

AMENITY MIGRATION AND THE CHANGING LANDSCAPE OF THE RURAL WEST

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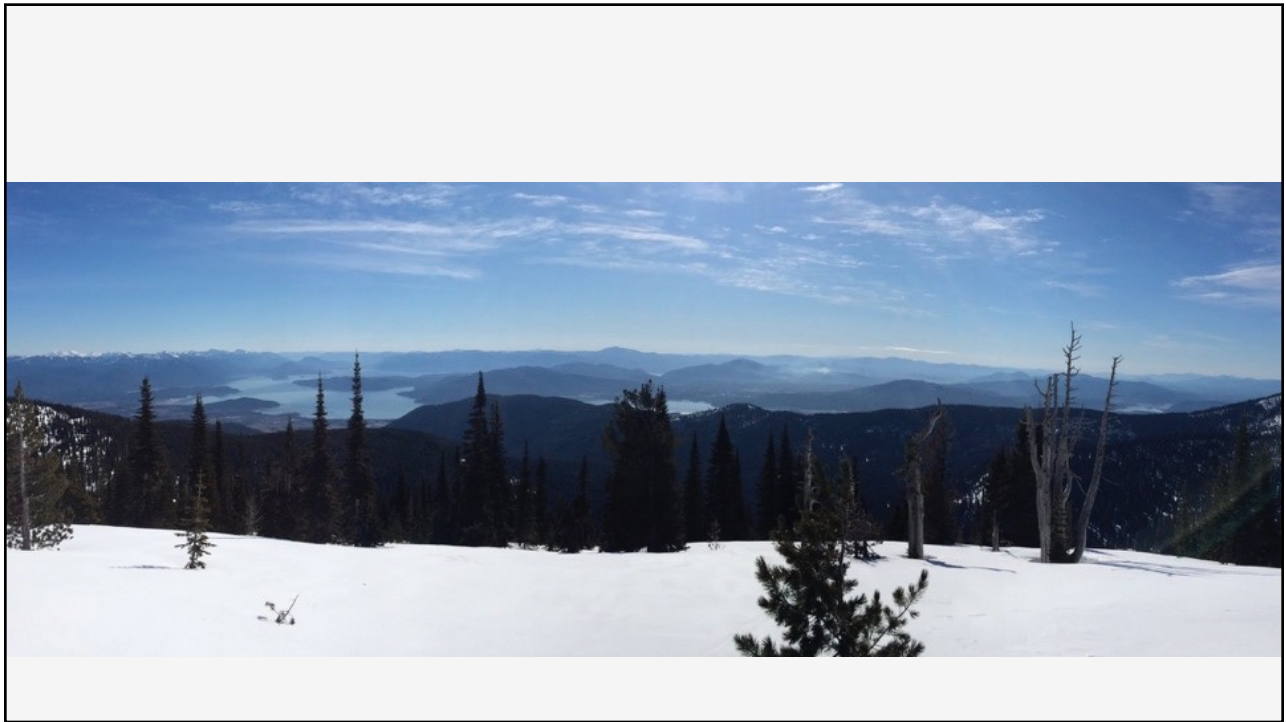
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What to expect

- A little bit about me and how I got involved in studying amenity migration
- Key findings from my past research on natural amenity communities in the west
- What those findings and my current work tell us about:
 - How amenity migration is changing - and is likely to change - communities and the landscape of the rural west
 - What we can do to help communities prepare for and respond to amenity migration and related challenges and opportunities
- The important role of planners and planning in helping address the “problemtunity” of amenity migration
- The Gateway and Natural Amenity Region (GNAR) Initiative and how you can help us help you

