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Environmental Dimensions of Wellbeing & Policy in Utah Communities

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DECEMBER 2025



***REPORT FOR THE USU
INSTITUTE OF LAND, WATER, AND AIR***

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Project Goals:

The primary goal of this project was to explore environmental perspectives from Utah residents and city leaders to inform policy and practice drawing on survey and interview data gathered by the Utah Wellbeing Project at Utah State University.

The Utah Wellbeing Survey is a partnership with Utah cities and towns to assess local wellbeing. For this report, we drew upon 2024 survey data, as well as supplemental interviews with 38 city leaders in spring 2025 to identify the environmental dimensions of how people value their communities as well as the most pressing environmental issues from local perspectives. This report compares survey findings from residents and interview findings from local leaders to assess alignments and misalignments on local environmental issues across Utah communities.

This report addresses research goals funded by USU's Institute for Land, Water, and Air to better understand local perspectives on the environment. Based on research findings, we provide practical suggestions for environmental policy and practice in Utah.



Data:

To address these goals, we relied on two distinct phases of data collection.

Phase 1: Local Residents (2024 Utah Wellbeing Survey)

We collected 16,712 survey responses from residents across 51 cities and towns in Utah in spring 2024. These surveys included both quantitative (numeric) and qualitative (open-ended responses) data. Quantitative questions focused on the rating and importance of local environmental quality as well as levels of concern about a variety of issues. Responses to open-ended questions allowed residents to provide additional insights into local environmental values, specific environmental concerns, and desired solutions or steps to address local issues.

Phase 2: City Leaders (2025 Supplemental Interviews)

In spring 2025, we conducted interviews with city leaders (e.g., mayors, city administrators, communication directors, development directors, etc.) across 38 cities and towns Utah. These interviews asked about the strengths, challenges, and needs of cities and towns, as well as actions the cities were taking to address these challenges.

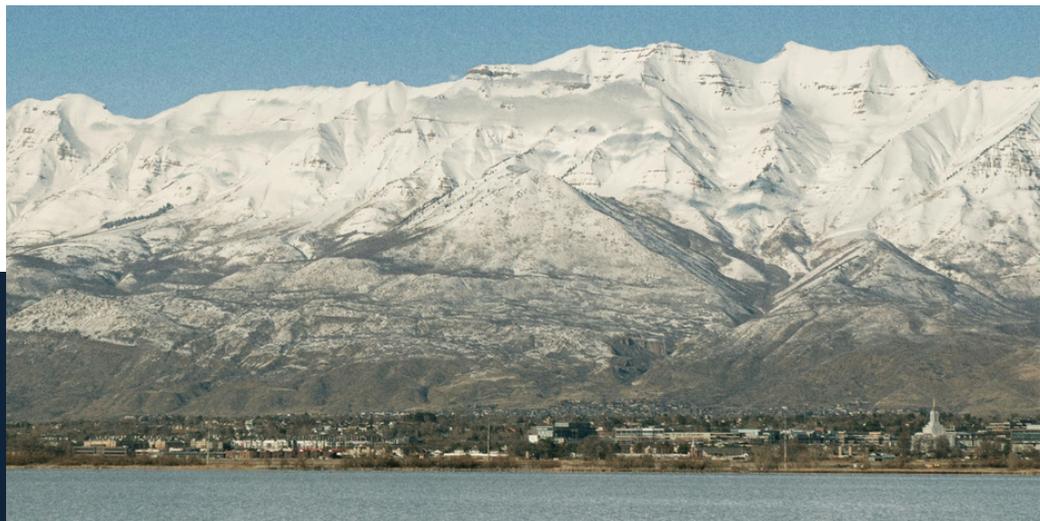


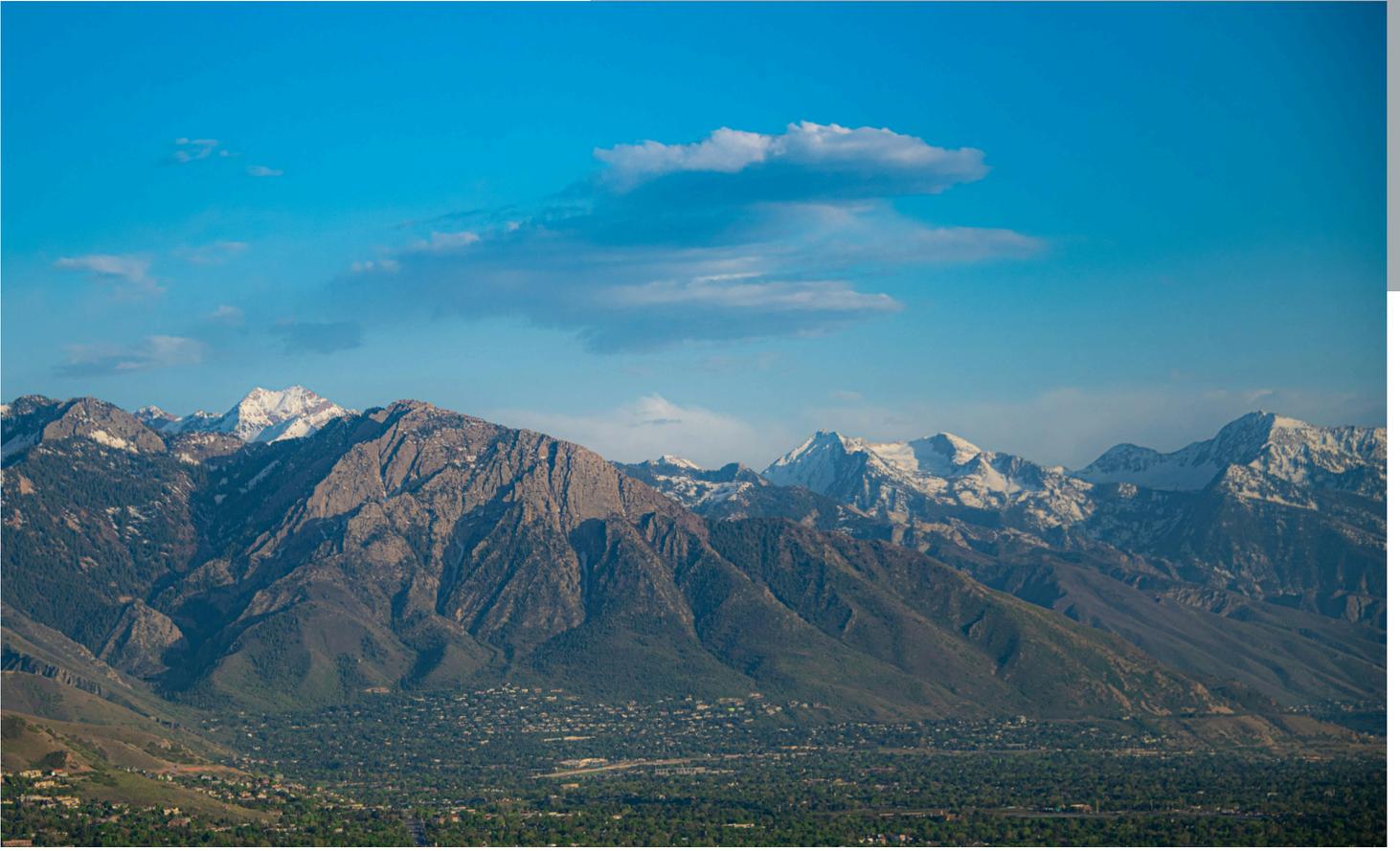
Focus Areas:

The findings presented in this report center on local environmental values, the importance and rating of local environmental quality and personal wellbeing, and levels of concern about six specific environmental issues: air quality, water supply, water quality, access to open/green spaces, the Great Salt Lake, and climate change. Quantitative findings show the proportions of Utahns who are concerned about each of these issues, while qualitative findings reveal similarities and nuances in local values and experiences across Utah communities as well as local resident perspectives on possible solutions and desired actions. Interviews with local leaders help to assess key environmental issues from their vantage point and how well aligned they are their residents' concerns.

Funding:

Funding was provided by USU's Institute for Land, Water, and Air to support inquiry on local environmental quality through analysis of survey data obtained through the 2024 Utah Wellbeing Survey as well as from interviews with city leaders in 2025. Original data collection through the Utah Wellbeing Survey was funded largely by the Utah League of Cities and Towns, with additional support from multiple municipalities, the Wasatch Front Regional Council, the Utah Agricultural Experiment Station, and USU Extension.





INTRODUCTION

The Utah Wellbeing Project

The Utah Wellbeing Project, led by Dr. Courtney Flint from Utah State University (USU), gathers Utahns' perspectives on key aspects of wellbeing to help guide local planning and policy. In 2024, the project collected over 16,700 survey responses from Utah adults from 51 cities and towns. Environmental perspectives are a central focus of the survey, among others such as health, population growth, economic development, and local concerns and wellbeing more broadly. The project also provides resources for community leaders and service providers focusing on improving wellbeing.

The Environmental is Important to Utahns

Utah is known for its nature, from scenic mountains to red rocks. Many Utahns value the beauty, recreational activities, and peace Utah’s environment provides. When asked what they value most about their city, over half of respondents (5,923/11,593 responses) mentioned something about their environment, from nature around them and recreational activities to the small town feel of their community. The influence of local environmental quality on wellbeing is reflected in the strong correlation between these two factors – in other words, those who rate their local environmental quality as high tend to have higher levels of overall personal wellbeing (see Figure 1).

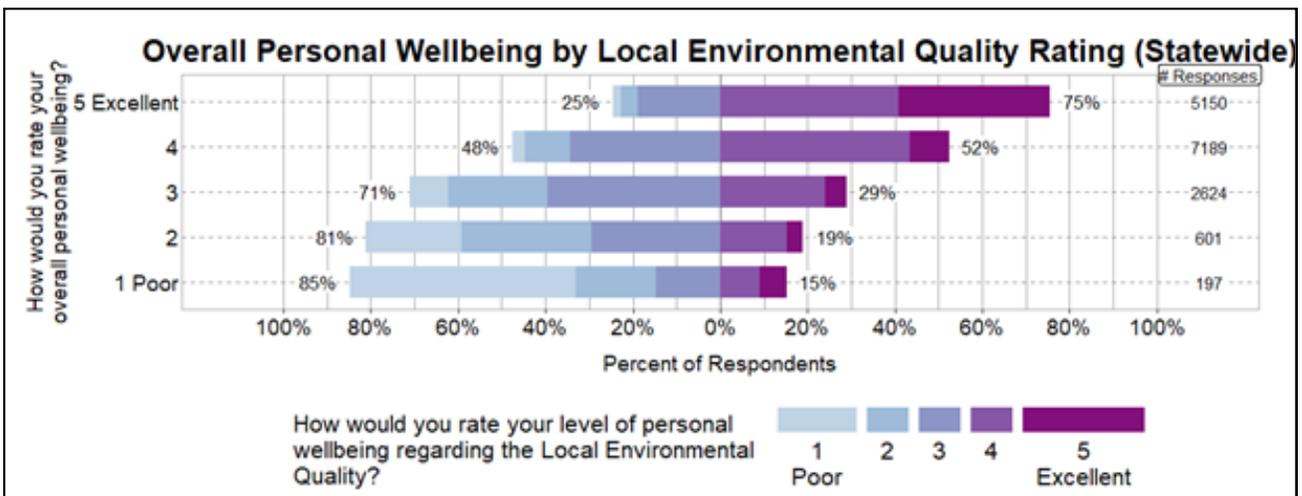


Figure 1. Correlation between overall personal wellbeing and local environmental quality in statewide data.

Despite the many elements of Utah’s environment that were repeatedly reported as being highly valued by our participants, there were also a number of environmental concerns. For example, survey data show that 85.3% of respondents across Utah indicated the importance of local environmental quality as a 4 or 5 on a 5-point scale (see Figure 2).

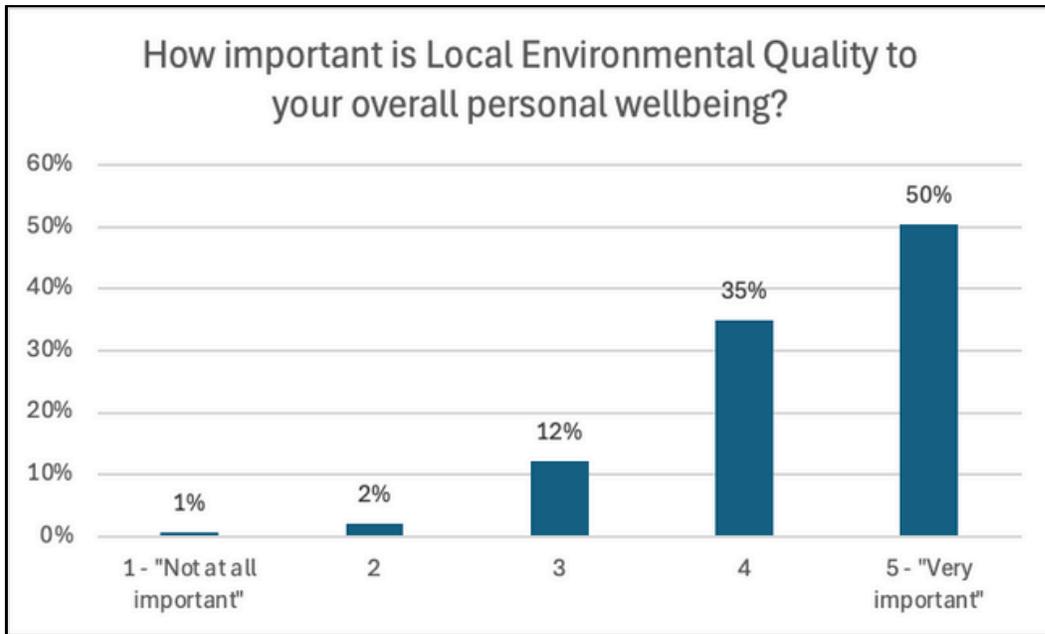


Figure 2. Distribution of importance scores for local environmental quality (Statewide).

