# SPANISH FORK LAND USE ELEMENT UPDATE COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT SUMMARY

## COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT PROCESS:

**Focus Groups = 35 stakeholders**
*Input on opportunities and threats with growth*

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**Survey #1 = 3,176 residents**
*Public input on development priorities*

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**The Chip Game = 88 stakeholders**
*Visualizing and understanding different growth scenarios in Spanish Fork*

↓

**Survey #2 = 286 residents**
*Public feedback on growth scenarios*

↓

**Spanish Fork General Plan Land Use Element Update**

## INTRODUCTION

The community engagement process was designed to weave technical content with community input and utilize several methods to encourage broad participation. To ensure the success of Spanish Fork's future, it is essential that all residents, business owners and stakeholders can easily provide input throughout the planning process. Without effective communication, the plan risks lacking inclusivity and community buy-in, making implementation difficult. The community engagement process captured key stakeholders and demographically representative feedback from residents throughout Spanish Fork.

## ENGAGEMENT WINDOWS

### ENGAGEMENT WINDOW 1: THE OVERALL VISION

This window focused on raising awareness, engaging stakeholders, assessing current conditions, and establishing a vision for the land use element. Activities included a project launch event, virtual interviews, small group meetings, and a site tour to gather insights. An interactive Storymap was regularly updated with relevant information. The phase culminated in a two-day chip game to explore land use scenarios, followed by a progress presentation to the City Council.

### ENGAGEMENT WINDOW 2: EVALUATING SCENARIOS

Engagement window two centered around sharing potential land use and development scenarios with the community and stakeholders, informing them about realistic housing opportunities and needs, and evaluating the best alternatives based on various metrics and visioning goals. Activities included virtual interviews and small group meetings, a regularly updated interactive Storymap, an online survey using visual preference tools, a developer roundtable, and a pop-up event.

### ENGAGEMENT WINDOW 1: THE OVERALL VISION

Engagement Window 3 will present the final plan to secure buy-in from the community, stakeholders, and City Council through leadership meetings and an open house, with the team offering materials for Spanish Fork's website and social media.

## FOCUS GROUPS

As part of the first public engagement window, our team conducted initial focus group meetings on January 22nd and 23rd of 2024 to discuss Spanish Fork's land use and future Front Runner station area needs. The four groups consisted of (1) business and landowners, (2) residents, (3) transportation specialists and (4) developers. The objectives of these meetings were to initiate the project with insight into diverse interests, gain a better understanding of a variety of concerns, opportunities and values related to growth and land uses, and lastly, gather input about what is working and where to make improvements for the next generation in Spanish Fork. Approximately 35 participants attended the 1-hour sessions which also included participation from City of Spanish Fork staff. Takeaways from the participant responses included:

OPPORTUNITIES FOR SPANISH FORK

- Celebrating and maintaining the sense of community

- Incorporating more density in key areas to allow for residential growth

- Incorporating affordable housing around the future station

- Infill opportunities in the downtown area with potential density and parking incentives

- Residents valuing the agricultural character of the city, rodeo grounds, iconic buildings like the sugar beet factory, the downtown area and the overall identity of Spanish Fork

- Increasing transit connections and trail connections

- Preserving open spaces and the River Bottoms area

PERCEIVED THREATS FOR SPANISH FORK

- Balancing growth and new development pressures with open space preservation

- Incorporating more density while maintaining the character of the city

- Increased development will also increase traffic and create challenges in main corridors within the city

## KEY TAKEAWAYS

### WHAT WE HEARD...

Community wants to welcome growth but also preserve the character of Spanish Fork

Protect Open Space and Agricultural Lands

Preserve existing residential neighborhoods

Incorporate more housing options for future generations

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### HOW IT INFORMS THE PLAN...

Defined areas of change and areas to preserve

Define areas for future growth

Explore medium density housing typologies

## SURVEY #1

Survey #1 gathered public input to help guide the developmental needs and community vision of the Land Use Element Update. Survey #1 was open from January 22 to February 13 and a total of 3,176 responses were recorded. The survey was advertised through various channels and available through the project StoryMap, the city's website, QR codes, etc. After analyzing the responses, we found that respondents had similar concerns and hopes for Spanish Fork as those established in the focus group discussions.

### DEMOGRAPHICS

Of the 3,176 responses, majority of respondents fell into the following categories:

26.9% ARE
**35-44**
YEARS

**50/50**
male/female

**Majority**
live in
Spanish Fork

**88.8%**
white

### VALUED CHARACTERISTICS VS BIGGEST CHALLENGES

Survey respondents deeply value the close-knit community, family-friendly amenities and overall high quality of life that Spanish Fork offers. Many feel that these qualities are what make the city a desirable place to live. However, they also acknowledge the significant challenges that come with growth. As Spanish Fork continues to expand, there are concerns about the ability to manage and upgrade infrastructure to meet the demands of a growing population. Urban development, while necessary for accommodating new residents, must be carefully balanced with efforts to preserve the city's unique character, heritage and sense of identity that residents cherish. The challenge lies in fostering growth without compromising what makes Spanish Fork special. The survey reflects a mix of hopes and concerns for Spanish Fork's future, focusing on community, safety, affordability, growth and preserving the city's character.
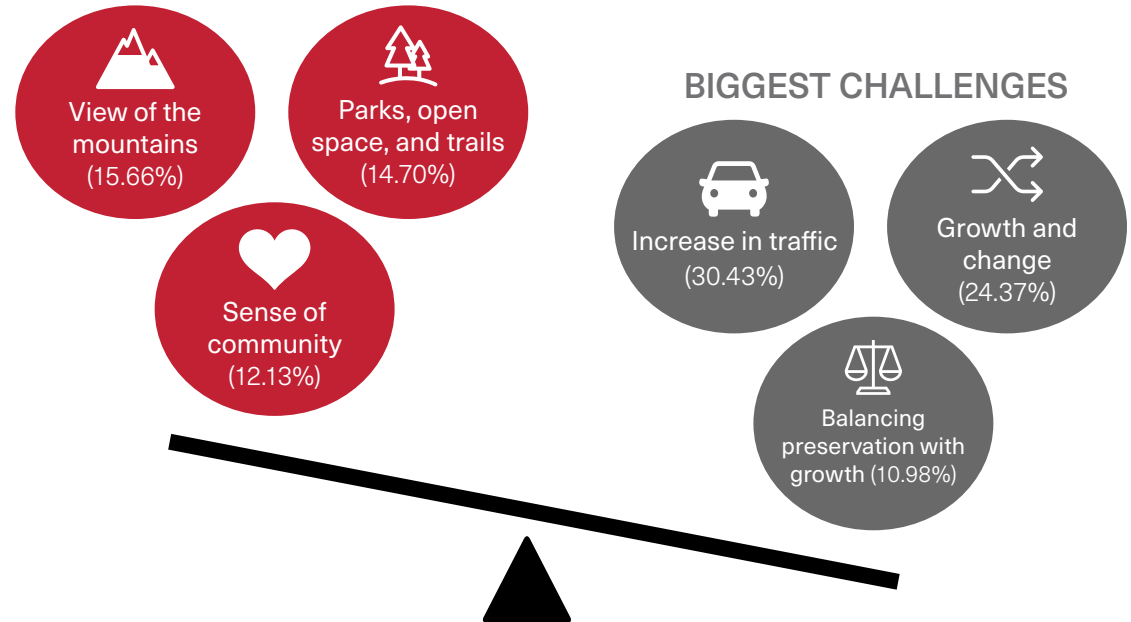
**MOST VALUED CHARACTERISTICS**

View of the mountains (15.66%)

Parks, open space, and trails (14.70%)

Sense of community (12.13%)

**BIGGEST CHALLENGES**

Increase in traffic (30.43%)

Growth and change (24.37%)

Balancing preservation with growth (10.98%)

**Figure 6:** Balancing values with challenges

## DESIRED AREAS FOR GROWTH

Residents voiced in Survey #1 that they would like to see growth concentrated in key areas such as Main Street, the future FrontRunner Station Area and North Gateway. These locations are seen as prime opportunities for development, where new businesses, housing, and infrastructure can enhance Spanish Fork's vibrancy while maintaining the sense of community. Focusing growth in these areas could also help preserve the character of other parts of the city.
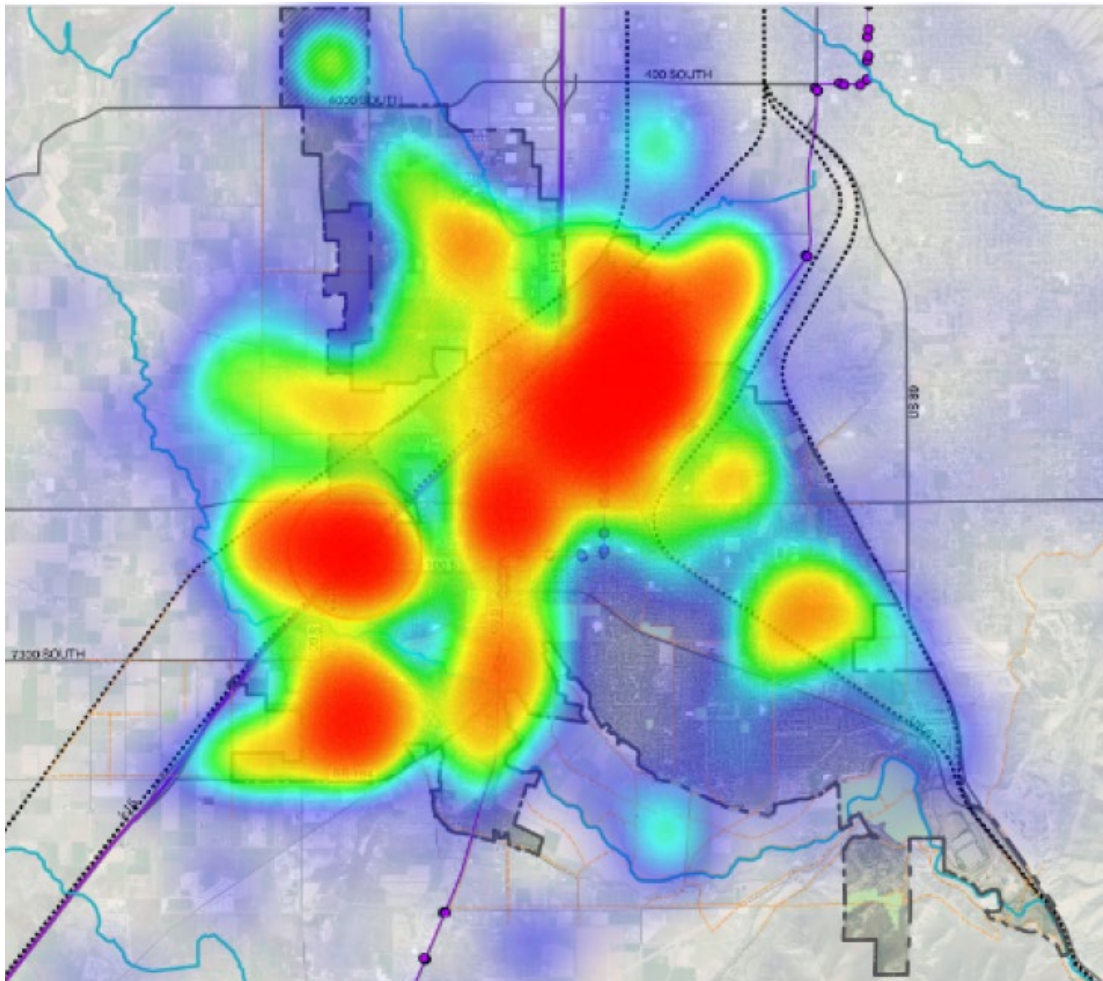


