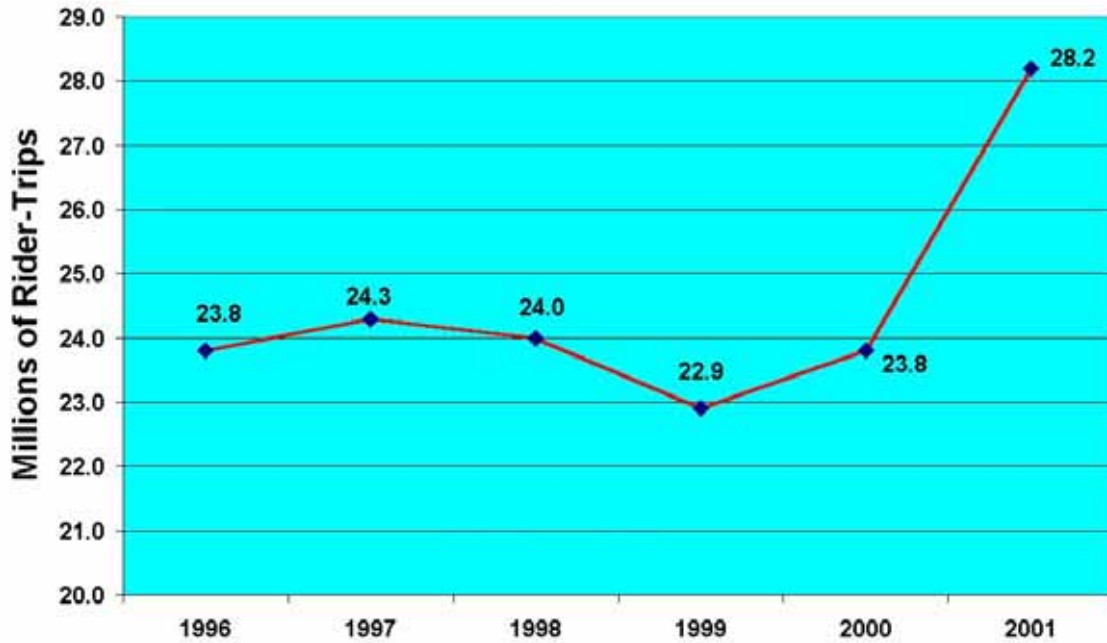


Figure 4 (Total System Ridership 1996-2001)

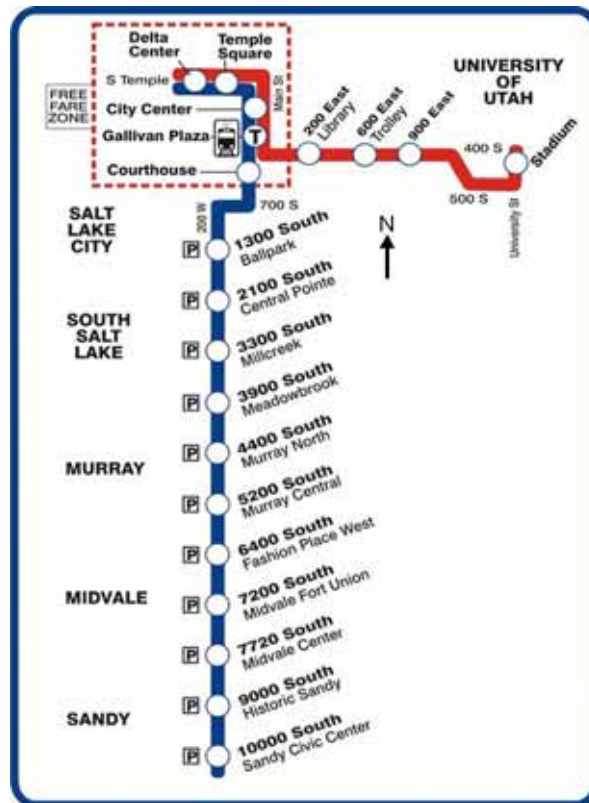


Figure 5 (Salt Lake City Light Rail Map)

The LTR is impressive in its popularity, yet it is currently a double edged sword. The greater access to downtown has a great benefit, yet the greatest recipient of higher usage has been The Gateway, which is a mixed-use development along the western edge of the downtown business that detracts a large percentage of retail and commercial business traffic. Many riders of the light rail travel to its farthest northwestern station at the Delta Center and patronize The Gateway to the immediate west. The result of this is the lessening economic stronghold at city center near the Temple and Convention center.

Salt Lake City has in the past years acknowledged this weakness along Temple Street. In response a massive development along this east-west corridor is underway. The City Creek Center, another mixed use project is slated to bring back retail, commercial, and residential activity to the city center (Figure 6).



Figure 6 (City Creek Center Development, Salt Lake City, Utah, Downtown Rising, SLC)

The result will be a 1.5 Billion dollar project in the downtown area. Its chief goals are in creating a central, mixed use, education, recreation, quality design and open space in the center of downtown (Ibid). Salt Lake City has the light rail to support this massive growth. The hope is to balance the growth with appropriate use in the city center area.

Zoning:

Found within downtown Salt Lake City is a conglomeration of zoning uses (Figure 7). Since the downtown designation is roughly 2042 acres, a multitude of zoning designations exist. Generally speaking the zoning in east downtown is mixed residential, and community shopping. The central part of downtown is designated D-1, which is the downtown main core. Due south is D-2, the downtown support district. On the western third of downtown are two predominate designations. The first is General Commercial (CG), the majority of which abuts the I-15 corridor. The second is Gateway Mixed Use (GMU). Highlighted below are a few of the most crucial districts in the downtown area:

- Downtown Main Core Overlay. This area includes the central business area, convention center and part of the City Creek Center.
- Delta Center Overlay District. The one block center for the Utah Jazz and special events
- Gateway Mixed Use (GMU) The popular mixed use development has drawn much of the economic activity of downtown.