However, only 54.4% of respondents across Utah rated their local environmental quality a 4 or a 5 on a 5-point scale from “Poor” to “Excellent”, suggesting there is room for improvement across the state (Figure 3).

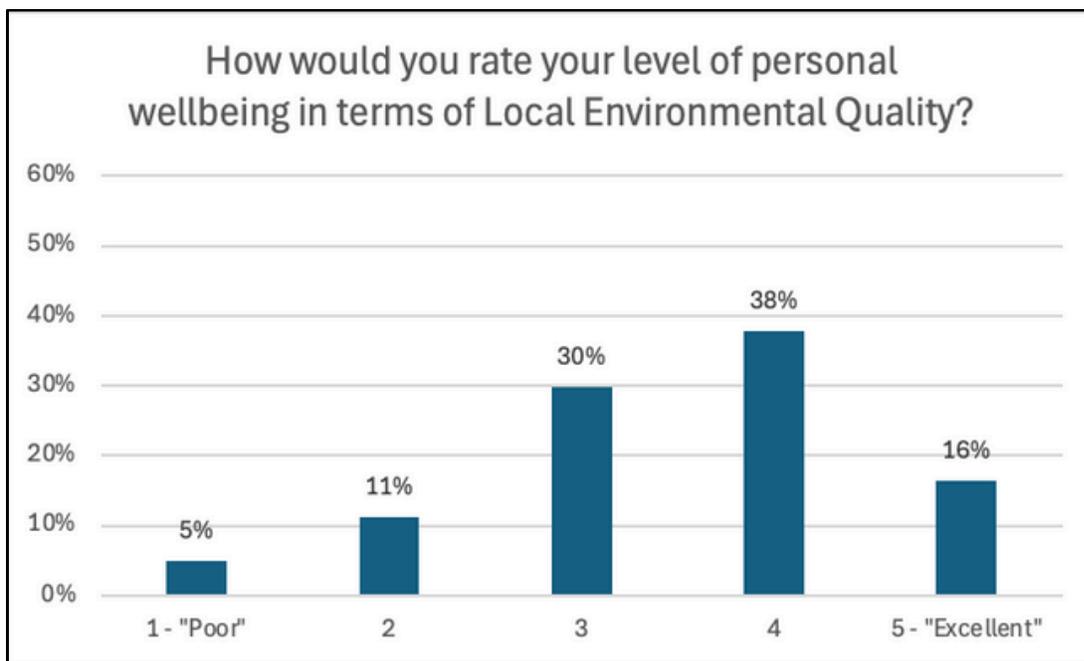


Figure 3. Distribution of ratings of local environmental quality (Statewide).

Figure 4 below shows how the nexus of importance and rating of local environmental quality varied across Utah communities, with average community ratings ranging from 3 to 4.3 on a 5-point scale.

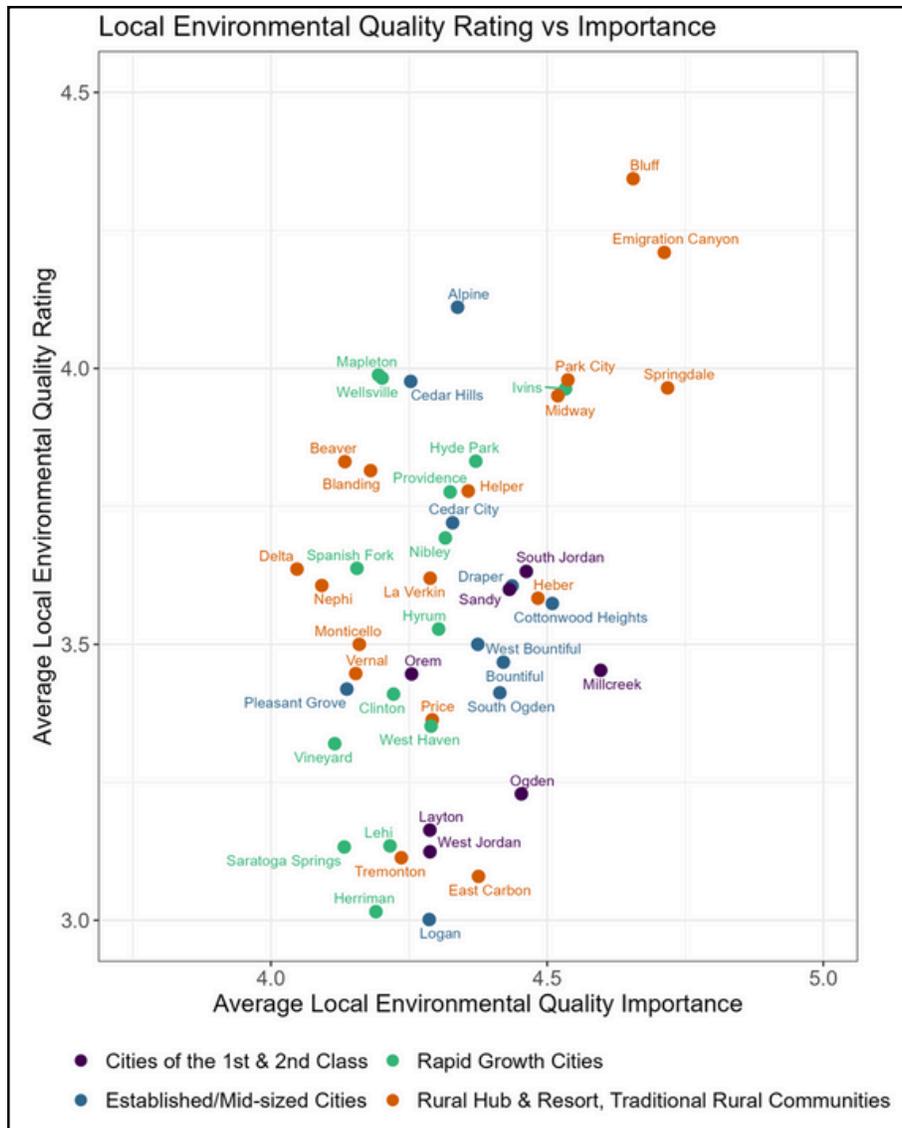


Figure 4. Position of Utah cities in the nexus of Local Environmental Quality rating (Y-axis) and Local Environmental Quality importance (X-axis)

This discrepancy between the reported importance and the reported rating, along with the variability in average ratings by city, warrants an investigation of environmental concerns across Utah at a city level.

The Current Report

This report contains in-depth information on a variety of local environmental perspectives. First, data collection methods are described. Second, research findings are presented from the 2024 Utah Wellbeing Survey (Phase 1) that highlight local quantitative and qualitative data summaries regarding various environmental concerns. Qualitative insights on what could be done to improve environmental quality and wellbeing are highlighted from the perspective of community residents. Third, insights gained from interviews with city leaders are shared (Phase 2) to paint a fuller picture of environmental concerns at a city level. To conclude, a summary of major takeaway points is provided along with a commentary on their implications for policy makers and practitioners in Utah.

METHODS

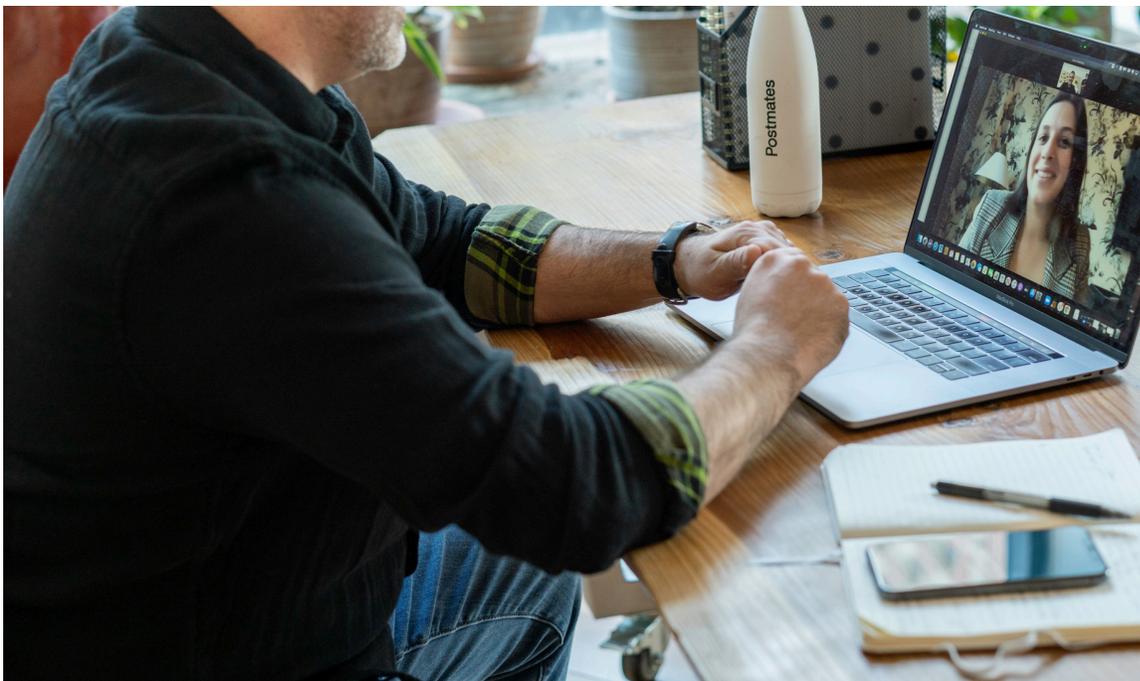
Phase 1

Our team collaborated with local city leaders to distribute survey links to residents through various platforms, including city newsletters, email lists, social media, websites, and other community networks. The survey was administered between February and May 2024 for the majority of cities and towns, with two cities completing the survey in the fall of 2024. The survey, available in English and Spanish, gathered both quantitative and qualitative data. Participation was voluntary and anonymous.

The current report focuses on a subset of survey questions and responses elucidating Utahn’s environmental concerns as well as their desired solutions to these concerns. Our analysis emphasized descriptive statistics and data visualizations to demonstrate differences across cities. We also analyzed open-response data to nuance to identify key themes related to environmental concerns and desired solutions to addressing these concerns.

Phase 2

In spring 2025, interviews were conducted via Zoom with leaders from 38 cities that participated in the 2024 Utah Wellbeing Survey. In addition to evaluation questions, participants were asked to articulate strengths, challenges, and needs of cities and towns, as well as actions the cities were taking to address these challenges. Interviews with city leaders were analyzed qualitatively to identify key themes.





FINDINGS

Phase 1: Utah Residents' Environmental Concerns

Quantitative Data

When asked how concerned they were about various environmental issues, most Utahns fell in the “major” or “moderately” concerned categories. Across the state, Utahns were most concerned about water supply, water quality, air quality, and open/green spaces. Concerns about the Great Salt Lake were lower overall but more localized to cities and towns near the Great Salt Lake. Concerns about climate change generally were less common than other concerns, but still salient with nearly 50% of Utahns falling in the major or moderately concerned categories (see Figure 5).