Be prepared to engage via surveys!
Submit your questions via the Q&A function

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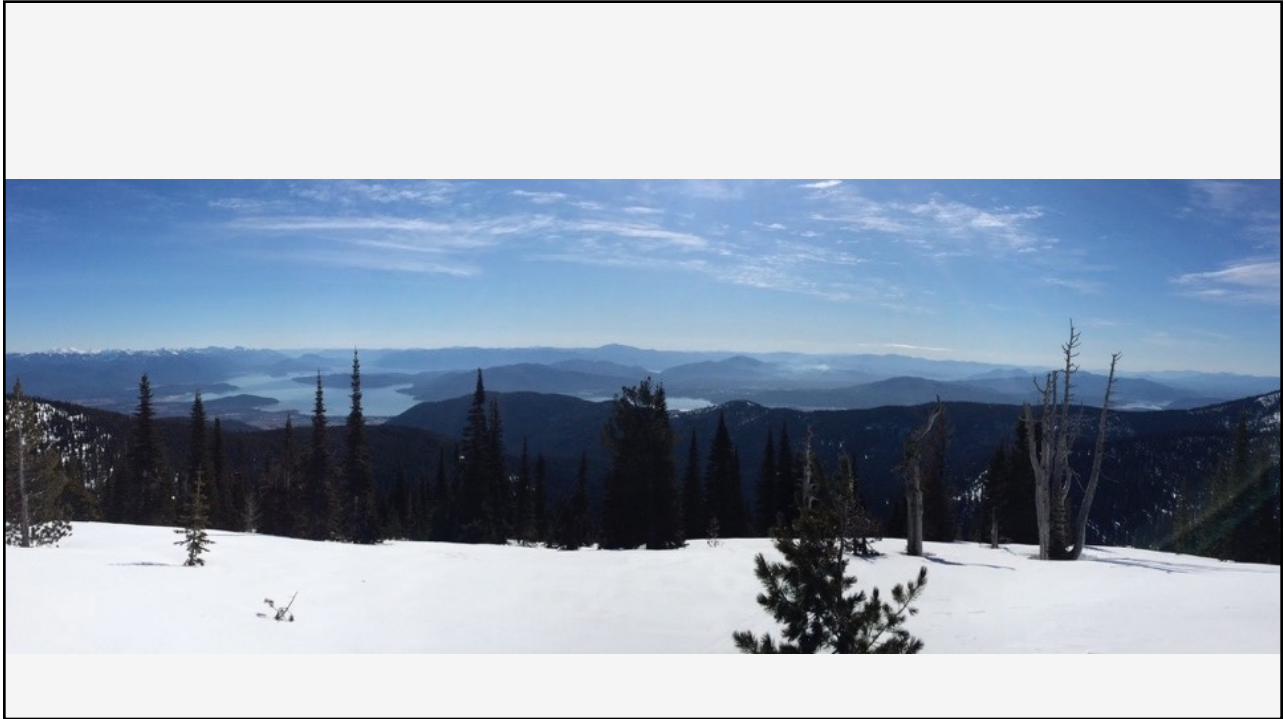
ENVIRONMENTAL DISPUTE RESOLUTION (EDR) PROGRAM

Promotes a culture of collaboration around complex environmental, natural resource, and public policy issues throughout the mountain west through:

- Teaching and training
- Coaching
- Public education
- Collaboration advising and assistance
- Research and thought leadership

<https://sjquinney.utah.edu/stegner-center/edr/>

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*Increasingly
popular
places to
live and
visit*

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*Big city problems
in small rural
towns and
regions...*

*and some unique
challenges*

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*Big city problems
in small rural
towns and
regions...
and some unique
challenges*

- Affordability and availability of housing
- Traffic/congestion/parking
- Insufficient or overwhelmed infrastructure and public services
- Employee attraction/retention
- Environmental and natural amenity impacts
- Economic vulnerability and need for diversification
- Loss of community character
- Questions about the role of tourism and tourism marketing
- Reduced quality of visitor experience
- Climate change vulnerability/adaptation
- Unique social-cultural-political dynamics
- Challenging local-regional-state-federal relationships

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*Gateway
and natural
amenity
region
(GNAR)*

A region that surrounds state or national parks, other major public lands, scenic rivers or lakes, or is otherwise rich in natural amenities