Population:



Figure 8 (Salt Lake City, Utah Downtown Census Map, Sources: (1) U.S. Census Bureau and (2) Salt Lake City Dep't. Of Trans.)

Salt Lake County's current population of 1.2 million makes this area the most populated region in the State of Utah. Salt Lake City's CBD can best be compared to Denver by looking at the entire metropolitan area as it relates to each CBD. Table 1 is a line-by-line population comparison of Salt Lake to the information provided by Downtown Denver Partnership.

Table 1. Demographic Data: Downtown Salt Lake City source: US Census
 Geography Selection: Census Tracts: 1003.06, 1019, 1020, 1021, 1022, 1023, 1024, 1025, 50% of 1008, 20% of 1007

	1990 Census	2000 Census	2005 Estimate	2010 Estimate	% Change, 2000- 2010
Population Demographics					
Total Population	11,658	13,493	14,613	15,081	11%
Pop. Density (per sq. mi.)	3,655	4,230	4,581	4,727	
Total Households	5,681	6,575	8,253	8,443	22%
Area/ Miles ²	3.19				
Area/ Acres	2,042				
Population By Gender					
Male	6,109	7,379	7,423	7,661	4%
Female	5,549	6,114	7,190	7,420	18%
Population By Race/Ethnicity					
White	8,706	10,076	11,430	11,796	15%
Black	456	528	433	447	-18%
Am. Indian or AK Native	283	328	211	218	-51%
Asian or Pacific Islander	387	448	690	712	37%
Some Other Race	1,243	1,439	1,620	1,672	14%
Two or More Races	589	682	230	237	-187%
Hispanic Ethnicity	2,509	2,904	3,340	3,447	16%
Not Hispanic or Latino	9,112	10,546	11,274	11,635	9%
Population By Age					
0 to 4	698	808	1,302	1,322	39%
5 to 14	870	1,007	1,624	1,884	47%
15 to 19	668	773	707	759	-2%
20 to 24	1,633	1,890	1,515	1,621	-17%
25 to 34	2,571	2,976	3,312	3,832	22%
35 to 44	1,757	2,034	1,885	2,145	5%
45 to 54	1,248	1,444	1,510	1,693	15%
55 to 64	729	844	1,237	1,353	38%
65 to 74	693	802	739	777	-3%
75 to 84	544	630	567	582	-8%
85+	247	286	215	217	-32%
Median Age	31.0	27.1	27.1	30.8	

Households By Income

\$0 - \$15,000	2,203	2,550	2,851	3137	12%
\$15,000 - \$24,999	1,715	1,985	2,219	2463	11%
\$25,000 - \$34,999	1,354	1,567	1,752	1958	11%
\$35,000 - \$49,999	1,261	1,460	1,632	1825	11%
\$50,000 - \$74,999	976	1,130	1,263	1412	11%
\$75,000 - \$99,999	376	435	486	534	10%
\$100,000 - \$149,999	172	199	222	244	10%
\$150,000 +	119	138	154	170	10%
Avg. Household Income	\$30,256.00	\$34,034.00	\$55,285.00	\$60,493.00	44%
Median Household Income	\$22,697.00	\$25,546.00	\$37,287.00	\$40,829.00	37%
Per Capita Income	\$13,482.00	\$16,673.00	\$22,411.00	\$24,540.00	32%

Employment and Business

Age 16 + Population	10,060	11,644	13,006
In Labor Force	6,650	7,697	9,081
Employed	5,889	6,816	8,630
Unemployed	752	870	432
In Armed Forces	10	11	19
Not In Labor Force	3,409	3,946	3,925

Housing Units

Total Housing Units	7,738	8,399
Occupied	6,575	7,503
Vacant	1,164	896

Vehicles Available

Avg. Vehicles/Household	<1	1
0 Vehicles Available	2,938	902
1 Vehicle Available	5,349	3,208
2+ Vehicles Available	3,743	4,142

Marital Status

Age 15+ Population	10,098	11,688	11,687
Married, Spouse Present	3,306	3,826	5,316
Married, Spouse Absent	1,101	1,274	250
Divorced	1,310	1,516	1,368
Widowed	553	640	645
Never Married	3,878	4,489	4,108

Educational Attainment

Age 25+ Population	7,789	9,015	9,465
Grade K - 8	509	589	580
Grade 9 - 12	649	751	614
High School Graduate	1,144	1,324	1,933
Some College, No Degree	2,154	2,493	2,090
Associates Degree	734	850	754
Bachelor's Degree	1,421	1,645	1,989
Graduate Degree	781	904	1,183
No Schooling Completed	396	458	323

Table 2 shows that metropolitan Salt Lake is approximately one third the size of Denver (32.6%), and the basic demographics follow suit.

	SLC Metro	SLC Downtown	Denver Metro	Denver Downtown
Population	181,743	14,105	557,478	52,919
Households	71,461	6,856	239,235	27,058
Area-Acres	69,760	2,042	97,920	4,800
Persons/Sq. Mile	1,666	4,422	3,617	7,053

Table 2. (Metropolitan versus Downtown Basic Demographics, 2000 Data, Source US Census Data)

Generally speaking, metropolitan Salt Lake City has a significantly younger (27.1) median age of its populace relative to metropolitan Denver (33.1). The percent of people over 25 years who had attained a Bachelor's Degree or higher is similar, 34.5% for Denver and 34.9% for Salt Lake--and both exceed the National average of 24.4%.