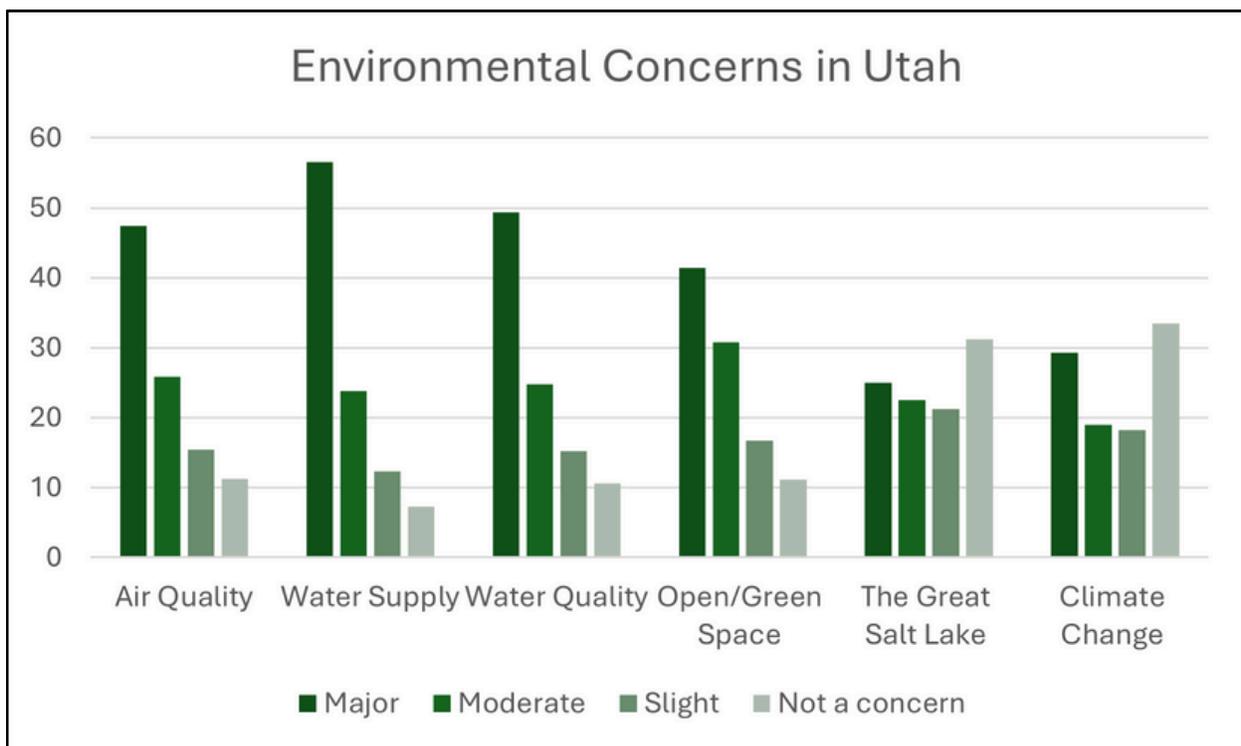


Figure 5. Distribution of environmental concern levels

Open-ended data

Those who responded 1-3 (n = 7,207) to the question pictured in Figure 3 (“How do you rate your local environmental quality?”), were asked the following, open-ended question:

Are there specific aspects of local environmental quality that you feel are problematic?

We received 4,995 responses (69%) to this open-ended question. Figure 6 provides a breakdown of the frequency of mentions of specific concerns in open comments (note that the number of responses exceeds 4,995 as many respondents listed multiple environmental concerns).

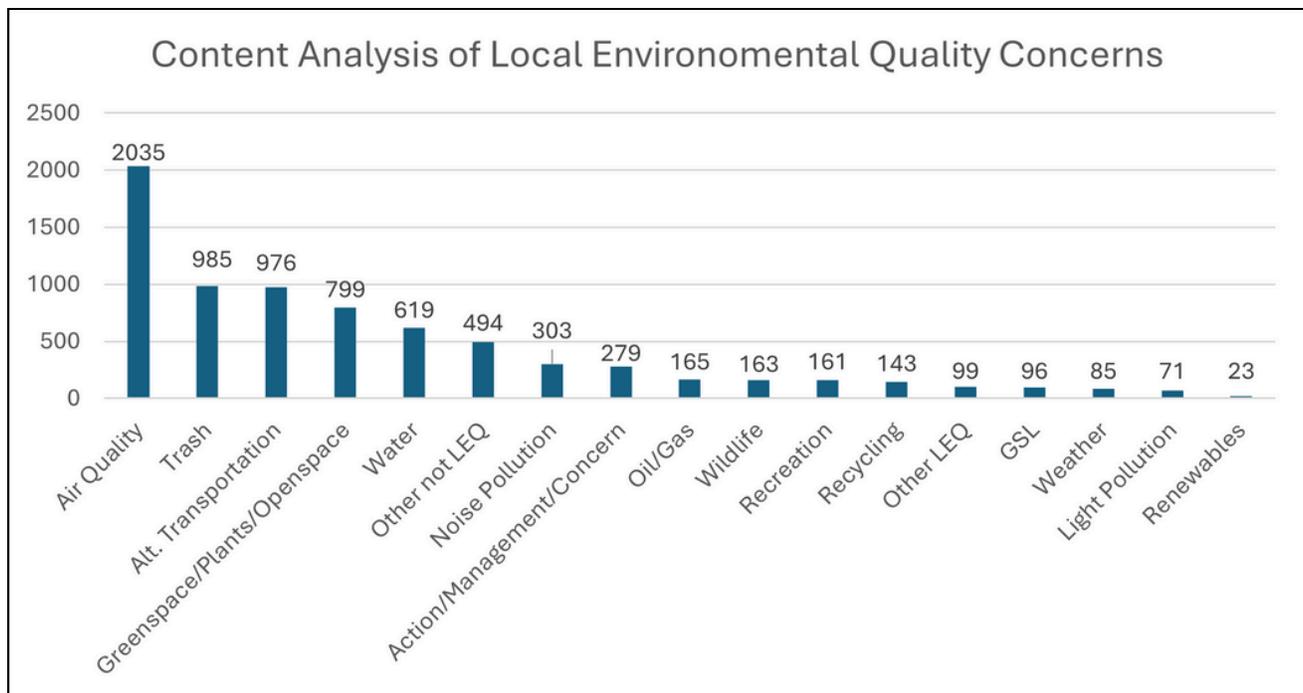


Figure 6. Distribution of the number of mentions of environmental concerns in open comments

In addition to these responses, we also analyzed a subset of responses to a question asking, “Is there anything that could be done to improve wellbeing in [City]?” Specifically, 1,221 responses to these questions were identified as relating to environmental concerns. We analyzed these responses to identify desired solutions.

These responses have been categorized according to the specific environmental concern (i.e., air quality, water supply and water quality, the Great Salt Lake, access to open/green spaces, and climate change) and will be presented alongside the quantitative findings.

Air Quality

Quantitative Findings

Across Utah, 73% of Utahns expressed that they had a moderate or major concern about the Air Quality in Utah. As seen in Figure 7, concern about air quality varied greatly by city/town, with only 24-25% (Monticello and Blanding) expressing moderate or major concern on the low end, and 92-93% (Midvale and Millcreek) expressing moderate or major concern on the high-end.



Concern About Air Quality Across Utah (2024)

As you look to the future of your city, how much of a concern is air quality?

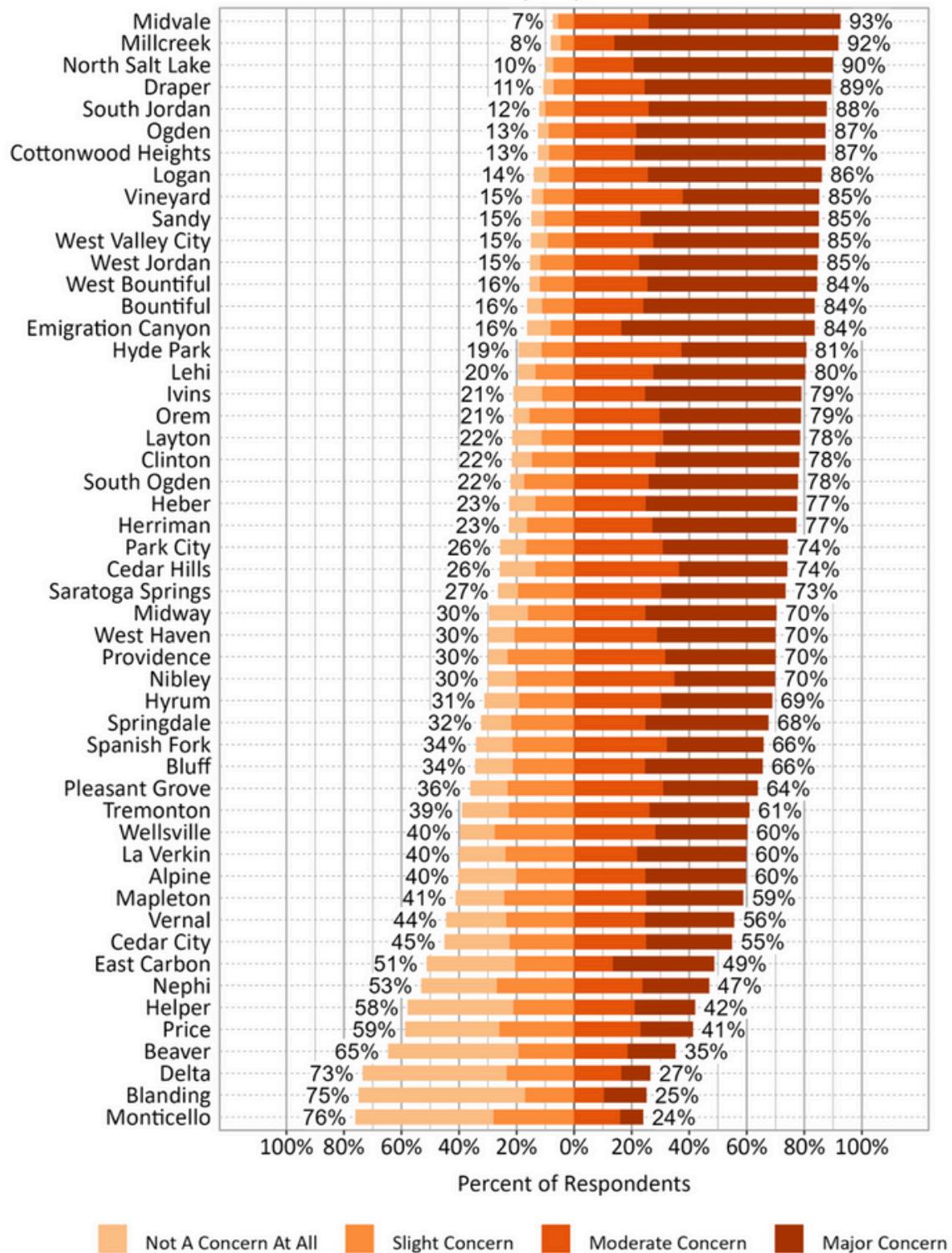


Figure 7. Distribution of air quality concerns

Qualitative Findings

Concerns

Open-ended responses revealed specific concerns related to air quality, including pollution from refineries and mining operations, inversion in the winter, odor from sewers, farming operations, or factories/refineries, burning wood/green waste, among others, as demonstrated in the following quotes:

- “Air quality is a frequent issue. Having an oil refinery right next door doesn’t help that either. If the Great Salt Lake dries up, we’ll be one of the first communities to get all the toxic dust.”
– **Bountiful Resident**
- “Clean air is always an issue in Utah. In Clinton particularly, there is too much construction (new homes and commercial buildings) going up which add to the dust and poor air quality.”
– **Clinton Resident**
- “Utah has the worst air quality in the country... its bad in draper and you can see just how bad when you go to the top of the mountain and see the blanket of pollution over the valley.” – **Draper Resident**
- “The beef plant still smells even though I know they've got scrubbers and it's better than it used to be. But it would be lovely if they didn't smell at all.” – **Hyrum resident**
- “The air quality keeps me inside more than I would like.” – **Lehi Resident**
- “PLEASE PLEASE do something about the sewer treatment, saying we will be better about treatment chemicals is not a long-term solution. The smell is just awful to live with and downright embarrassing to our town.” – **Midway Resident**
- “The poor air quality due to the numerous refineries in the area! I often can smell gasoline type smells as I step out of my house!” – **North Salt Lake Resident**

Desired Solutions

Some of the desired solutions to address air quality included increasing walkability, access to EV chargers, and public transportation to reduce pollution from private vehicles. Residents across Utah also emphasized the importance of monitoring and enforcing policies on vehicle exhaust and creating policy limiting the frequency of residential fires. Finally, residents across Utah expressed the need to address development, pollution, and smells of private companies, including quarries, refineries, factories, and housing developments:

- *“Monitor car/truck exhaust and SOUND levels and end the pollution.” – Cedar City*
- *“We need stricter burning laws. I can't go outside when the air is bad.” – Cedar Hills*
- *“[We need a] public transportation route especially in winter to limit vehicle traffic on bad air days.” – Emigration Canyon Resident*
- *“More of a walking/biking culture would be nice as air quality will diminish in the future.” – Heber Resident*
- *“Reduce airborne dust. Do not allow loud motorbikes and trucks. Don't allow bad exhaust and trucks that emit black clouds of dust. There should be emissions testing for all vehicles. Enforce air quality. No more burning of weeds or fields.” – Ivins Resident*
- *“Re-route air traffic around our town so we aren't victim to their chem trails.” – La Verkin Resident*
- *“We desperately need frontrunner. We need connections with the outside world (Wasatch Front) that aren't just roadways. Frontrunner would be a godsend for bringing people in, helping people get out, keeping air quality in check, and expanding population concerns.” – Logan Resident*
- *“Continue prioritizing bicycling, pedestrian, and public transit routes. Continue working hard on our air quality and fighting the gravel mine.” – Millcreek Resident*

- *“Think about ways to improve the air quality, especially the air quality hurt by mining and oil refineries. The whole city is heavily polluted with dust and has a disgusting smell.” – **North Salt Lake Resident***
- *“It would be nice if Ogden would have a fire night once a week instead of every night! And limit fires for heating homes in the winter but I feel for people already being squeezed by higher energy/food/tax costs that have to use wood to heat with.” – **Ogden Resident***
- *“Encourage installation of fast EV chargers. There are people with children who won't visit Cache County because there are no realistic ways to charge their EVs once they get here. Owning a low pollution, cheap to operate EV is not realistic without fast chargers available to all of the new apartment dwellers in town. Right now only home owners can do charging at home. Air quality would improve if there were more EVs.” – **Providence Resident***
- *“Better public transit. Providing housing to those in need. Work to fight climate change. More multi family housing units. Higher density housing and better walkability. People should be prioritized over cars.” – **West Valley City Resident***

Water Supply & Water Quality

Quantitative Findings

Most of the Utahns we surveyed had moderate or major concerns about the Water Quality (74%) and the Water Supply (80%) in Utah. While there was some variation by city, concern remained consistently high, with only five cities/towns dropping below 65% in the major or moderately concerned categories for water quality (see Figure 8), and only two cities/towns dropping below 70% in the major or moderately concerned categories for water supply (see Figure 9).