**Figure 7:** Areas indicated for growth

## SPANISH FORK'S VISION IN 10 YEARS

When asked about the vision for Spanish Fork in the next 10 years, residents showcased a diverse range of ideas, yet several themes consistently emerged. Most commonly, they described a future marked by a strong sense of community, where people feel connected and engaged with one another. Safety and affordability were also prominent concerns, reflecting a desire for a secure and economically accessible environment, especially for housing. Additionally, many expressed a hope for continued growth, with the expectation of expanded opportunities and development. Despite this growth, preserving Spanish Fork's unique character was seen as crucial, ensuring that the area retains its distinctive qualities and charm.



**Figure 8:** Key word responses to Spanish Fork's vision

## DEVELOPMENT PRIORITIES

Residents of Spanish Fork expressed a strong desire to preserve green spaces, open areas, and agricultural land, advocating for slower development to maintain the area's natural beauty and outdoor recreational opportunities. Concerns about overdevelopment and traffic congestion were prevalent, with many emphasizing the need to address infrastructure strain and traffic issues to protect the community's quality of life. Affordable housing and diverse housing options were also highlighted as important, with a preference for single-family homes on larger lots and genuinely affordable multi-family residences. Additionally, there was significant support for sustainable growth practices, including mixed-use development near transit stations to reduce car reliance and promote walkability, all while preserving Spanish Fork's character. Respondents also called for improvements in infrastructure, such as road maintenance and public transit, along with enhancements to community amenities like parks, trails, and recreational facilities to further enrich residents' quality of life. Respondents would like to see an arts and cultural emphasis to maintain community and create identity, along with an increase in local retail development.

### Affordable/attainable housing
(28.82%)
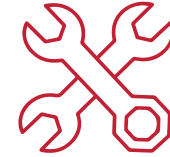
More options to obtain single family homes

### Mixed-use development and sustainable growth
(13.50%)

This includes reducing reliance on cars and promoting walkability

### Arts and cultural facilities
(13.14%)

To maintain community, create identity, and host events

### Infrastructure improvements
(10%)

This includes road maintenance and public transit

### Preservation of green space and open space
(10%)

To maintain Spanish Fork's natural beauty and outdoor recreation

### Restaurants
(10%)

Increase local retail development within the community

**Figure 9:** Development priorities in the next 5-10 years

## HOUSING IN SPANISH FORK TODAY

Currently, 39% of respondents believe that housing in Spanish Fork is too expensive, highlighting a growing concern among residents about affordability.

**39%**
respondents

housing in Spanish Fork → **$$$**
too expensive
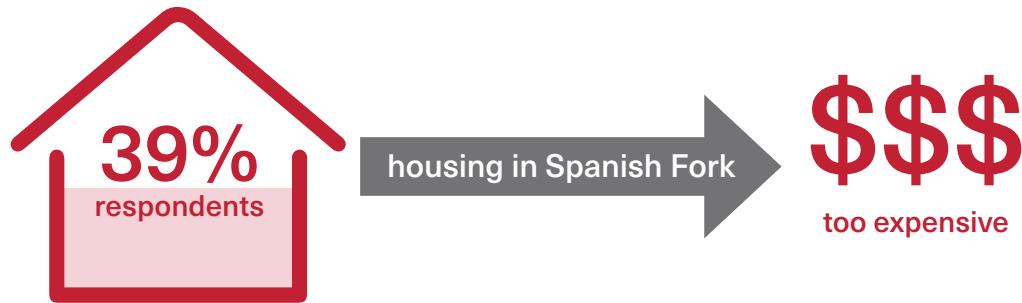
Majority of respondents have a strong preference for single-family housing:

- With spacious backyards and larger lot sizes

- Desire for more rural housing opportunities and community-oriented developments

- Incentives to rebuild and improvement old parts of town

While the majority of survey respondents prefer single-family homes, there is also a widespread acknowledgment that the city needs to offer a more diverse range of housing options and price points to accommodate its expanding population.

- Includes townhomes, apartments and condos

Main concerns for high-density housing should address includes:

- Overcrowding

- Lack of green space

- Percieved low-quality conditions

- Strains on infrastructure

Balancing the demand for single-family homes with the need for more affordable and varied housing will be key to Spanish Fork's sustainable development and long-term success.