The most significant differences in Salt Lake City's population versus Denver's are that the average household size is larger at 3.13--the highest in the United States; and population is stimulated by a natural increase (88%) more than in-migration

(13.2%)³. Utah’s population has increased each year since 1990 and ranks 35th in the nation for population growth⁴. Dramatic positive inflow to the central downtown area is to be expected between 2006 and 2012 as extensive redevelopment projects will increase residential units. The next 18 months anticipate over 1300 new housing units in the downtown area with several other large projects in the planning stages⁵.

Referring to Table 3, Salt Lake City already has a comparable percentage of its population residing in the downtown district, so the Salt Lake redevelopment program could produce significant changes between the two urban centers.

While Salt Lake has a higher density in its downtown relative to Denver, this could be due to the lower percentage of overall acreage dedicated to its downtown district. The ratio of individuals and households are similar.

	SLC	Denver
Population	8%	9%
Households	10%	11%
Acres	3%	5%
Density	265%	195%

Table 3. (Percentage of Population, Downtown by Metro Areas.)

With respect to housing, the median home price in Salt Lake was \$183,398 in 2005, with a median household income of \$50,042. In Denver’s 2005 market, median home price was \$216,337 with a median household income of \$49,800. Salt Lake City has historically provided a substantially lower cost of living. Although variable, current estimates are showing that the gap is narrowing at 15.5%⁶, and one estimate points as

³ Salt Lake City Tourist and Visitor Center. Demographic Information. www.saltlakecityutah.org/salt_lake_demographics.htm.

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ Downtown Rising: Inspired by the Second Century Plan. www.downtownrising.org/projects

⁶“Cost of Living Calculator.” www.bestplaces.net/col/

low as 2.7%⁷. Primarily due to lower costs of living (Table 4), both Denver and Salt Lake City receive substantial immigration from California⁸.

Cost of Living Indexes	Salt Lake City-Ogden, Utah	Denver, Colorado	United States
Overall	93.3	110.4	100
Food	110.3	111.2	100
Housing	81.5	119.1	100
Utilities	84.9	97.6	100
Transportation	101.2	107.2	100
Health	89.5	125.8	100
Miscellaneous	99.5	97.4	100

Table 4. (Cost of Living Indexes: Salt Lake City and Denver, Source Data Masters, 2006)

Development and Retail:

The downtown CBD boundary encompasses Office, Retail, Industrial, and Residential uses. The majority of square footage in the boundary is office space, which has an overwhelming influence in the downtown because of its proportion. Commercial uses in this study have been subdivided into two parts, Office and Retail. The Office space totals 9,910,113 of Rentable Square Feet (RSF). The average lease rate at Aug 2006 was \$15.72.⁹

⁷ "Cost of Living." <http://swz.salary.com/costoflivingwizard/>

⁸ Salt Lake City Tourist and Visitor Center. Demographic Information. www.saltlakecityutah.org/salt_lake_demographics.htm

⁹ Ellis, Richard., "CBRE Salt Lake City Office Market Report: Mid Year 2006". July 2006. <<http://www.cbre.com/slc>>. P.1-7.

The Commercial Class can be divided also into three subclasses that are labeled A, B, and C. Class A is the premium rental space, Class C is the cheapest. The average rate per Square Foot has steadily inclined over the past decade. Table 1 shows a change of rate increase over the past 10 years.

The vacancy rates show interesting patterns relating to the proportion of Commercial, Residential and Industrial uses. The following figures illustrate the economic intensity of the CBD and their ratios. It also shows that the commercial vacancies rates have a great deal of influence on the residential and industrial trends. Residential and industrial sectors follow the commercial sector's trends.

	1996	2000	2006
Class A	\$19.02	\$21.46	\$28
Class B	\$15.05	\$16.41	\$21
Class C	\$12.9	\$13.51	\$18.25

Table 4: (Commercial Class Rental Rates per Square Foot 1996-2006.)^{10, 11}

¹⁰ Wood, James A., "Economic Change in Salt Lake City, Central Business District, 1999-2001" University of Utah, Bureau of Economic and Business Research. Prepared for the Downtown Alliance Salt Lake City. May 2002.p.45.

¹¹ Lawson, Michael M., "Commerce CRG, Cushman and Wakefield Alliance: Mid Year 2006 Market Review: Salt Lake County." August 2006. < <http://www.commercecrg.com/reports/06midyear.pdf> >. P.3-6.