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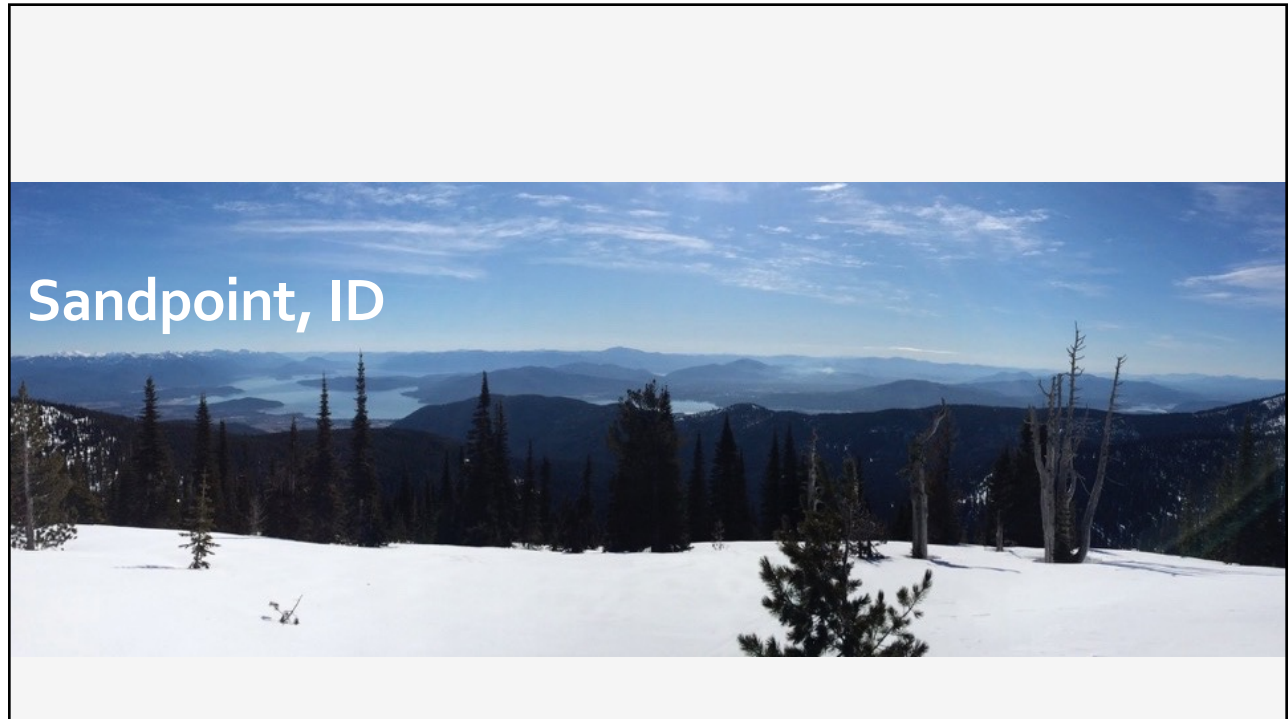
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Question for the audience:

What GNAR community (or communities) do you live in, work in, or tend to spend time in?

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*INCREASINGLY POPULAR
PLACES TO LIVE AND VISIT...*

*BIG CITY PROBLEMS IN SMALL
RURAL TOWNS AND REGIONS*

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*2018 Study:
Planning and
development
challenges in
western GNAR
communities*

- How pervasive are these issues across the western GNAR communities?
- How are GNAR communities experiencing and dealing with these issues?

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*2018 Study:
Planning and
development
challenges in
western GNAR
communities*

- Database of western GNAR communities
- Interviews with public officials in 25 western GNAR communities
- Survey of public officials across all western GNAR communities

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*What defines
a GNAR
community?*

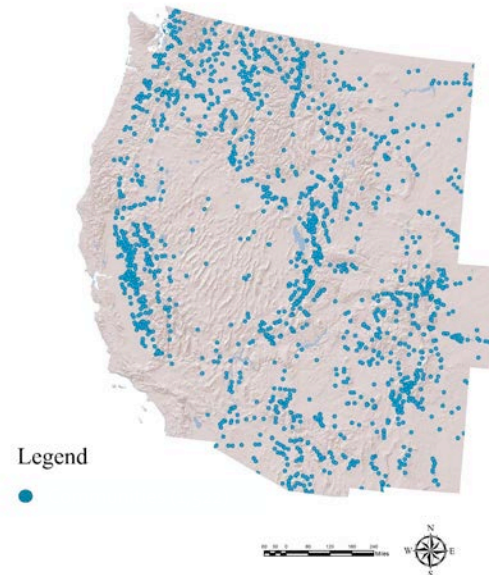
- Small town
 - 150-25,000 people
- Proximity to natural amenities
 - Within 10 miles of a national park, state park, national forest, lake, scenic river, etc.,
- Not in an urbanized area
 - Further than 15 miles from an urbanized area by road