# KEY TAKEAWAYS

## WHAT WE HEARD...

- Preserve character and sense of community

- Balance growth and preservation

- Address traffic concerns

- Need for affordable and attainable housing options

## HOW IT INFORMS THE PLAN...

- Need to identify areas for higher density and growth

- Limit development in River Bottoms

- Consider traffic volumes when thinking about future growth

## THE CHIP GAME

During the Chip Game work session held on April 8th, 27 stakeholders participated, including business owners, residents, developers and transportation specialists. They worked in five groups with scaled maps and chips that represented various densities and land use types and created potential growth and land use scenarios. Each group was given the number of chips needed to accommodate 6,800 units by 2040, plus chips for parks and open space, commercial use and community services, and created one scenario for future growth.

Afterwards, Spanish Fork engaged more groups in this same exercise, which included members from the Chamber of Commerce, Middle School Students (25 7th grade students), Youth City Council, four Planning Commission members and 36 members of the General Public. These meetings were held in-person or virtually using Mural, an online platform that allows for interactive mapping and discussion.

### CHIP GAME INSTRUCTIONS

To accommodate future growth, each land use chip on the map represented 15 acres of land, and with a scale of 1 inch equaling 800 feet. Participants needed to determine the appropriate number of chips required. Participants placed these chips in locations where they envision growth, ensuring to include essential elements such as parks, schools, shopping areas and mixed-use zones. It was also important for participants to protect certain areas they wanted to preserve while also showing trail and road connections to create a well-planned, cohesive layout.
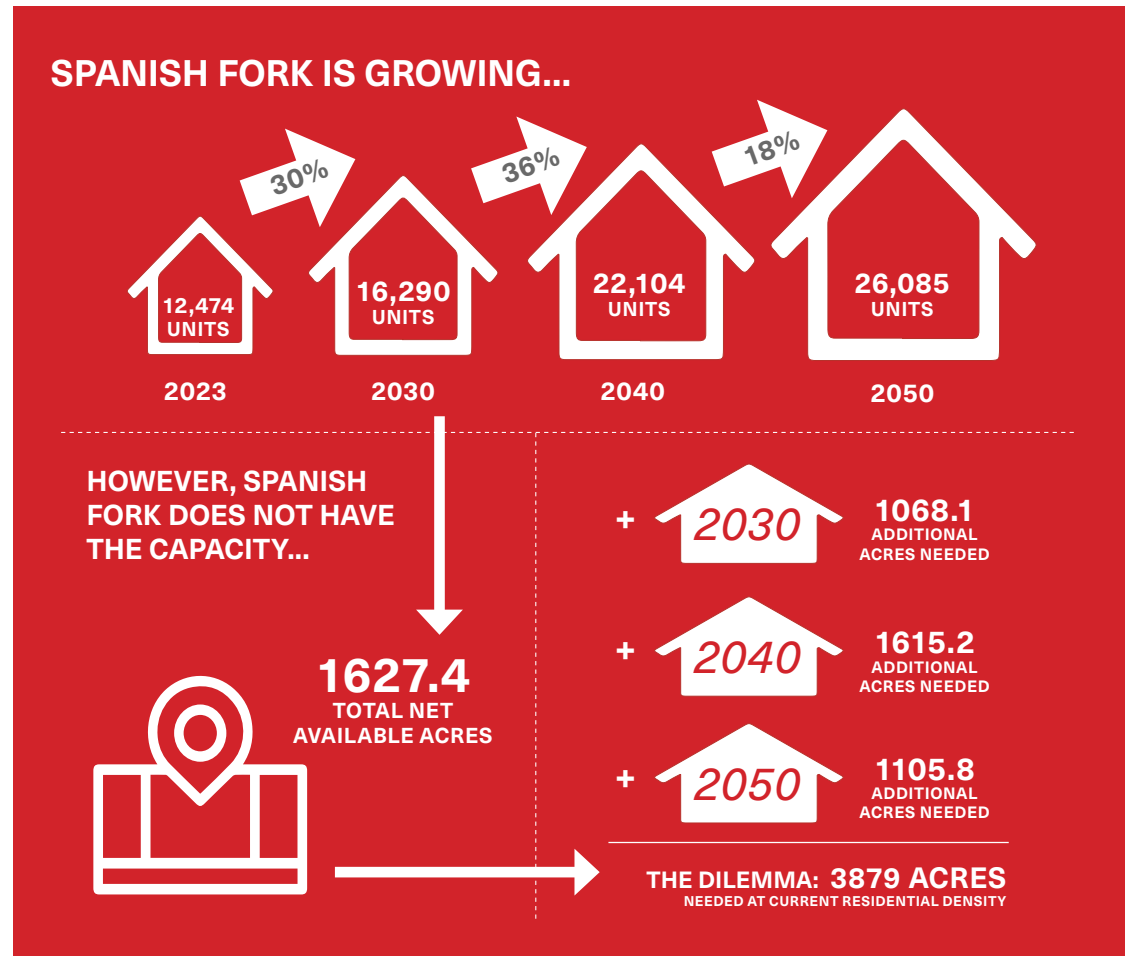


**SPANISH FORK IS GROWING...**

| 2023 | 30% → 2030 | 36% → 2040 | 18% → 2050 |
|------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| 12,474 UNITS | 16,290 UNITS | 22,104 UNITS | 26,085 UNITS |

HOWEVER, SPANISH FORK DOES NOT HAVE THE CAPACITY...