Salt Lake City Vacancy Rates

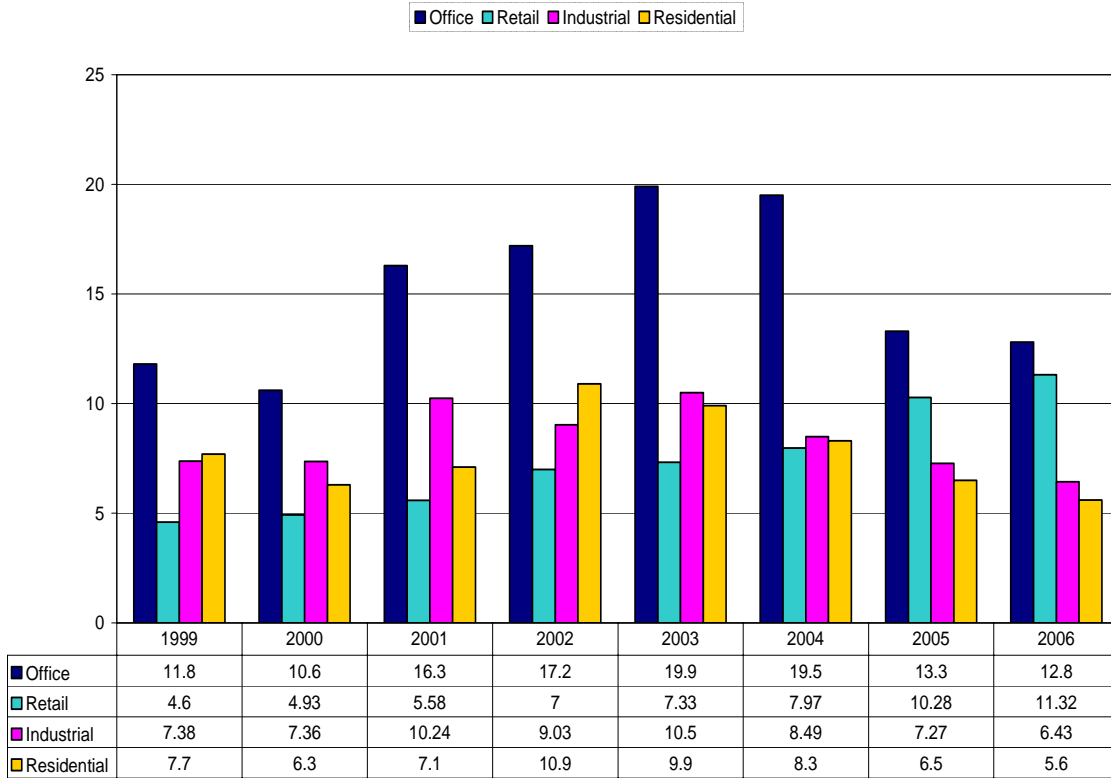


Chart 1: (Downtown Salt Lake City Vacancy Rates in Percent.)¹²

The retail sector shows a steady increase in vacancy rates contrary to the tendency of the other three sectors. The pattern that emerges for the Office, Residential, and Industrial sectors is as follows;

- In 1999 and 2000, a modest decline happens.
- Then the course of their trends inclines sharply in 2001.
- The sharp incline in 2001 is followed by modest gain until the vacancy rate crests in 2003.
- Then there is a decline strongly between 2003 and 2004 with a gentler falling rate for 2005 and 2006.

¹²Ellis, p. 1-7, and Lawson, Michael M.,

The Office vacancy rates show a similar pattern with two major economic indicators, unemployment and new construction rates. Chart 2 shows the same cresting at 2003 and decline witnessed in the three sector analysis.

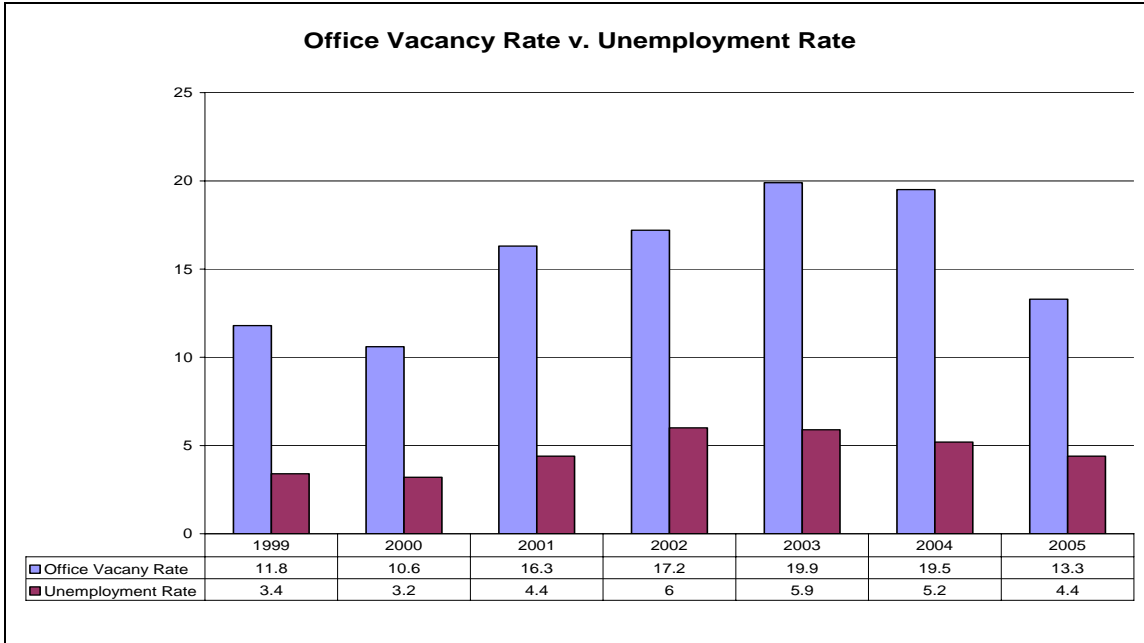


Chart 2: (Office Vacancy Rate v. Unemployment rates 1999-2006.)^{13 14}

Chart 3 shows that new construction built prior to 2003 had an impact on vacancy rates. Office rates rose after the construction crest at 2001. The fact that there is no new construction during 2004 shows a recession in the rental market and a recovery in 2005.

The interruption in construction in three out of the eight years shows that the market for construction in the CBD has a polarity and is reactive. The crest and ebb cycle of the vacancy, unemployment, and the construction rate indicate a relationship, and the construction pattern appears two years ahead the others' cycle. If the pattern is similar enough, the construction cycle shows rebound in 2005 which would translate to higher

¹³ Antonie, George H., "Rental Market Outlook for the Salt Lake City-Ogden Utah Housing Market Areas; U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, 2004 www.hug.gov/local/ut/library/saltlake04jan.pdf. p.5.