Concern About Water Quality Across Utah (2024)

As you look to the future of your city, how much of a concern is water quality?

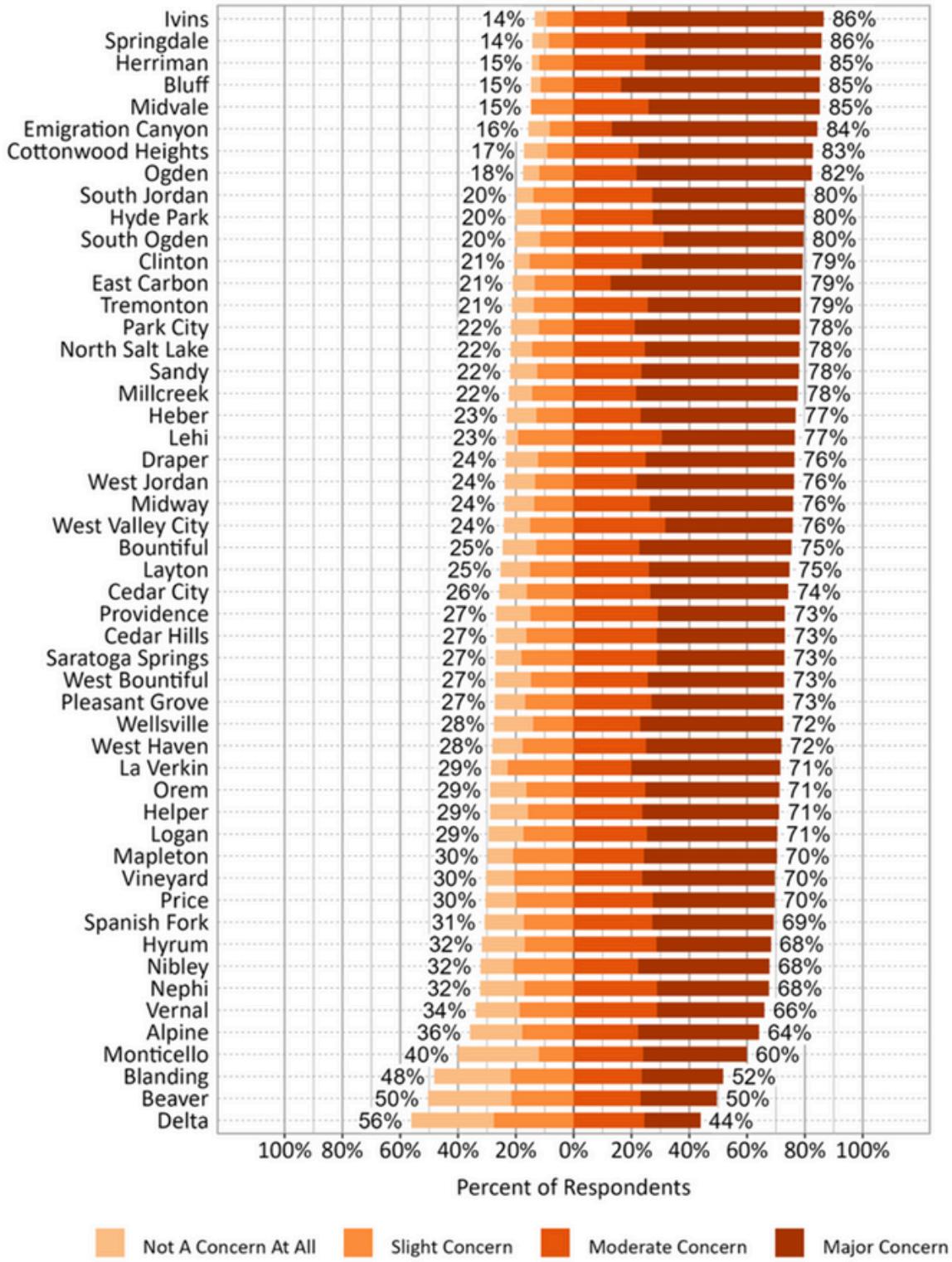


Figure 8. Distribution of water quality concerns

Concern About Water Supply Across Utah (2024)

As you look to the future of your city, how much of a concern is water supply?

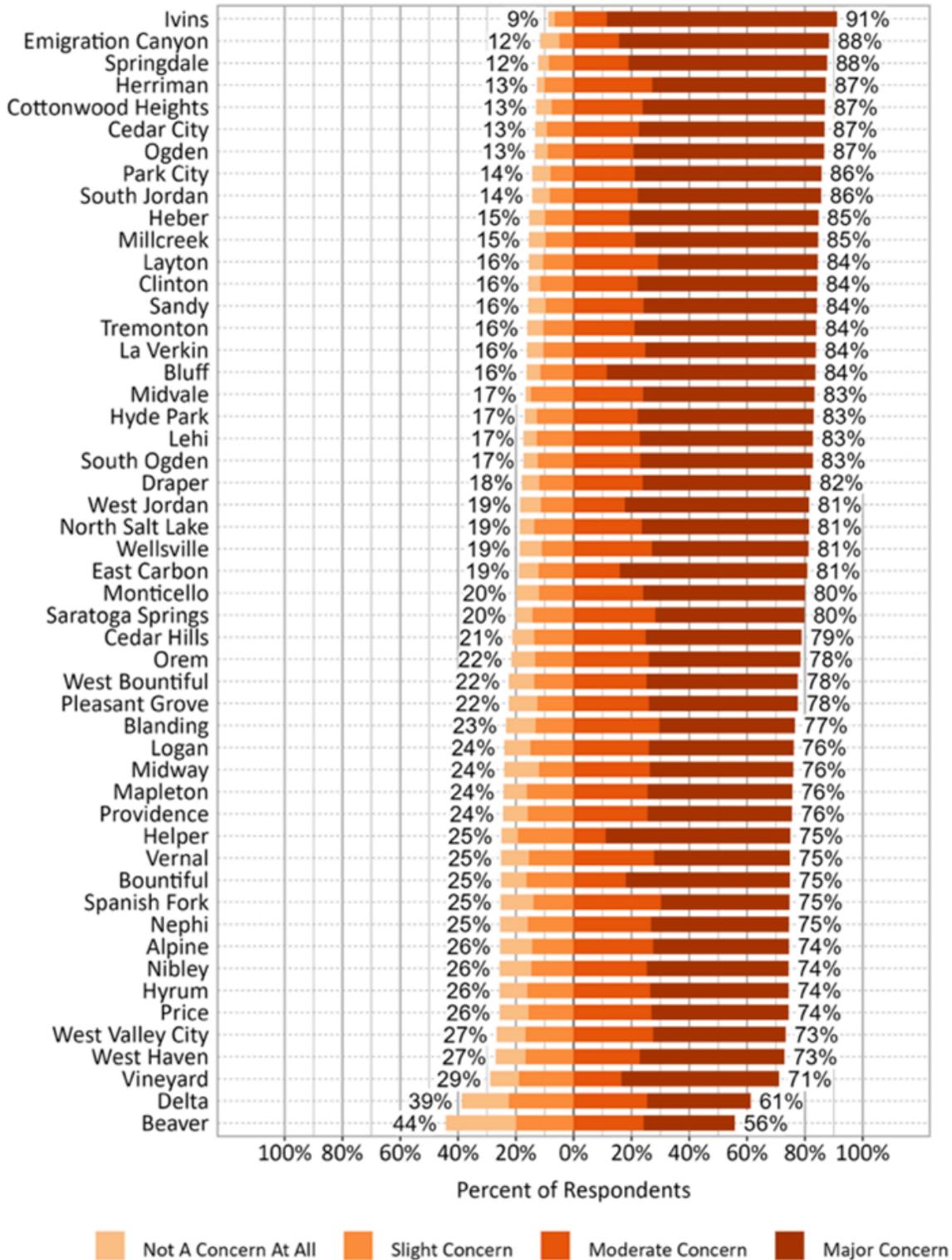


Figure 9. Distribution of water supply concerns

Qualitative Findings

Concerns

Across Utah, residents expressed worry over water supply, viewing unchecked growth, overdevelopment, and careless city practices as major threats to an already limited resource. Many residents felt that their city or town was running out of water, with new housing and recreational projects, like water parks and multifamily complexes, outpacing what their local systems can sustain. Overwatering of parks and lawns was another commonly expressed frustration, with many residents viewing green lawns as a symbol of waste and poor conservation enforcement. In addition to these salient concerns about water supply, many residents also raised serious concerns about their local water quality. Participants described foul-tasting or unsafe tap water, aging infrastructure, and inadequate monitoring. For some participants, reports of illness, E. coli contamination in irrigation systems, and possible carcinogens in groundwater were especially concerning. Many of these quotes reveal a level of distrust toward city and state leaders as many residents fear both the quantity and safety of Utah's water are being neglected as the state grows.

- *“[There’s a] disregard for water conservation by the city (over watering of parks) and no repercussions for residents watering daily or failing to fix their sprinklers.” – **Alpine Resident***
- *“We have way too many people for our little town . . . we don’t have enough water for them all.” – **Cedar City Resident***
- *“Monitoring water consumption is a joke when the city puts in a brand new water park.” – **Cedar Hills Resident***
- *“The groundwater needs to be evaluated for carcinogens. There have been several children diagnosed with cancer in the past few years.” – **Clinton Resident***

- *“Water quality is good, but water infrastructure is failing.” – Cottonwood Resident*
- *“People constantly over watering their lawns. Some people water once or twice a day when once or twice a week would do it.” – Draper Resident*
- *“Our water quality is low. Our family drinks bottled water, [but] when we don't, we get sick.” – East Carbon Resident*
- *“Old septic systems. Not much community support for private Well water quality.” – Emigration Canyon Resident*
- *“Water out of the tap smells awful and tastes worst. It's undrinkable.” – Herriman Resident*
- *“I am concerned about the amount of multihousing units going up and their impact on water usage.” – Layton Resident*
- *“We were unable to eat any of our produce last summer due to e. Coli in the irrigation water supply. We are hoping to start a garden again this year but don't want to bother if we'll be told we can't use it in a few months.” – Lehi Resident*
- *“There is no documentation the City is checking our potable water quality. If the city is checking the water quality where is my monthly reports. The Heber valley sewer district is located in Midway. Residents that live near those sewer pond are experiencing health issues that were not present before the sewer district expanded.” – Midway Resident*
- *“You update part of the town but you don't update the rest! The plumbing is horrible/ hasn't been updated, they don't go and bore out the ditches on the north part of main street making flooding issues for homes.” – Nephi Resident*
- *“Our water has issues all the time with sulfur smell or yucky taste.” – North Salt Lake Resident*
- *“Very concerned about soil and water quality and safety related to historical mining. Also concerned that large residence overdevelopment (especially in historical [Park City] and previously undeveloped natural spaces) will degrade our environment.” – Park City Resident*
- *“Storm drain is never regularly cleaned causing water problems. Road smells of sewer.” – Sandy Resident*
- *“The cities waste treatment continually has issues. The overgrowth of the city vs water availability lead to questionable water treatment.” – Tremonton Resident*
- *“Water recycling options would be nice.” – Vernal Resident*

Desired Solutions

Survey participants presented a wide variety of ideas to help address Utah's growing water supply and quality concerns. Many suggestions focused on smarter conservation efforts, stronger infrastructure, and more coordinated local leadership. A number of residents called for cities to take the lead by modeling responsible water use on public property by replacing lawns with native plants, cutting irrigation at public parks, and investing in infrastructure that can handle both drought and heavy rainfall. Residents also emphasized education and incentives as key tools, urging cities to expand outreach on waterwise landscaping. Other participants wanted to see local governments offer meaningful rebates to incentivize conservation efforts. Overall, many Utahns report that they are eager to do their part, but they want their leaders and neighbors to match their efforts to foster a more water-secure future.