**1627.4** TOTAL NET AVAILABLE ACRES

+ **2030** 1068.1 ADDITIONAL ACRES NEEDED

+ **2040** 1615.2 ADDITIONAL ACRES NEEDED

+ **2050** 1105.8 ADDITIONAL ACRES NEEDED

**THE DILEMMA: 3879 ACRES** NEEDED AT CURRENT RESIDENTIAL DENSITY

**Figure 10:** The Dilemma



60 Units / 4 du/acre — Low Density Residential

120 Units / 8 du/acre — Medium Density Residential

300 Units / 20 du/acre — High Density Residential

450 Units / 30 du/acre — Urban Density Residential

Commercial — Commercial

450 Units / Mixed Use 30 du/acre — Mixed Use

Park — Parks and Open Space

Community Services — Community Services

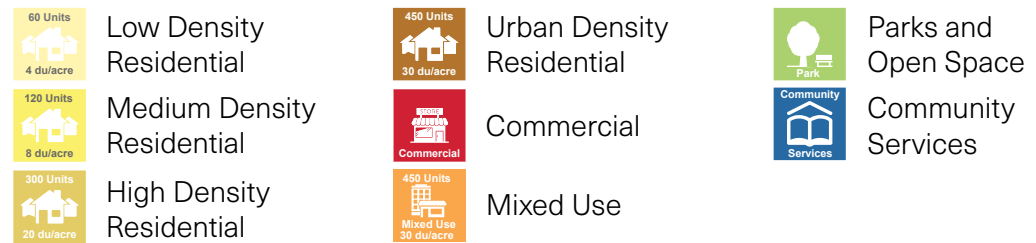**Figure 11:** Land use chips

## CHIP GAME RESULTS

In analyzing the scenarios developed by Stakeholders, the Planning Commission, and other community groups, four distinct potential growth locations of increased density were identified: (1) North Gateway near I-15 and 4800 S, (2) the future FrontRunner Station Area, (3) Southwest Gateway near I-15 and (4) CR 164, and the intersection of US 6 and Spanish Fork Parkway. The North Gateway area and the future Station Area emerged as consistently high-density zones, averaging about 30 dwelling units per acre in the northern portion and around 16 dwelling units per acre near the station. In contrast, the Southwest Gateway displayed a broader range of density approaches, while the area around US 6 and Spanish Fork Parkway was recognized as another key growth location. Additionally, some groups considered infill along Main Street as a viable option for increased density.

These results informed the development of two potential growth scenarios that were presented to the community in Survey #2.
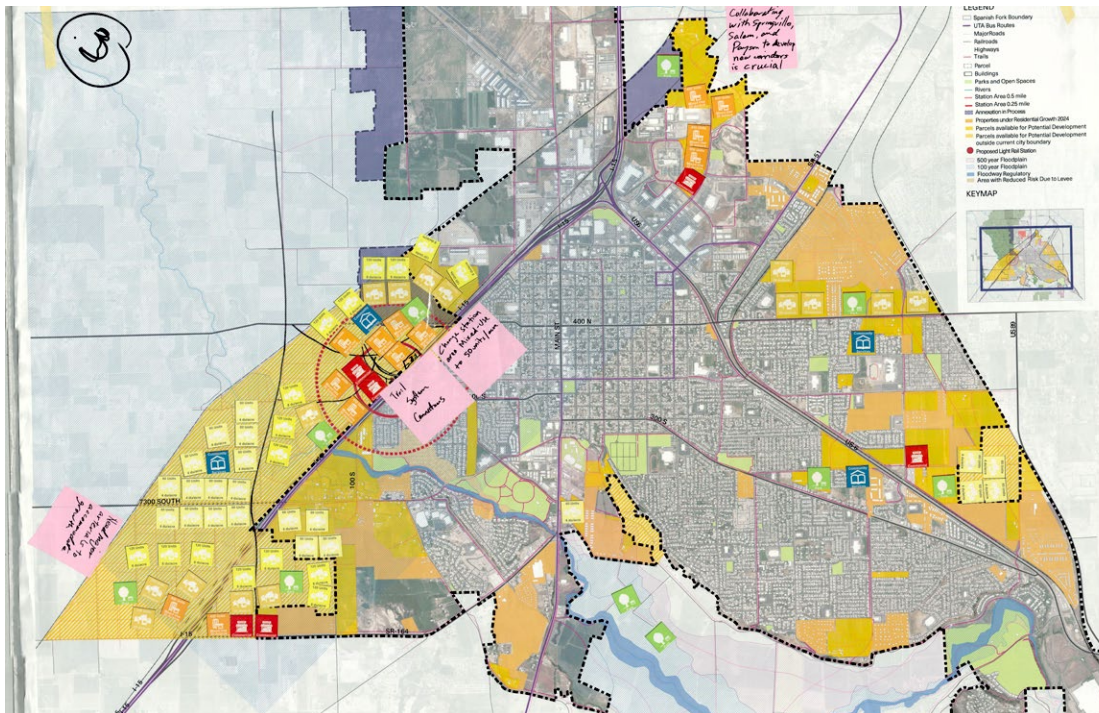


**Figure 12:** Chip game results

# KEY TAKEAWAYS

## WHAT WE HEARD...

Consensus in potential growth areas

Need to create some higher/ medium density growth areas

Follow current development patterns

Integrate mixed-use and a variety of housing options

## HOW IT INFORMS THE PLAN...

Two Growth and Land Use scenarios where created following feedback from the Chip Game

Both Scenarios incorporate the 4 identified growth areas

Scenarios include medium density mixed-use and medium density housing

Hwy 6 intersection is seen as a smaller and less dense growth area

## SURVEY #2

Survey #2 aimed to gather feedback on potential growth and land use scenarios based on the chip game results and concepts for future development around the station area. The survey, open from July 30 to August 19, recorded a total of 286 responses, reflecting a diverse range of community perspectives.