¹⁴ Lawson, p.3-6.

vacancy and unemployment rates in 2007. Policy shifted towards investment in 2006 could yield timely expansion capital next year.

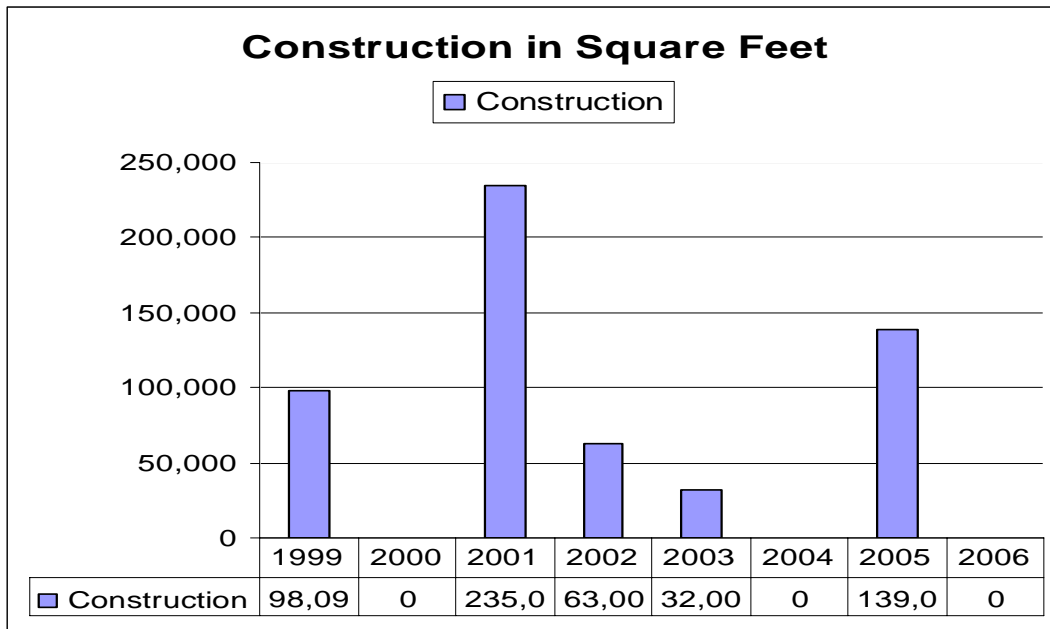


Chart 3: (Square Foot Construction.)¹⁵

There are some housing projects that are proposed or already under construction. Ownership patterns in the downtown area uncover that the LDS Church owns a substantial share at 1,377,400 SF. This has defiant socioeconomic and policy impact in the area. The Church of Ladder Day Saints founded Salt Lake as their capitol and wields tremendous influence over the downtown. The church comes second in construction value with 172 million in 2002 within the CBD. The Gateway topped the list for value.

The Downtown Alliance manages coordination between downtown business and governmental institutions; however the church has substantial influence in the Downtown Alliance.¹⁶

¹⁵ Lawson, p.3.

¹⁶ Lawson, p.3.

The LDS Church has contributed to a large amount of redevelopment in the down town. There has been the retail investment on State Street and the renovation of the Temple and Tabernacle.¹⁷

Two major impacts in the downtown area's real estate is the completion of the 1.59 billion dollar I-15 expansion project. This construction project has added light rail into the downtown area and allows for greater traffic capacity. Commuter rail from the north to down town is anticipated in 2007 from Weber County.

The second major economic impact was the infusion of money by the 2002 Winter Olympic Games. The construction for the games had a tremendous impact on construction rates in 2001 and its legacy is still affecting the whole state of Utah.

Development projects of significant importance include the 360 million dollar Intermountain Health Care Hospital, and Salt Lake Palace Convention Center planned to open in 2006. The Gateway Mall, which was built in 2001 has added a large amount of retail space and has had success.¹⁸

The retail market in the near future will be impacted by the City Creek Center. It will add new square footage to downtown for Office, Retail, and Residential uses. The LDS Church owns the land for the new development along with 1.5 million dollars in its investment. The City Creek Center will have large department stores like Nordstrom and Macy's. It will have three residential towers onsite along with four financial towers encompassing Zion and Key banks. The development when completed will have an additional 5,600 underground parking stalls.¹⁹

¹⁷ Cornell, Steve D., "Ideas for Down town Makeover Best Built on History", Salt Lake City Tribune, October 14, 2006.< http://www.sltrib.com/search/ci_4493952>.

¹⁸ City Data, November 2006. www.city-data.com/us-cities/The-West/Salt-Lake-City-Economy.html.

¹⁹ Tracy, Greg., "Downtown Gets Major Face Lift in New City Creek Center Development." October 4, 2006.<www.bluroof.wordpress.com/2006/10/04/downtown-salt-lake-city-gets-major-face-lift-in-new-city-creek-center/>. p. 1.

The predicted rise in vacancy rates in 2007 could come to fruition with this new construction, however the overall implications for downtown retail will be good.

The City Creek Center development shows that the city and the church are interested in experimenting with unconventional zoning regulations. Creating vibrant residential and commercial opportunities into the CBD can provide greater income because the higher taxable values and increased hours of operation.

In summary, the development and retail of the Salt Lake City downtown area has a large commercial base that influences trends for other land use sectors and mimics key economic indicators. The trends point to growth in 2007. The largest managing and financial influence is the LDS Church. The city has constructed large areas for economic expansion in the commercial and residential sectors. It has had some large events, namely the 2002 Winter Games and the I-15 expansion project to help investment. Retail development has expanded in the last decade and mixed zoning and land use redevelopment is underway to capture more shopping revenue.