- *“I feel like as a community we need to be more conservative when it comes to using water. The years we have water we should be saving it.” – **Blanding Resident***
- *“The city should facilitate more outreach programs about water-friendly lawn options.” – **Bountiful Resident***
- *“We need to stop planting grass and use native plants like clover and yarrow for lawns.” – **Heber Resident***
- *“There is not enough push to incite homeowners to reduce their lawn size. Maybe the city could be an example by reducing the lawn size and watering around city buildings and parks? The bench is filling up with houses with inadequate infrastructures to accommodate unusual rainfall. If it rains for a day or two, water collection sites are half full or more, and water accumulates in several locations on the roads already. Building the infrastructure to accommodate larger amounts of rainwater would be beneficial in the long run.” – **Hyde Park Resident***

- *“Southern Utah's water security and sustainability is problematic. Water reclamation and reuse should be the number one capital investment priority of Ivins and the greater southern Utah region. The region should make significant, and advance, investments in water reclamation and reuse immediately.” – Ivins Resident*
- *“[We need more] education on appropriate low water yard solutions.” – Logan Resident*
- *“Where I live we do not have secondary water and need to use culinary which is very expensive! The new 164 town homes being built below us are going to have secondary water, why can't WE have the same. My husband and I as well as our neighbors been asking the same question and NEVER get an answer! It would be very helpful to have secondary water access.” – Ogden Resident*
- *“Utah is also in the midst of a long-term water crisis. It's been nice we've had a few years with lots of snow and rain, but another dry year will set us back to where we were in 2020. Utah needs to do more to conserve water and plan for a future where the state population is even bigger than it is now.” – Orem Resident*
- *“[We need] information on landscaping to reduce water consumption, local natural options to replace watered lawn.” – Sandy Resident*
- *“I would like the health of the lake improved through dredging it.” – Saratoga Springs Resident*
- *“I'd love to do the [waterwise] rebates with the city, but they keep changing things in May after I've spent winter planning things and setting up contractors for the work, then they don't work with county offers either, it's one or the other. Yet, now I still need approval from the city and can't take what the county offers because the city has its own rebate bonds or whatever, so I just get stuck with a 1-time park strip flip of \$250, when the county offers me a \$3500 rebate to retrofit my lawn into waterwise plants and drip irrigation. . . . It's not much of an incentive to convert to waterwise, when they have so many restrictions and won't allow to work with county offers now. I think every city but ours participates now.” – South Jordan Resident*



The Great Salt Lake

Quantitative Findings

One specific and unique concern about water supply in Utah is the water levels of the Great Salt Lake, with 48% of the Utahns we surveyed reporting it as a major or moderate concern. There was a great deal more variability in concern about the Great Salt Lake, a pattern that appears to generally align with proximity to the Great Salt Lake, with those within the Great Salt Lake Basin typically expressing greater concern than those outside the Basin (see Figure 10). However, looking closer at community perspectives on the Great Salt Lake for those in the Basin, Figure 11 shows that proximity to the lake within the Basin was not a clear predictor of concern levels.



Concern About the Great Salt Lake Across Utah (2024)

As you look to the future of your city, how much of a concern is the Great Salt Lake?

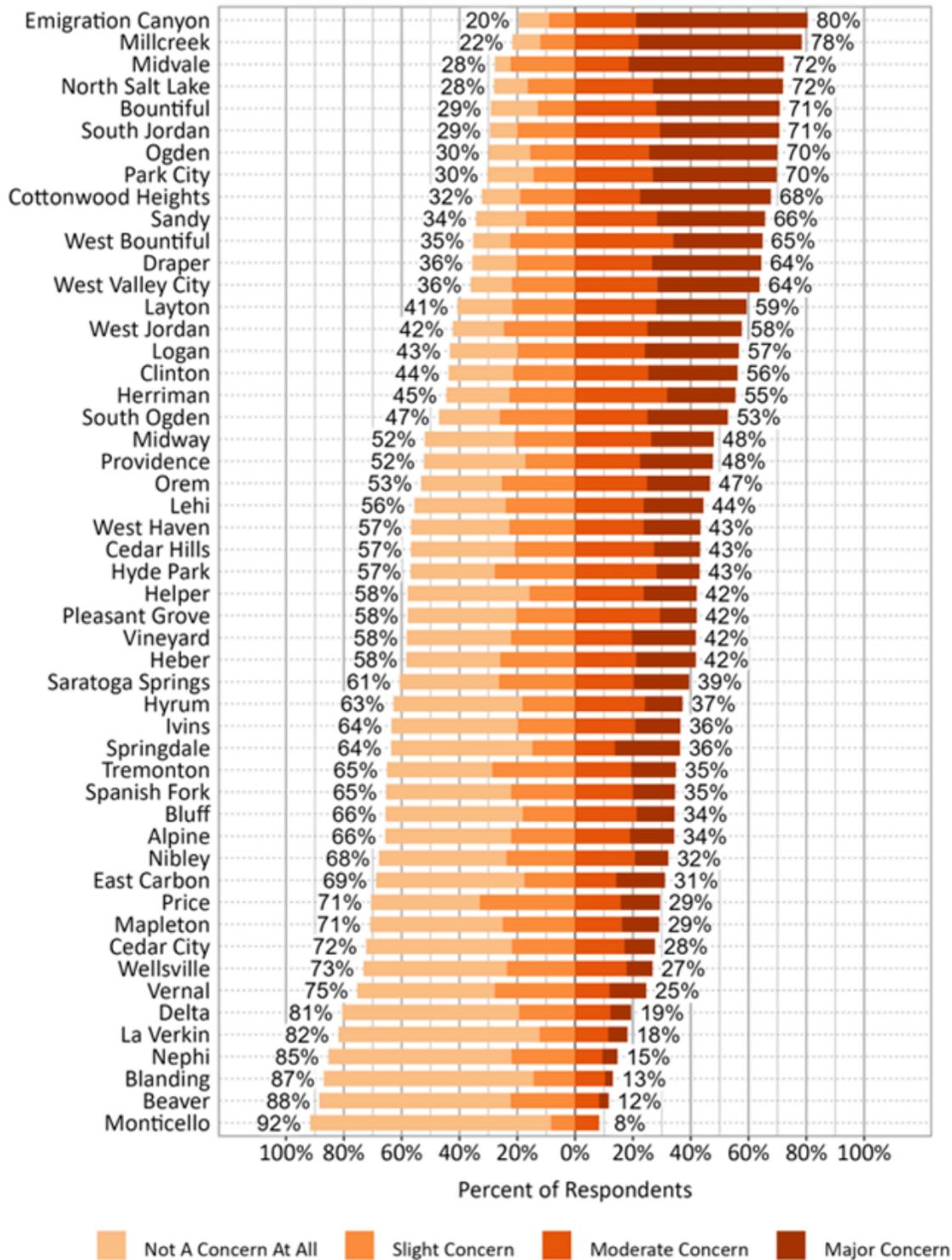


Figure 10. Distribution of Great Salt Lake Concerns



Figure 11. Map showing relative levels of Great Salt Lake concern at the community level within the Great Salt Lake Basin

Qualitative Findings

Concerns

Participants reported that the rapidly lowering water levels in the Great Salt Lake due to water diversion for agriculture, industry, and population growth as a serious concern, now and in the future. In particular, a number of Utahns, particularly those in some of the cities neighboring the Great Salt Lake, expressed fear that as the lakebed dries, the toxic dust containing arsenic and heavy metals will become airborne and threaten air quality and public health. Some participant quotes are presented here:

- *“Bountiful is also located directly east of the drying Great Salt Lake lakebeds. Tailpipe emissions, industrial emissions, and dust from Great Salt Lake all contribute to poor air quality - inversion in the winter and ozone in the summer. This negatively impacts my health and overall quality of life.” – **Bountiful Resident***
- *“Concerned about future worsening of air quality due to mismanagement of Great Salt Lake.” – **Clinton Resident***
- *“The great salt being low causes toxins to rise when the wind blows. The water in Clinton has been contaminated twice while I have lived here.” – **Clinton Resident***
- *“Environmental risk due to the Great Salt Lake lakebed being exposed.” – **Layton Resident***
- *“Dust from Great Salt Lake lakebed exacerbates [my] asthma.” – **Layton Resident***
- *“I worry about water. The news about drought conditions and the Great Salt Lake drying up makes me very concerned.” – **North Salt Lake Resident***



Desired Solutions

Utahn Residents emphasized solutions centered on aggressive water conservation and greater public accountability. A number of residents urged cities to reduce excessive water use, not only by restricting lawn irrigation but by removing barriers that make water-wise landscaping difficult or unaffordable. The residents we surveyed also called for coordinated regional action, noting that local governments must work together. Many residents discussed these solutions alongside the need for climate-conscious urban planning, better management of vehicle traffic and emissions, and tree planting to improve air quality. Some quotes include:

- *“If the Great Salt Lake dries up, we’ll be one of the first communities to get all the toxic dust. Water conservation is not a priority. You can’t water your lawn more than X amount, but the city also makes it difficult to change from grass to anything else because of their requirements of so many plants, and you can’t put this stuff here, and you can only put this stuff there, etc. It’s like living in an HOA where your property taxes are your dues.”*
– **Bountiful Resident**
- *“The environmental catastrophe of the Great Salt Lake drying up impacts all residents of the Salt Lake Valley and our regular Salt Lake Valley inversions have demonstrable, statistically measurable impacts on our health. The City of Cottonwood Heights is one small piece of a much larger puzzle, but the City of Cottonwood Heights does nothing to promote water efficiency nor reducing private passenger vehicle traffic which greatly contribute to the above problems.”* – **Cottonwood Heights Resident**
- *“Given the overall state of the air pollution and concerns with the toxic dust from the Great Salt Lake, each community should do more to manage water usage.”* – **Draper Resident**
- *“Reservoirs are currently doing quite well (84% full), but I remain concerned that we lack the policy to prevent significant change to the Great Salt Lake, and the effect that will have on our air quality.”*
– **Orem Resident**

- *“Yes. Way too much water consumption in this city and not enough outreach to address climate change actively happening. East Millcreek is very affluent and White and they don’t seem to care about their actions impacting our planet. It should be a huge concern here where we literally have poisoned dust coming from the Great Salt Lake dustbed, terrible air quality, and declining water with a fast growing population.” – **Millcreek Resident***
- *“We are headed for an ecological disaster in the Great Salt Lake, that could be averted with stringent water management (since we use more water per capita than any other state). Planting trees in key locations could also help.” – **South Ogden resident***

Open/Green Space

Quantitative Findings

Access to open and green spaces was a prevalent concern across cities in Utah, with 72% reporting it as a moderate or major concern. Although this concern was more prevalent in urban areas, a fair number of residents of rural cities also reported access to open or green spaces as a moderate or major concern (see Figure 12).



Concern About Open Space/Green Space Across Utah (2024)

As you look to the future of your city, how much of a concern is open space/green space?

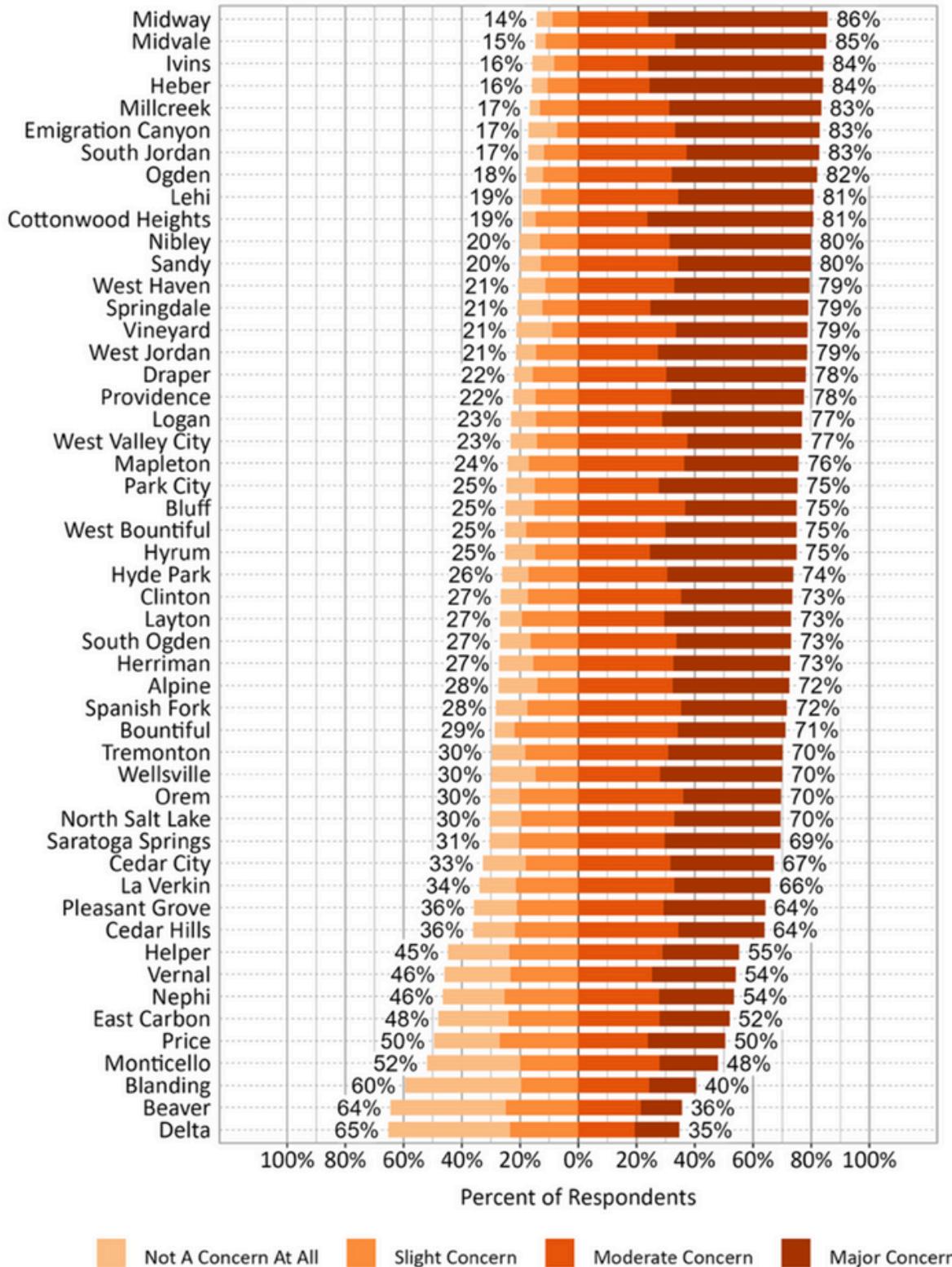


Figure 12. Distribution of Open Space/Green Space Concerns

Qualitative Findings

Concerns

Many Utahns viewed open or green spaces as a finite resource being threatened by rapid growth or misplaced priorities. In particular, any cities and towns across Utah are seeing major housing or industrial developments, which many Utahns expressed concern over how these developments threatened scenic landscapes, wildlife, and their small-town feel. These concerns often overlap with those explored in the other themes in this report, connecting rapid growth and development to broader issues like water supply issues, air quality, and an overall declining sense of local stewardship.