### DEMOGRAPHICS

Although there were not as many responses as survey #1, respondents fell into similar demographic categories:

28% ARE
**35-44**
YEARS

**46/52**
male/female

**64%**
participated in
Survey #1

**95%**
full-time
residents

## POTENTIAL GROWTH LOCATIONS

Four areas were defined as the potential growth locations:

- North Gateway
- Southwest Gateway
- East Spanish Fork
- Station Area
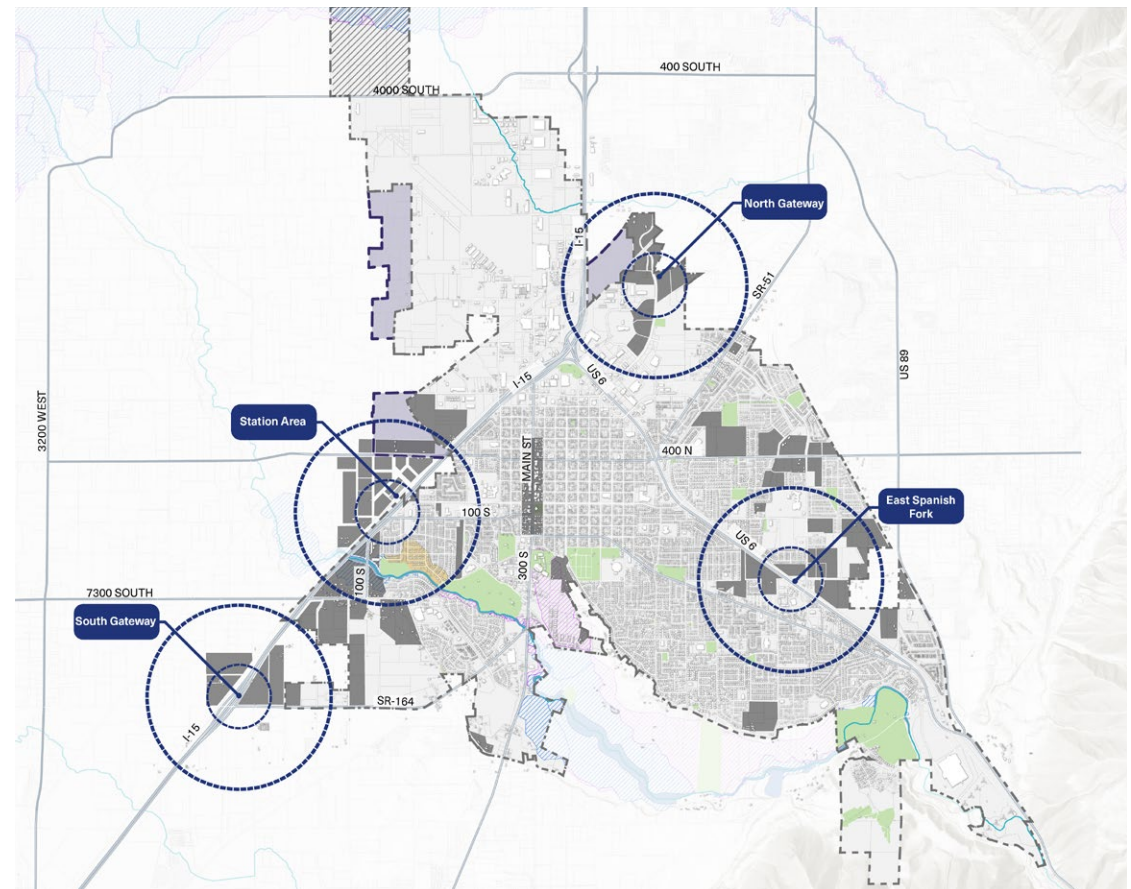


**Figure 13:** Proposed growth locations

## NORTH GATEWAY

UDOT is currently constructing a new freeway interchange at I-15 and 2700 North, offering a strategic opportunity to establish a new gateway on the north side of the city. This development is expected to reshape the area, making it a focal point for future growth. Key land use priorities for this area include integrating commercial and retail spaces to boost economic activity, developing neighborhood parks to enhance community recreational opportunities, and creating mixed-use developments to promote vibrant, walkable environments.
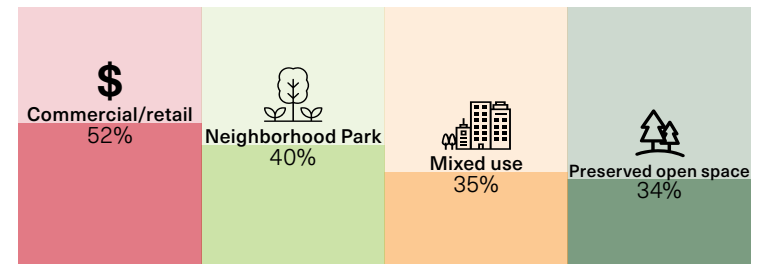