Parking:

October 25, 2006 the Downtown Salt Lake City Transportation Plan incorporated a presentation on the current parking status. Within the broader context of public transportation, the master plan aims to have three paths to access downtown.

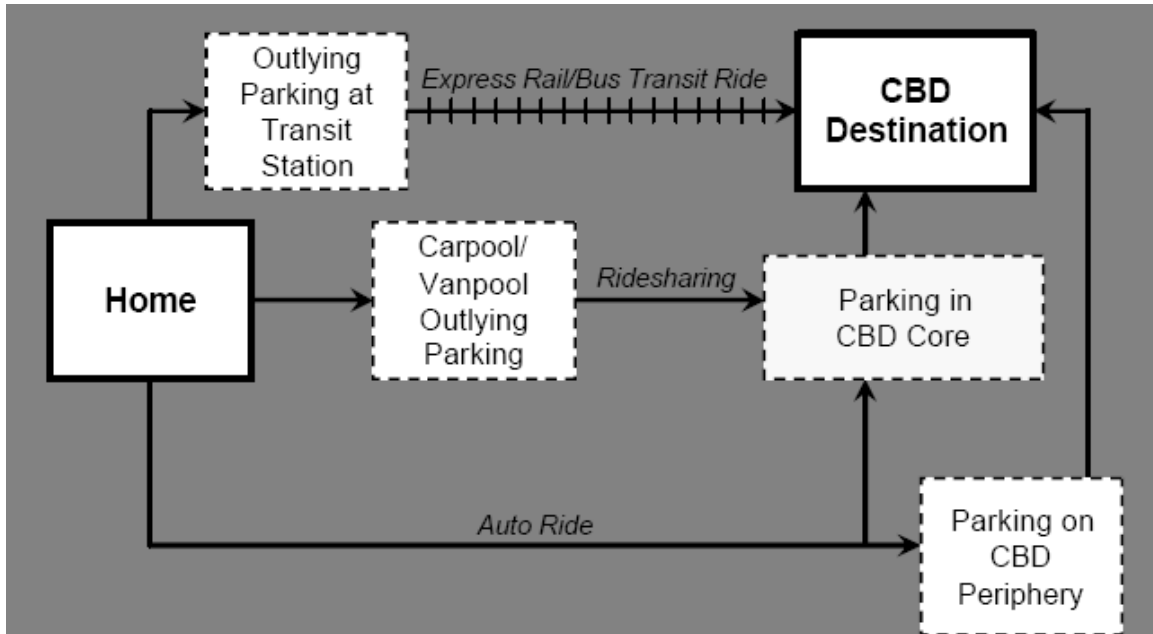


Figure 9. Salt Lake City, Commuter Strategies – Downtown Access²⁰

Once one is inside the CBD, the transportation plan goes into a specific analysis of parking availability.

- Approximately 30,000 off-street parking spaces
- A vast majority of off-street parking is privately-owned and operated
- 62% open to the public
- 74% available for evening parking
- Approximately 2,000 on-street parking

Places

- Approximately 40% of on-street parking is free²¹

²⁰ Salt Lake City, Transportation Master Plan, Parking Presentation Oct. 26, 2006
<http://www.slcgov.com/transportation/dtp/pdfppt/ParkingPresentationCLB102506.pdf>

²¹ *ibid*

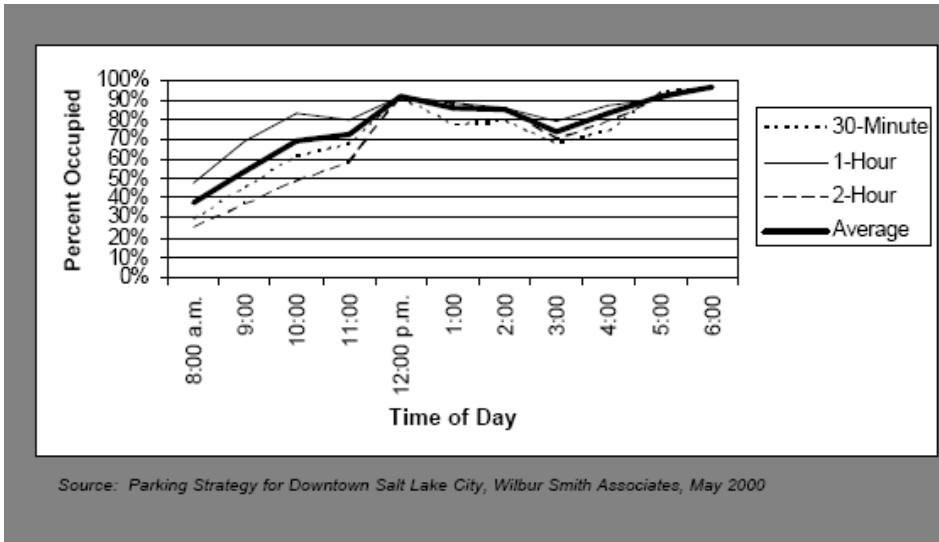


Figure 10. Occupancy of Surface Parking in the CBD by Time of Day²²

From the above figure the popularity of downtown surface parking is clear. Occupancy reaches above ninety percent twice during the daily flow of parking, once at the 12:00pm and once in between 5:30-6:00pm. The resulting income from this high occupancy should in turn be substantial. In fact, this is the case.