- *“Constant development of the area has reduced access to the natural areas around the town and have increased traffic and congestion.” – **Alpine Resident***
- *“[We] need more open space.” – **Bountiful Resident***
- *“The city itself lacks a lot of greenery, especially on Main Street. So much construction and empty lots and so much room for cars but almost no room for people. I wish it were more walkable.” – **Cedar City***
- *“[We need] more parks, green space, trails and trees.” – **Clinton Resident***
- *“I miss fresh air & open spaces” – **Draper Resident***
- *“Inaccessible public lands, poorly maintained parks and recreation, lack of recreational information.” – **East Carbon Resident***
- *“The booming housing impact of too many homes going up. Too many hotels and the future convention space. Ruining our landscape in Heber.” – **Heber Resident***
- *“There are too many high density housing and cars here making this city feel like it cares much less about the beautiful natural elements here.” – **Herriman Resident***

- *“Developers jamming the landscape with high-density, California-style housing. When we moved here, the city council’s goal was to maintain a rural feel. That’s now [replaced with] jammed-in housing.” – Hyde Park Resident*
- *“[I’m concerned by the] endless development with noise, dust, desecration of native vegetation and natural landscape.” – Ivins Resident*
- *“There’s a lack of access to parks and green space.” – Layton Resident*
- *“Farmland is disappearing and you can't eat car washes.” – Logan Resident*
- *“Parks are not well maintained.” – North Salt Lake Resident*
- *“I feel like many of our trees are being cut down these days for subdivisions.” – Sandy Resident*
- *“I feel that care of our natural resources: wild land conservation, lakes, rivers is not prioritized In Spanish Fork long-term. We are developing wild lands and planting more lawns instead of native plants.” – Spanish Fork Resident*
- *“Better parks and remodeling of current ones.” – West Valley Resident*



Desired Solutions

Residents offered numerous ideas to restore balance between growth and green space, emphasizing proactive city planning and community investment. Suggestions often focused on increasing tree coverage, preserving existing open lands through conservation and education efforts, and designing developments that prioritized parks, trails, and gathering spaces. Many felt that city planners could do more to integrate nature into urban areas through practices such as native landscaping, public art, and infrastructure that promotes both environmental health and community connection. Residents across Utah also emphasized the importance of monitoring and enforcing policies and ordinances related to green space maintenance and use, smart growth, and tree and open space requirements for new developments. Quotes from our participants included:

- *“... Stop allowing major development and [ensure that] environmental and agricultural areas [remain protected] and [prevent] zoning change” - **Alpine Resident***
- *“Impose a fine for trash on properties and put the money towards improving parks and natural areas.” - **Cedar City Resident***
- *“Limit the development of trails in the canyon to the original trails plan rather than disturb and distress additional natural areas. Our wildlife is already crowded with the intrusion of more people and dogs.... Keep people in the major corridors of the canyon and leave the rest undisturbed for our diverse flora and fauna!” - **Emigration Canyon Resident***
- *“[We want to have] greater access to trails, especially connections to nearby mountains, backcountry, [and] maintain open [and] agricultural space.” - **Hyrum Resident***
- *“Protect [open] space [and] quiet beauty. Many people who travel here don’t understand how to care for fragile desert lands. Perhaps they should be required to receive training to visit here.” - **Ivins Resident***
- *“Conservation easement on open spaces.” - **Ivins Resident***

- *“STOP removing large amounts [of] land in Red Mountain dams. STOP plowing down all plant life [and] [disrupting] the soil. STOP destabilizing the land (subjacent [and] lateral support for our homes). STOP causing accelerated erosion along the dams by removing too much dirt. Leave open space instead of overdeveloping fragile desert lands. [We] don’t have water to support rapid growth.” - Ivins Resident*
- *“Require [one] tree for every bedroom of a property with a dwelling.” - Midway Resident*
- *“Stop covering irrigation ditches and make sure people plant trees and trees are not removed unnecessarily.” - Millcreek Resident*
- *“Clean up and take care of what we have.” - Tremonton Resident*
- *“[Create] wetland preserves.” - West Haven Resident*
- *“Add trees [and other] environmental barriers to [mitigate] the noise and air pollution between Legacy and the [surrounding] communities.” – **North Salt Lake Resident***
- *“More green space. Requiring green space for every new development.” – **Ogden Resident***
- *“Prioritize gathering spaces to listen to local musicians and [to promote] local art and food.... [Improve] connection with nature through parks and trails. [Preserve] what makes Ogden beautiful and why people move here in the first place... to connect with the mountains.” - **Ogden Resident***
- *“[We] need more emphasis on preserving what little wild areas is left before it’s all paved over. Focus on wildlife needs. [Plant] more trees to improve air quality.” - **Sandy Resident***
- *“I feel like the city needs to put more money back into the community. The streets always feel sad and not cleaned up or taken care of. More family events and new places for families to go, like a splash pad or something for the kids in the summer. [Take] better care of our parks.” - **Saratoga Springs Resident***
- *“Even though owners can build as much as they want on [their] land, policies can still and should be implemented to respect nature and provide important and vital green space....” - **Saratoga Springs Resident***
- *“Conserve and protect wild and open lands. Replace lawns with native or edible plants. Support and focus for healthy lifestyles [and] community connections. [Create a] walkable downtown [and] community gathering spaces centered around nature.” - **Spanish Fork Resident***

Climate Change

Quantitative Findings

Relative to concerns about air quality, water supply and water quality, and air quality, Utahns were overall less concerned about climate change. Still, 48% of our participants reported that climate change was a moderate or major concern. There was a very wide variation in concern by city, as illustrated by Figure 13. Further, some qualitative quotes suggest that Utahns may be less worried about climate change relative to other environmental concerns as they view climate change as a global issue rather than a state or local issue, as explored next.



Concern About Climate Change Across Utah (2024)

As you look to the future of your city, how much of a concern is climate change?

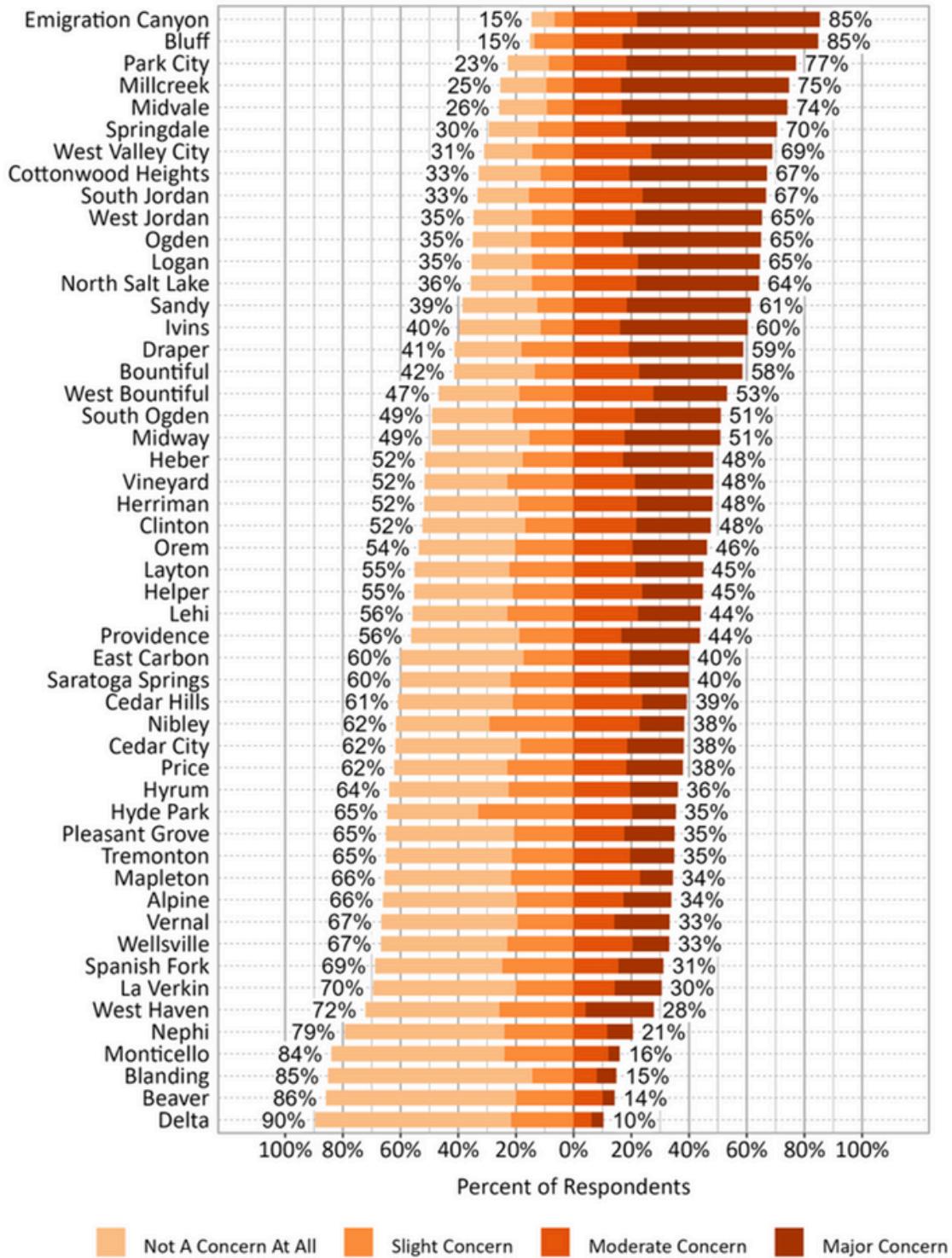


Figure 13. Distribution of climate change concerns

Qualitative Findings

Concerns

Participants who mentioned concerns about climate change often framed it as a global rather than local issue but found their local leaders and fellow residents' responses or lack of concern about climate change to be concerning. Some quotes include:

- *“Climate change is a problem, but it is everywhere.” – Cedar Hills*
- *“The air quality is horrific and keeps getting worse . . . but I'm fully aware no of the elected officials actually care, most of them still deny climate change.” – Clinton resident*
- *“I am concerned about the evidence of climate change on my surroundings and have noticed trees dying due to the high heat in my neighborhood and in the canyons and am very concerned about this summer's temperatures and don't think that the city and state is doing enough.” – Cottonwood Heights Resident*
- *“There are times of the year that children aren't even allowed to outside for recess because the air quality is so low. . . . Whether or not you believe in climate change this pollution alone should wake us up to do something about it.” – Draper Resident*
- *“The lack of awareness in the community or even accepting that climate change is real, is of great concern.” – Orem Resident*
- *“Locals do not believe in climate change. They are not caring for the environment.” – Vernal Resident*

Desired Solutions

Some of the desired solutions to addressing climate change concerns focused on energy-efficient alternatives such as installing solar power on homes and large developments, expanding the use of electric vehicles and charging stations, producing wind and nuclear

energy options to reduce the reliance on fossil fuels, conserving water and increasing secondary water usage, and implementing climate change mitigation and adaptation plans.