**Figure 14:** North Gateway top land use priorities

## EAST SPANISH FORK

While much of the east side of Spanish Fork features established residential neighborhoods, there are still areas with potential for development, particularly around US 6 and near Spanish Fork Parkway. Respondents have expressed a desire for more neighborhood-serving retail and additional housing options in these areas. Top land use priorities for this region include establishing commercial and retail spaces, preserving open space, focusing on low-density housing such as single-family homes, and developing neighborhood parks. These priorities aim to enhance the area's functionality and livability while maintaining its community-oriented character.
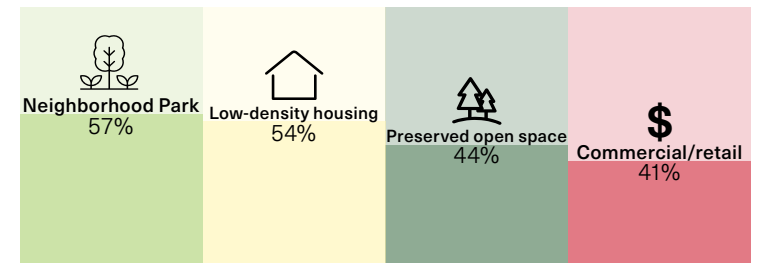


**Figure 15:** East Spanish Fork top land use priorities

## STATION AREA

UTA is currently conducting an environmental assessment to determine the best location for a future FrontRunner station, while UDOT is evaluating the potential for a new interchange through a similar assessment. UTA's station area planning aims to boost transit ridership and expand affordable housing options. Key land use priorities include developing neighborhood parks, mixed-use spaces, preserved open areas, and medium-density housing.
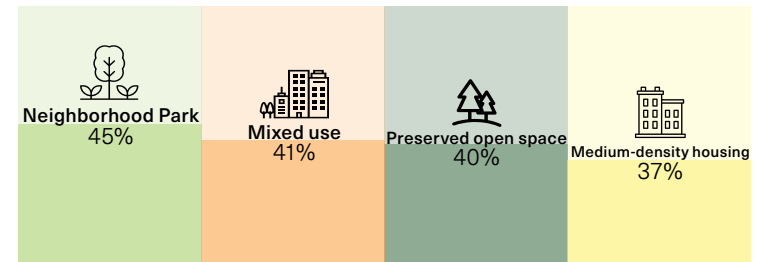


**Figure 16:** Station area top land use priorities

## SOUTHWEST GATEWAY

UDOT has future plans to reconstruct the existing interchange at I-15 and SR 164, also known as the Benjamin Exit, located in the southwestern part of Spanish Fork. This project presents an opportunity to establish a new southwest gateway to town. The top land use priorities for this area include developing commercial and retail spaces, medium-density housing such as townhomes and condos, low-density single-family homes, neighborhood parks and preserved open space.
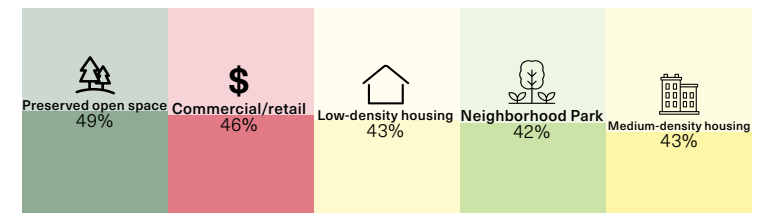


**Figure 17:** Southwest Gateway top land use priorities

## SCENARIO 1: EAST-WEST SPINE (400 N TO 100 S)

In this Scenario, the North Gateway has the highest average density and the largest percentage of total growth. The Station Area and South Gateway also concentrate an important percentage of growth, while the area along US 6 near the intersection with Spanish Fork Parkway accommodates a smaller growth percentage, with medium density development and neighborhood-serving commercial uses. Redevelopment along Main Street can help increase density and vitality downtown, while accommodating a smaller percentage of future growth.

Top strateiges for Scenario 1 included areas of growth that are distributed throughout various parts of the city, rather than being concentrated solely along I-15. To enhance this development, the redevelopment of underutilized land along Main Street is proposed, while also improving East-West streets to better connect the proposed nodes. This comprehensive approach aims to create a more integrated urban environment, fostering connectivity and revitalizing key areas within Spanish Fork.