Public parking on street is a large cash revenue for the city. In the 2005-2006 fiscal year the meter coin revenue was \$1,285,540, and the citation revenue was \$3,547,395²³ A majority of off-street locations are primarily privately owned. Thus Salt Lake City has raised questions as the policies in which they would like to adopt:

- Change on-street parking hours of enforcement to match peak demand
- Increase on-street parking rates
- Variable on-street parking rates depending on time of day and/or location

²² Parking Strategy for Downtown Salt Lake City, Wilbur Smith Associates, May 2000

²³ Salt Lake City, Transportation Master Plan, Parking Presentation Oct. 26, 2006
<http://www.slcgov.com/transportation/dtp/pdfppt/ParkingPresentationCLB102506.pdf>

- Multiple-space parking meters²⁴

The majority of off-street parking in Salt Lake City is privately owned. “Monthly rates vary from \$25-\$146. The average hourly rate is \$2.00. Nighttime varies generally from \$3.00-\$12.00. Event parking varies from \$2.00-\$10.00 per event.”²⁵ Salt Lake City has found various critiques of the private off-street parking.

- Off-street parking is confusing to short-term parking patrons
- Off-street parking rates are expensive or not available for use in many cases
- Off-street parking is not available after hours in many facilities²⁶

Taking these negative issues of off-street parking into account, Salt Lake City has raised tentative solutions. These tentative solutions are the result of recent brainstorming and have yet to move into the action phase.

- Overall parking management
 - Through the RDA or other entity
 - Uniform rates and policy
- City subsidy or operation of private facilities during nights and weekends
- New public parking facility
- Improved parking way-finding²⁷

Salt Lake City is still grappling with the decision to subsidize off-street parking. The City also is currently in process of questioning whether to build public garages downtown. This issue of parking is one in flux in Salt Lake at the present. More efficient on-street solutions are taking shape with improved technology. Off street solutions will depend on the future direction Salt Lake City wishes to take with the majority of privately-owned off street parking surface and garage lots.

²⁴ibid

²⁵ ibid

²⁶ ibid

²⁷ ibid

Policies and Politics

History

"It is enough. This is the right place. Drive on." B. Young, 1847

In July of 1847, after the death of the LDS Church's founder Joseph Smith, Brigham Young led a group of 150 people—mostly men, west to escape religious persecution and find a center for their new religion. Upon arriving at the east shore of the Great Salt Lake, Young uttered the words above, which are commonly abbreviated to "this is the place."²⁸ During the first few years, the new settlement was governed by a high council—later replaced by a traditional city government. At that time, government was dominated by the local, LDS-controlled People's Party until 1890. In 1857, President Buchanan deployed 2500 soldiers on the Utah expedition. This was a forceful attempt to make a national statement against polygamy. The Utah War lasted less than a year, ending in April of 1858 with Young's surrender. Young founded the Zion's Cooperative Mercantile Institution in 1868, the nation's first department store, as an avenue to promote LDS independence from outside (non-LDS) goods and services. The LDS church did not officially ban polygamy until 1890--32 years after the war, and presumably as a condition of statehood²⁹.

Although a specific LDS-organized political party diminished in 1890, the church still wields considerable influence on local politics. The current three-block purchase and redevelopment of downtown exemplifies this: city council approved the sale of public land to the church in a vote of 5 to 2 along church membership lines, and the church won a battle against the city and the ACLU over certain activities planned to be banned from the 3 block area—including smoking, sunbathing, and public demonstrations.

²⁸ Anon. "History of Salt Lake City." www.wikipedia.com

²⁹ Ibid.

Social Problems

As with every major metropolitan center in America, affordable housing and chronic homelessness are substantial problems. In 2006 Sunrise Apartments was constructed--a government-sponsored endeavor using a mix of public and private funds. This project added 100 units specifically for the chronic homeless, and was a part of a 10-year county plan to end chronic homelessness³⁰. Between 2000 and 2003, Salt Lake City added 1300 affordable housing units to its cache³¹. In 2005 alone, the city added 264 units of affordable housing³². In addition to federal programs such as the HOME initiative and Neighborhood Block Grants, Salt Lake has initiated its own housing trust fund and first-time buyer assistance programs. A lower-than-average cost of living, an aggressive construction plan, and local and federal grant programs offer a perception of priority in increasing and sustaining the supply of affordable housing units in Salt Lake.

While significantly lower than the national average, crime and drug activity are significant. In 2006, Mayor Anderson announced that the city enjoyed the lowest level of crime in 14 years during the prior year. This included a 3.5% decline in violent crime, arson and burglary, as well as a 33% decline in gang-related activity³³. The Mayor's Coalition on Alcohol, Tobacco and Other Drugs has also encountered several successes, and Mayor Anderson described one: "Of the 67 people who died of drug overdoses in Utah during the first nine months of 2005, 16 were younger than 20. We launched a multifaceted awareness effort, including 16 billboards, 15 UTA bus boards, radio and city telephone hold-line spots, and a 26-week print media campaign, to

³⁰ Anderson, Rocky. "State of the City, 2006" www.slcgov.com/mayor/speeches/press_speech. 1/17/2006

³¹ Anderson, Rocky. "State of the City, 2003" www.slcgov.com/mayor/speeches/press_speech. 1/14/2003

³² Anderson, Rocky. "State of the City, 2006" www.slcgov.com/mayor/speeches/press_speech. 1/17/2006

³³ Ibid.

encourage people who may be present when someone suffers an overdose to call 911 or get the person to an emergency room for medical treatment, rather than panicking and abandoning the person”³⁴.