Residents across Utah also emphasized the importance of local and state governments leading the way in conservation efforts by ensuring that publicly owned properties reflect environmentally conscious practices and by putting tax dollars behind environmentally friendly initiatives. They further stressed that these institutions should not hinder residents from taking their own climate-conscious actions. Finally, as seen in the other sections of this report, residents expressed a strong need to address climate change by reducing pollution, protecting water quality, and strengthening long-term conservation strategies. Suggestions to address climate change included:

- *“[Put] time and effort into encouraging a reduction in the carbon footprint of both residents and local businesses.” - **Bountiful Resident***
- *“How can we harness all the wind we get [in Bountiful] to power city resources?” - **Bountiful Resident***
- *“There needs to be a climate mitigation and adaption plan, and better housing element in the general plan.” -**Bountiful Resident***
- *“Implementation and enforcement of metering for secondary water usage. (...the city being a good example when it comes to secondary water usage).” – **Cedar Hills Resident***
- *“Support clean energy and water conservation.” - **Cottonwood Heights Resident***
- *“Bigger water conservation program with focus on protecting [the] Great Salt Lake.” - **Draper Resident***
- *“Please develop in a sustainable way. Growth must be smarter, sustainable, future conscious, not just for quick real estate profits. All electric buildings, make use of abundant solar here, stricter water use regulations, mixed-use zoning, redevelopment instead of sprawl.” -**Ivins Resident***

- *“Logan should obtain more power through nuclear power to reduce carbon footprint. We should get a driverless taxi company to do a trial in the city.” - **Logan Resident***
- *“Logan needs to invest in infrastructure that will allow us to take advantage of solar on homes. The city is having to buy electricity on the open market at high rates during peak times of the year. They need to stop viewing solar on homes as competition and recognize that it will take the heat off of the city and allow them to focus on providing affordable rates. Energy prices are only going to go up. Invest in private and municipal partnerships that make sense.” - **Logan Resident***
- *“More mixed business integration to housing and low-income housing as well as more climate conscience improvements.” - **Mapleton Resident***
- *“Stricter environment policies for heating cooling, water use. Require distributed power generation on remodel and new construction. Solar, wind, and [so] on. Amend zoning to allow for small wind generation on property.” - **Millcreek Resident***
- *“Encourage installation of fast [Electric Vehicle] chargers. There are people with children who won’t visit Cache County because there are no realistic ways to charge their [vehicles] once they get here. Owning a low pollution, cheap to operate EV is not realistic without fast chargers available to all of the new apartment dwellers in town. Right now, only homeowners can... [charge] at home. Air quality would improve if there were more EVs.” - **Providence Resident***
- *“Sandy should join the Utah Renewable Communities coalition to encourage renewable energy.” - **Sandy Resident***
- *“Move to renewable energy, help oil works and miners transition to that job if they like, don’t leave them behind in our energy work. They are important! However, we need to phase out fossil fuels.” - **Vernal Resident***
- *“More concern [from] the city [on] environmental issues, such as air pollution, they should be promoting clean energy sources.” - **West Valley City Resident***



FINDINGS

Phase 2: Interviews with City Leaders

We conducted informal interviews with 38 city leaders. In these interviews, no specific questions were asked about environmental concerns; rather, questions focused on general strengths, challenges, and plans to address current challenges. This approach allowed environmental strengths and concerns to emerge naturally and without prompting alongside the other more salient concerns cities were facing.

However, this approach may also have led to less data on specific environmental concerns, and it introduces challenges in comparing responses from residents and city leaders. Thus, these summaries are not intended to act as a compare and contrast between residents' views and city leaders' views. Rather, looking at these views from residents and city leaders together provide a fuller picture of environmental concerns in Utah at a city level.

Across the 51 cities, residents' average local environmental rating was 3.76/5, with scores ranging from 2.96 to 4.34. From the residents' perspectives, Table 1 pulls from the same set of data as presented earlier in Phase 1. Thus, we see significant overlaps in the issues as seen earlier, though this table provides more insights into the specific environmental values mentioned previously.

Specifically, many Utah residents deeply value their small-town feel, quiet neighborhoods, mountain views, and access to nature, as well as alarm by rapid growth, the loss of open space, declining air

quality, and a lack of walkability or bike paths. While pride in community and connection to the outdoors remain strong, many feel squeezed by affordability issues and strained infrastructure. In short, Utah residents value the state's natural beauty and serenity but fear those qualities are slipping away due to unchecked growth and development and poor air quality.

City leaders shared many of these concerns but spoke from a planning and resource management angle, recognizing growth as both opportunity and burden. City leaders recognized the benefits of bringing business and tax revenue along with the costs of straining water supplies, infrastructure, and affordable housing. Leaders across Utah consistently highlighted the need for smarter, more sustainable growth that preserves open space, improves air and water quality, and maintains residents' sense of place. Many cities are pursuing practical steps, from water management plans and open space bonds to better communication with residents and more community events, to balance development pressures with environmental stewardship and quality of life.

While there was considerable alignment about environmental values between residents and leaders, there was a great deal of misalignment on environmental challenges. Of the 36 interviews with shareable information, only 11% (4) showed considerable alignment about challenges, 31% (11) showed partial alignment on topical areas, and 58% (21) had no overlap in challenges mentioned.

Table 1. Environmental Concerns Among Utah Residents and Leaders by City

City, N [Average Local Environmental Rating/5]	Residents (51 cities/towns)		City Leaders (38)		
	Top Enviro Values	Top Enviro Issues	Strengths	Challenges/Needs	Plans
Alpine, N = 379 [4.11]	Access to mountains and nature Beauty/views Small town feel Quiet	Loss of open space Air quality	Access to trails and nature Small town feel Community generosity	Isolation Distance between neighbors and services	More community events Updating parks
Beaver, N = 142 [3.83]	Small town feel Quiet Nature	Road surfaces Odor from sewer ponds Lack of recycling More walking paths	Rural Community connection and pride Clean water and air Connection to nature and access to recreation	Lack of resources and employment opportunities Lack of affordable housing Tourism threatening resource availability	Approval for multifamily housing Development of new manufacturing facility and business growth
Blanding, N = 216 [3.81]	Small town feel Access to outdoors Quiet	More trails Trash/litter	People National monument designation and tourism driving growth	Lack of affordable housing	Increase attainable housing options Growing USU Blanding program offerings
Bluff, N = 64 [4.34]	Quiet Dark skies Public lands Beauty	Lack of bike lanes Lack of walkability	Sense of community Proximity to public lands	Water supply issues	Move waterworks into the community; address supply issues
Bountiful, N = 201 [3.48]	Small town feel Quiet Access to mountains and nature Beauty	Too much growth/loss of open space Air quality GSL concerns Refinery pollution	Proximity to both mountains and SLC Community Pride	Affordability (income doesn't match cost of living) Lack of volunteering Lack of faith in institutions	Adding high density housing options Expanding trails

<p>Cedar City, N = 722 [3.72]</p>	<p>Small town feel Access to outdoors and recreation Nature Beauty</p>	<p>Loss of small town feel Water supply Litter Lack of recycling</p>	<p>Small town feel Community Connection</p>	<p>Growth is occurring too quickly Information channels are lacking Lack of public transportation</p>	<p>Growing airport/access to flights to SLC</p>
<p>Cedar Hills, N = 340 [3.98]</p>	<p>Access to nature and mountains Trails Small town feel</p>	<p>Too much growth/loss of open space Air quality Road surfaces</p>	<p>People City leaders</p>	<p>Lack of growth or sustainability</p>	<p>Decrease city expenditures and increase revenue</p>
<p>Clinton, N = 427 [3.41]</p>	<p>Small town feel Quiet Access to parks and trails</p>	<p>Air quality Road surfaces Park maintenance Water shortages/quality</p>	<p><i>Not Interviewed</i></p>		
<p>Cottonwood Heights, N = 331 [3.57]</p>	<p>Access to mountains and outdoors Outdoor recreation Quiet Beauty</p>	<p>Too much growth/loss of open space Air quality Lack of bike/walkability Do not want proposed gondola</p>	<p><i>Redacted by Request</i></p>		
<p>Delta, N = 121 [3.64]</p>	<p>Small town feel Open space Quiet</p>	<p>Litter and trash Lack of recreational opportunities</p>	<p><i>Not Interviewed</i></p>		
<p>Draper, N = 614 [3.61]</p>	<p>Trails Access to nature and mountains Open space Beauty</p>	<p>Too much growth/loss of open space Air pollution Not enough trails Geneva Rock gravel pit Lack of bike/walkability</p>	<p>Open space and trails Historic preservation</p>	<p>Air quality/inversion Quarry/mining operations Physical and mental health</p>	<p>Increasing access to information and health services</p>

<p>East Carbon, N = 176 [3.08]</p>	<p>Quiet Access to nature Small town feel</p>	<p>Water quality Property maintenance Air pollution</p>	<i>Not Interviewed</i>		
<p>Emigration Canyon, N = 138 [4.21]</p>	<p>Natural beauty Quiet Access to nature Wildlife</p>	<p>Lack of bike lanes Air quality Noise pollution</p>	<p>Mountains Wildlife Dark sky ordinance recently passed</p>	<p>Road safety Flooding Water quality</p>	<p>Protect and clean water supply</p>
<p>Heber, N = 413 [3.58]</p>	<p>Rural/small town feel Beauty Open space Outdoor recreation opportunities</p>	<p>Too much growth/loss of open space Air quality Noise pollution Water supply</p>	<p>Mountains and natural environment Clean air Low traffic Community connection</p>	<p>Lack of affordable housing Rapid growth High groundwater levels</p>	<p>Create and enact a stormwater management plan Pass a sensitive land ordinance Monitor air quality</p>
<p>Helper, N = 45 [3.78]</p>	<p>Small town feel Access to outdoors and mountains</p>	<p>More trails Trash/litter Yard/property maintenance</p>	<p>Historic preservation River restoration work Community pride</p>	<p>Lack of infrastructure Lack of resources for mental health Lack of affordable housing Need for road and electrical grid maintenance</p>	<p>Collaboration with county to provided mental health support</p>
<p>Herriman, N = 128 [3.02]</p>	<p>Small town feel Trails Access to mountains and outdoors Quiet</p>	<p>Too much growth/loss of open space Air quality</p>	<p>Diversity and community connection Community events Recreation opportunities Trails</p>	<p>Affordable housing Traffic and commute times</p>	<p><i>Unavailable</i></p>
<p>Hyde Park, N = 220 [3.83]</p>	<p>Rural/small town feel Quiet Open space</p>	<p>Too much growth/loss of open space Air quality More trails Road surfaces</p>	<p>Sense of community Small town feel Rapid growth</p>	<p>Improved walkability and trails Increased community events</p>	<p>Complete development of a section of the Bonneville shoreline</p>

<p>Hyrum, N = 271 [3.53]</p>	<p>Small town feel Quiet Natural beauty Open space Access to outdoors</p>	<p>Lack of sidewalks Air quality Odor (from JBS) Too much growth/loss of open space</p>	<p><i>Not interviewed</i></p>	
<p>Ivins, N = 324 [3.96]</p>	<p>Natural beauty Quiet Dark skies Small town feel</p>	<p>Loss of nature and open space Water supply Air pollution Light pollution</p>		<p>Mountains and nature/outdoor recreation opportunities Community spirit and volunteerism</p> <p>Water supply Affordable housing Aging population No county plan for severe droughts/water conservation</p> <p>Emergency preparedness</p>
<p>La Verkin, N = 121 [3.62]</p>	<p>Small town feel Quiet Open space</p>	<p>Yard/property maintenance Loss of open space and small town feel</p>		<p><i>Not interviewed</i></p>
<p>Layton, N = 312 [3.16]</p>	<p>Access to nature/mountains Trails Outdoor recreation</p>	<p>Too much growth/loss of open space Noise pollution Air quality</p>	<p><i>Not interviewed</i></p>	
<p>Lehi, N = 304 [3.13]</p>	<p>Small town feel Access to outdoors and mountains Trails</p>	<p>Too much growth/loss of open space Air quality More trails and green space</p>		<p>Parks Employment opportunities</p> <p>Traffic Flooding</p> <p>Environmental projects to protect Traverse mountain Investigating solutions to alleviate traffic</p>
<p>Logan, N = 714 [3.00]</p>	<p>Access to outdoors and outdoor recreation Rural/small town feel Mountains Beauty</p>	<p>Lack of bike/walkability Air quality Too much growth/loss of open space Trash/litter</p>	<p><i>Redacted by Request</i></p>	