**Areas of growth are distributed in various parts of the city and not just along I-15** (majority ranked 1st)

**Redevelopment of underutilized land is proposed along Main Street** (majority ranked 2nd)

**East-West streets will be improved to connected proposed nodes** (majority ranked 3rd)

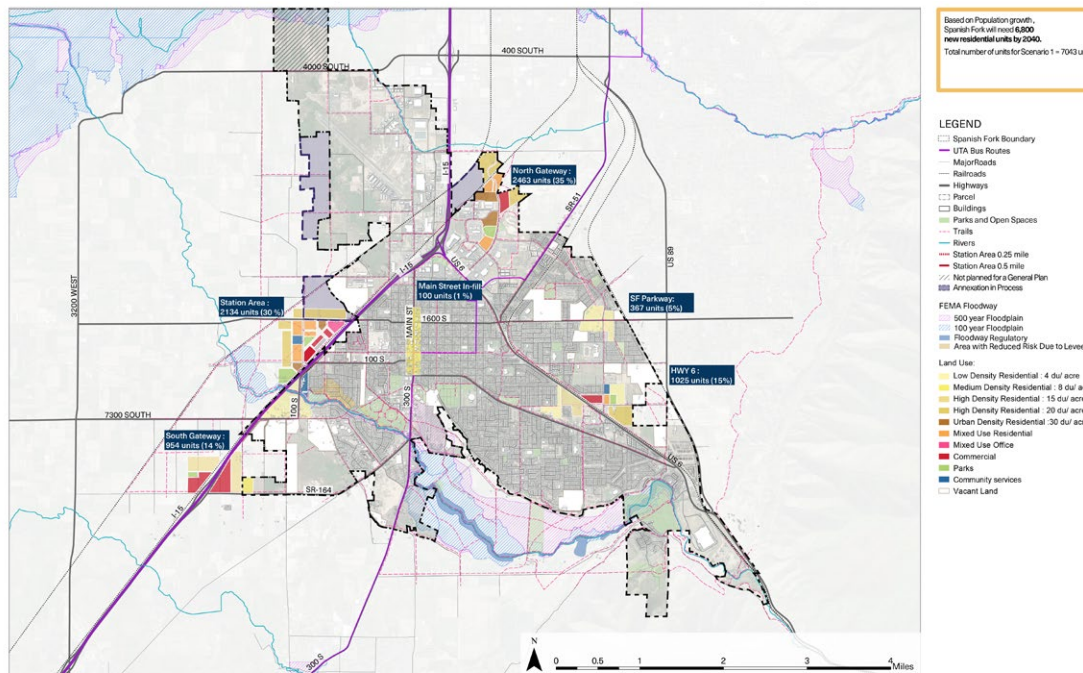**Figure 19:** Scenario 1 preferred strategies

## SCENARIO 2: I-15 FOCUSED

In Scenario 2, growth is concentrated along the I-15 Corridor, with the North Gateway area accounting for the largest percentage of new units, the South Gateway area accommodating significant growth and high density, and the Station Area focusing on medium density mixed-use and residential land uses. Hwy 6 plays a smaller role in this Scenario.

The top strategies emphasize a focused approach to urban development, with no major growth proposed along Highway 6. Instead, growth will be concentrated in specific nodes along I-15, with the North Gateway designated to hold the highest density. This targeted strategy aims to streamline development and maximize the efficient use of land in key areas.



**Figure 18:** Scenario 1

**Figure 20:** Scenario 2

 **No major growth is proposed along Hwy 6** (majority ranked 1st)

 **Growth nodes are only focused along I-15** (majority ranked 2nd)

 **North Gateway holds the highest density** (majority ranked 3rd)

**Figure 21:** Scenario 2 preferred strategies

# KEY TAKEAWAYS

## WHAT WE HEARD...

**$** North Gateway is seens as the main commercial growth area

The future Station Area is seen as a mixed-use core

South Gateway is seen as lower density area with open space and commercial

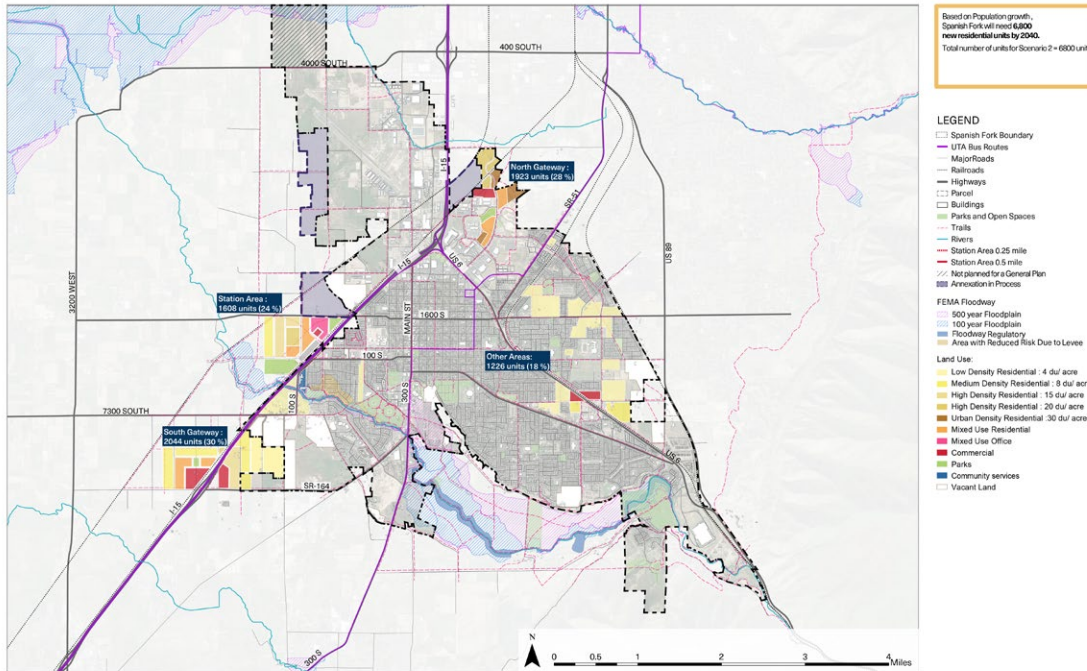**X** No major growth along Hwy 6 area

Main Street can see some infill development

## HOW IT INFORMS THE PLAN...

Preferred plan will concentrate higher density development on North Gateway and medium density mixed-use on the future Station Area

Main Street and Hwy 6 will be considered as areas for small change

South Gateway will follow existing development patterns

Open spaces will be preserved and celebrated