One problem more distinctive to this city is religious division. Rocky Anderson has led the city in addressing these problems by commissioning the “Bridging the Religious Divide” program, designed to offer persons of differing cultural and religious backgrounds an opportunity to come “together for an honest, open dialogue on the issues that bring us together, as well as those that divide us.”³⁵ The sectarian division of LDS and non-LDS citizens, as the mayor believes, is a key restraint in becoming a truly successful globally-oriented municipality.

Business

Similar to Denver, Salt Lake City has been subject to a boom-and-bust economy since its inception. The first major boost to the city’s population and economic activity came with the California gold rush of 1849, when it became a vital trading hub. By 1870, Salt Lake’s link to the Transcontinental Railroad brought another population boost, and expanded the mining industry. The Great Depression hit Salt Lake harder than average, as unemployment reached 36% and the annual per capita income dropped from \$537 to \$276 in a 3 year period from 1929 to 1932. Although the New Deal as well as LDS programs kept the citizens afloat, full recovery did not occur until World War II. Along with a rapidly growing defense industry base new to the Wasatch front, the war boosted the mining industry. After the war, Salt Lake’s urban and suburban sprawl tended to follow the rest of the country. At this point, the military and aerospace industries were a

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ www.ci.slc.ut.us/events/bridges.htm

staple of Salt Lake's economy³⁶. However, LDS-based businesses still wield a considerable amount of influence surrounding local commerce.

Currently, the Salt Lake City Chamber of Commerce has teamed up with the Downtown Alliance to sponsor a "regional visioning effort"--essentially a comprehensive business plan for the Salt Lake City CBD. Downtown Rising, a revival of the 1960 Second Century Plan, aims to provide leadership "by convening dozens of business leaders, downtown experts and regional interests who will create common principles, concepts, themes and visuals that portray what today's business leaders and downtown users want their downtown to be for future generations."³⁷ This effort appears to be fueled by the unprecedented \$1.5 billion redevelopment campaign planned for the next 5 years. The first draft of the blueprint for Salt Lake was publicly released on August 28, 2006, and is still open for public comment at www.downtownrising.com.

Environmental Issues

The city's current administration has made strides socially, economically and infrastructurally. Thus, it is no surprise that Salt Lake also aims to lead the nation in sustainable living issues. The local government has actively campaigned for the last 6 years to reduce public automobile use, promote the increase of multi-modal forms of transportation, and expand opportunities for Salt Lake citizens to develop and sustain healthy and active lifestyles. Beyond the multiple recreational opportunities directly east of the city, a new multi-modal hub in the CBD is geared at more than a mass transit crowd. Rocky Anderson touts its capabilities as a pedestrian hub and a bicyclists' hub³⁸. In 2006, the city enacted a "free parking for clean vehicles" program, intended for hybrid

³⁶ Anon. "History of Salt Lake City." www.wikipedia.com

³⁷ "Downtown Rising: Inspired by the Second Century Plan." www.saltlakechamber.org/policy/issues/downtownrising/index.asp see also www.downtownrising.com

³⁸ Anderson, Rocky. "State of the City, 2006" www.slcgov.com/mayor/speeches/press_speech. 1/17/2006

and alternatively-fueled vehicles. Salt Lake also undertook a capital improvement program to improve walkability throughout the downtown area, including the installation of “countdown” crosswalk signals, red flag crosswalks, and extensive repair of sidewalks and other pedestrian routes³⁹.

Compare and Contrast to Downtown Denver:

The city of Denver and Salt Lake have many commonalities. Both are the largest cities in their states and are state capitals. The topography surrounding each city is similar. Salt Lake runs up against the Wasatch Front with ski and other recreational resorts nearby, while Denver abuts the Front Range with similar resorts. Salt Lake saw the expansion of the I-15 corridor with investments in light rail into the city center, while Denver has just completed its T-REX expansion of I-25 with additional light rail lines into the CBD. There is a concerted effort to expand transportation systems in both cities. An anticipated commuter line from Weber County in the north to Salt Lake’s CBD is analogous to Denver’s new Fast Tracks plan for northward commuter line expansion.

Each city has a coordinated downtown entity, however in the case of Salt Lake City the LDS Church influences far more in their downtown than the Denver Partnership.

The cost of living in Salt Lake is lower than Denver and the mean salaries are higher, however the education rates are similar. Salt Lake City population indicators show that immigration and household children will close the population gap.

Commercial Office space for both downtowns is the primary land use and retail activities are being pushed heavily along with new residential units.

³⁹ Ibid.

The Salt Lake downtown area is smaller than the Denver area at only 2042 acres. Both cities have seen rapid development outside of their CBDs and show municipal merging between neighboring suburbs.

Section 4.

Summary:

The downtown area for this study consisted of an area that was delineated by the Master Plan and the Transportation district. The access Salt Lake City has to the Rocky Mountains to the east provides substantial recreational and development opportunities. The culmination of this was the 2002 Winter Olympic Games which sparked rapid construction, tourism, and economic growth.

Salt Lake has a lower cost of living and population relative to Denver, partially due to a higher average annual salary. A higher domestic increase, viewed from a substantially larger average household size, insures net population growth. The education levels are relatively equal.

The success of The Gateway has caused the city to redevelop the downtown area. The City Creek Central project will add high rise residential and upscale commercial retail directly into the downtown core.

The LDS Church holds substantial influence in the downtown area and is the largest landholder. Their commitment to redevelopment of the city center and restoration of the Tabernacle and Temple has altered the CBD. The plan is create a 24 hour, vibrant downtown that matches many other American cities and adds to greater, taxable revenue.

Commercial Office dominance in the CBD follows the major economic indicators of unemployment and construction. The presented cycle points to growth in vacancy rates, construction, and employment in 2007 and 2008.

Section 5:

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