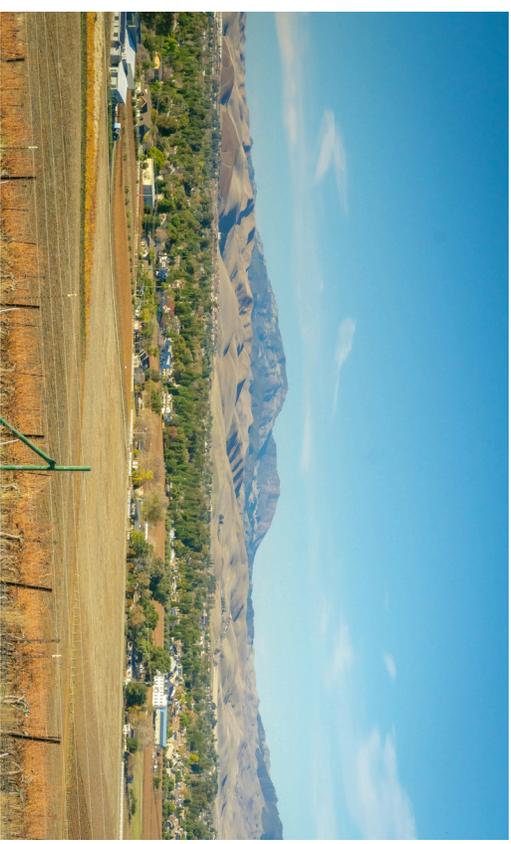
<p>Mapleton, N = 167 [3.99]</p>	<p>Small town feel Quiet Open space Mountains</p>	<p>Loss of open space/farms Air quality Sidewalk maintenance Loss of small town feel</p>	<i>Not Interviewed</i>		
<p>Midvale, N = 66 [2.95]</p>	<p>Quiet Small town feel</p>	<p>Lack of walkability Air quality</p>	<p>Location to arts and culture Small town feel</p>	<p>Affordable housing Crime Safety concerns</p>	<p>Uplift Midvale coalition Install security cameras</p>
<p>Midway, N = 141 [3.95]</p>	<p>Small town feel Open space Beauty Access to outdoor recreation</p>	<p>Sewer ponds Loss of small town feel</p>	<p>Open space Quality of life Community connection</p>	<p>Rapid growth; losing rurality Wasatch county sewer issues</p>	<p>Open space bonds Zoning to protect rural areas</p>
<p>Millcreek, N = 276 [3.45]</p>	<p>Access to outdoors and mountains Open space</p>	<p>Air quality Lack of sidewalks Preserve nature and open space Lack of bike lanes</p>	<p>Connection to nature Community connection City leaders</p>	<p>Bridging gap between east and west sections of the city</p>	<p>Physical newsletter to get information to all residents Seeking grants to improve roads and infrastructure</p>
<p>Monticello, N = 26 [3.50]</p>	<p>Small town feel Quiet Access to nature</p>	<p>Property maintenance Weeds</p>	<p>Location Mountains</p>	<p>Trucks driving through Unable to keep up with maintenance for recreation areas Residual impact of formal uranium mill</p>	<p>Finding funds to protect parks and grow recreational opportunities Uranium remediation</p>
<p>Nephi, N = 422 [3.61]</p>	<p>Small town feel Rural status Access to outdoors and outdoor recreation</p>	<p>Property maintenance Litter Lack of walking/biking trails Road surfaces</p>	<p>Central location Mountains Rurality</p>	<p>Rapid growth</p>	<p>Impact fees Water requirements to build</p>

<p>Nibley, N = 306 [3.691]</p>	<p>Small town feel Open space Quiet Parks Access to mountains and nature</p>	<p>Too much growth/loss of open space Air quality More trails Lack of bike/walkability</p>	<p>Community connection and volunteerism Parks</p>	<p>Lack of indoor recreation Communication between leaders and residents</p>	<p>Growing active transportation infrastructure Education campaigns to accompany city projects Feasibility study for indoor recreation facility</p>
<p>North Salt Lake, N = 414 [2.961]</p>	<p>Trails Quiet Access to mountains and nature Small town feel Beauty</p>	<p>Air quality Too much growth/loss of open space Refinery pollution Bad odors (from sewers and refinery) Mosquitos</p>	<p>Diversity Growth that prioritizes preservation Location Mountain Trails</p>	<p>Air quality Traffic and transportation Crime and safety concerns</p>	<p>Carefully weighing the pros and cons of proposed developments</p>
<p>Ogden, N = 751 [3.231]</p>	<p>Access to mountains and nature Trails Outdoor recreation Beauty/Views</p>	<p>Loss of open space and nature Air quality Lack of bike/walkability</p>	<p>Mountains Trails</p>	<p>High poverty rate</p>	<p>Integrating recreation opportunities into schools Initiatives to reduce poverty</p>
<p>Orem, N = 1,302 [3.451]</p>	<p>Access to nature/outdoors/mountains Parks Beauty</p>	<p>Too much growth/loss of open space and nature Air quality Lack of bike/walkability</p>	<p>Parks and green spaces Canyon Shopping</p>	<p>Air quality Traffic Poverty level</p>	<p>EV charging stations Planting trees Solar panels on new city hall</p>
<p>Park City, N = 192 [3.981]</p>	<p>Access to outdoors Outdoor recreation Trails Nature</p>	<p>Loss of open space Water quality Air quality</p>	<p>Community connection Outdoor recreation opportunities</p>	<p>Rapid growth Affordable housing Traffic Water quality</p>	<p>Carbon neutral by 2030 Leading climate summits for similar mountain towns</p>
<p>Pleasant Grove, N = 296 [3.421]</p>	<p>Small town feel Mountains Beauty Quiet</p>	<p>Road surfaces Air quality Too much growth/loss of open space</p>	<p><i>Not interviewed</i></p>		

<p>Price, N = 278 [3.36]</p>	<p>Small town feel Outdoor recreation Air quality</p>	<p>Litter/trash Property maintenance Road surfaces Lack of public transportation</p>	<p><i>Not interviewed</i></p>
<p>Providence, N = 201 [3.78]</p>	<p>Small town feel Quiet Beauty</p>	<p>Loss of small town feel Air quality</p>	
<p>Sandy, N = 884 [3.60]</p>	<p>Access to mountains/canyons Access to outdoors/outdoor recreation Beauty</p>	<p>Too much growth/loss of open space Air quality Lack of walkability/sidewalks</p>	<p><i>Not interviewed</i></p>
<p>Saratoga Springs, N = 384 [3.13]</p>	<p>Beauty Access to nature/outdoors Trails Small town feel Open space</p>	<p>Too much growth/loss of open space More trails More green space/parks</p>	
<p>South Jordan, N = 193 [3.63]</p>	<p>Open space Cleanliness Trails</p>	<p>Air quality Loss of open space</p>	<p><i>Not interviewed</i></p>
<p>South Ogden, N = 131 [3.41]</p>	<p>Trails Beauty Mountains</p>	<p>Air quality Water supply and quality Lack of sidewalks and bike lanes Property maintenance</p>	
<p>Spanish Fork, N = 403 [3.64]</p>	<p>Small town feel Trails Open space/farms Parks</p>	<p>Too much growth/loss of open space Air pollution</p>	<p><i>Not interviewed</i></p>
<p>Springdale, N = 113 [3.96]</p>	<p>Beauty Access to outdoors/nature Small town feel Zion NP</p>	<p>Too much growth/loss of open space Outdoor recreation too crowded</p>	
<p>Location Parks and trails Water quality Snow and cobble</p>	<p>Lack of community involvement in zoning processes Lack of volunteerism</p>	<p>City celebrations Maintaining traditions Built skate park</p>	
<p>Mountains Trails Lake</p>	<p>Rapid growth Traffic Water supply</p>	<p>Preserving Utah Lake Fostering sustainable growth Road projects</p>	
<p>City leaders Balance of growth and preservation</p>	<p>Getting community members involved and elevating their voices.</p>	<p>Accessible buildings Ample opportunities to share concerns</p>	
<p>Nature and scenery Community connection</p>	<p>Tourism Traffic Noise Aging population</p>	<p>Mitigate impacts of tourism Zoning, parking, and transportation policies</p>	

<p>Tremonton, N = 494 [3.11]</p>	<p>Rural/small town feel Farms and open space Quiet</p>	<p>Too much growth/loss of open space Loss of small town feel Air quality More trails</p>	<p>Community connection and spirit</p>	<p>Economic opportunities Rapid growth</p>	<p>Provide cultural and community engagement activities Get individuals more involved in city decisions</p>
<p>Vernal, N = 463 [3.45]</p>	<p>Small town feel Outdoor recreation Nature</p>	<p>Air quality More trails Lack of bike/walkability Loss of small town feel Cleanliness</p>	<p>Open space, scenery Recreation Small town feel Public programs Low taxes</p>	<p>Air quality/inversion Poor physical and mental health</p>	<p><i>Not asked</i></p>
<p>Vineyard, N = 150 [3.32]</p>	<p>Parks and recreation Trails Small town feel</p>	<p>Mosquitos/bugs Air quality</p>	<p>Potential for growth</p>	<p>Misinformation Concerns about whether remediation of Geneva steel was</p>	<p>Redevelopment agency focused on developing safely Improving green</p>
<p>Wellsville, N = 171 [3.98]</p>	<p>Small town feel Beauty Quiet</p>	<p>Too much growth/loss of open space Loss of small town feel More trails</p>	<p>Small town feel</p>	<p>Future growth</p>	<p>Fostering intentional growth More outdoor activities Integrating residents' voices in zoning</p>
<p>West Bountiful, N = 284 [3.50]</p>	<p>Small town feel Trails Quiet</p>	<p>Refinery pollution Lack of sidewalks Property maintenance Air quality</p>	<p>Separate residential and commercial areas Trust from residents</p>	<p>Air quality Water supply Traffic Growth</p>	<p>Intentional growth planning</p>
<p>West Haven, N = 108 [3.35]</p>	<p>Open space/farms Access to nature Small town feel</p>	<p>Too much growth/loss of open space Lack of walkability Air quality</p>	<p><i>Not interviewed</i></p>		

<p>West Jordan, N = 282 [3.12]</p>	<p>Parks Open space/farms Small town feel</p>	<p>Too much growth/loss of open space Air pollution Noise pollution More green space/parks</p>	<p>Landscape Diversity Trails Affordability</p>	<p>Rapid growth Less outdoor opportunities in some areas</p>	<p>Growth planning Revamping parks Involved mayor Water conservation efforts</p>
<p>West Valley, N = 140 [2.99]</p>	<p>Parks and green space</p>	<p>Air quality Litter More green space/parks</p>	<p>Cultural diversity</p>	<p>Poverty level Travel out of city for health services Aging infrastructure Limited access to nature</p>	<p>Increase residents' knowledge of local parks Repurposing aging infrastructure to facilitate affordable housing</p>



DISCUSSION/SUMMARY

Utahns care greatly about their environment, and their perceptions of their environment has a strong positive relationship with their self-reported well-being: those who rank their local environmental quality higher, also rank their overall personal wellbeing higher. In particular, Utahns value the trails and outdoor recreational opportunities and the beauty and diversity of their city's landscape. However, Utahns also perceive a number of threats to the environment they love and value.

The most prevalent concerns articulated in the Utah Wellbeing Survey were water supply and water quality. In our semi-arid environment, these concerns are not new, but respondents found continued disregard for these concerns or lack of changes to better protect and improve water supply and water quality to be frustrating. Some of the most common changes our participants recommended included:

- Promoting water conservation awareness through education campaigns highlighting practical strategies for households and communities.
- Supporting waterwise landscaping and outdoor water efficiency, including rebates, incentives, and guidance for homeowners.
- Encouraging responsible water use across sectors, ensuring households, businesses, and agriculture all play roles in sustainable water management.

For some Utahns, most often those from cities within the Great Salt Lake Basin, concerns about water supply were exacerbated by fears of permanent environmental damage and serious health issues from toxic dust resulting from the drying lakebed of the Great Salt Lake. The diminishing levels of the lake were seen to pose a serious issue, making the implementation of sound environmental practices to conserve water that much more important.

Relatedly, air quality in general was a strong concern for many. Not only was air quality a concern along the Wasatch Front which is somewhat notorious for air quality issues, rural places such as Vernal and Springdale were also hotspots for air quality concern. Many suggestions related to advancing public transportation options to reduce cars on roads. Suggestions for addressing climate change also emphasized reducing emissions through advances in sustainable energy transitions.

Another important issue to many Utahns is the preservation and beautification of open and green spaces, including trails and city parks. Utilizing native plants and water efficient greenery in the development or renovation of these areas can help provide a cost-effective solution that preserves both the beauty and recreational opportunities Utahns value, while not contributing to already stressed water infrastructure. Given the rapid population growth and economic development occurring in many Utah communities, this tension needs to be managed carefully to protect the highly valued open and green spaces.

Overall, the findings from Utah Wellbeing Survey serve as a call for action across Utah. Utahns look forward to more environmentally friendly practices such as xeriscaping and reducing carbon emissions, along with education efforts and policy changes to support these endeavors. There's a strong call for careful planning across Utah communities, including involving residents in these discussions and decisions as much as possible. Finally, across the board, resounding calls were heard to plan for growth and development in more responsible ways.

Comments from residents highlighting desired governance and planning efforts focus on the following broad areas:

- Planning for long-term water security, accounting for population growth, climate variability, and future community needs.
- Strengthening collaboration between government agencies and residents to share responsibility and promote solutions that work locally.

Interviews with city leaders and staff reveal general alignment on the value of natural environments in Utah communities. However, concerns from residents about local environmental challenges were not always shared, or at least voiced as top priorities or action items, by city leaders.

The Utah Wellbeing Project, by partnering with cities and towns across the state, sheds quantitative and qualitative light on how residents view their environments, including thoughtful comments on the actions they would like to see leaders take. The next survey led by the Utah Wellbeing Project will be administered in 2026, offering a new opportunity to track perspectives of Utahns and support better alignment between residents and leaders and opportunities for the wellbeing of our communities. Tracking trends in times of growth and change provides an important foundation for decisions, policies, and actions by individuals and leaders alike.

REFERENCES

All images are courtesy of USU Photoshelter, Unsplash.com, and Canva.com.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Nicolas Holden, Emma Horning, and Shanna Peterson made important contributions to graphics and coding for this report.

We are grateful to the USU Institute for Land, Water & Air for making this analysis possible through grant funding.