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GNAR community database

- 1,522 GNAR communities
 - 821 incorporated cities
 - 701 Census designated places
- 30.6% of Mountain West communities
- 61.1% of “small” Mountain West communities

Final City Selection



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Interviews with public officials in a range of GNAR communities

- 30 public officials (planners, town managers, mayors, etc.) in 25 GNAR communities
- Communities were selected to represent diversity of:
 - States
 - Populations
 - Levels of development
 - Amenity types
- 2 individuals representing regional organizations working with GNAR communities

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Regional survey

Survey was sent out to 1,278 GNAR community public officials

- Completed by 333 public officials in **264** communities
 - Average population of represented communities was **4,895**

As of 2018, these communities:

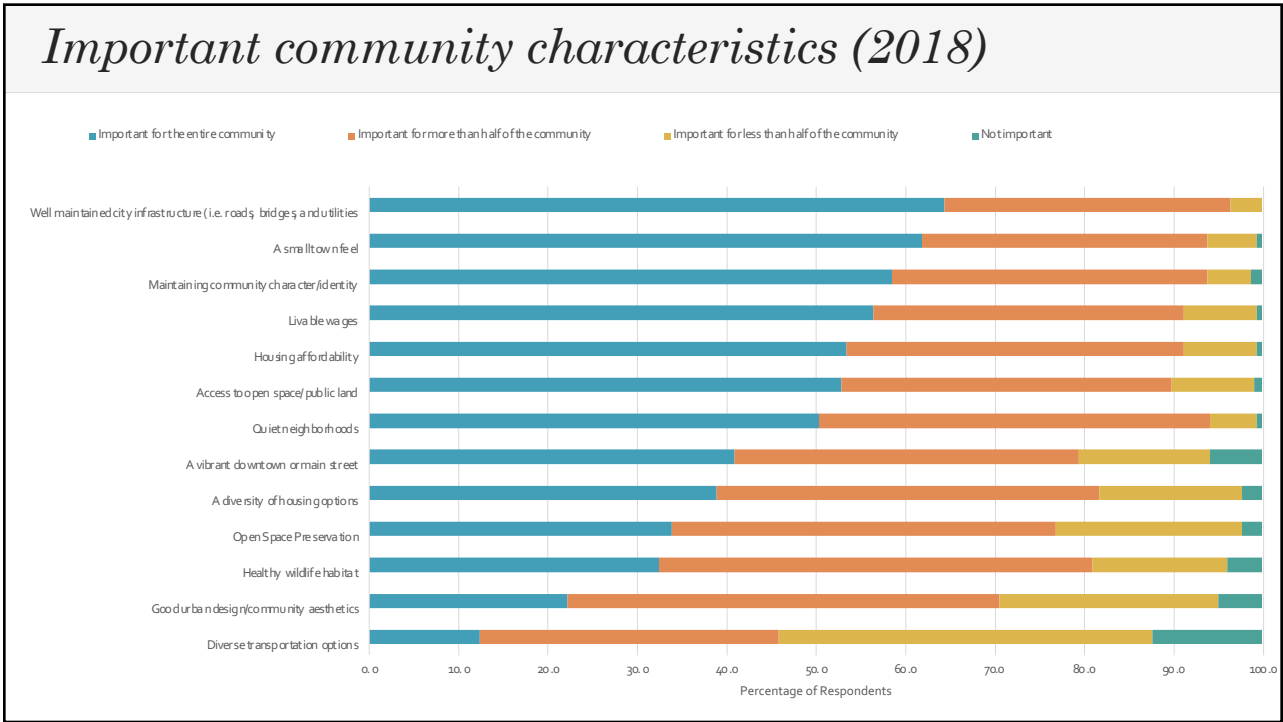
- Were growing (**8.2%** average growth rate between 2013-2018)
- Had an average per capita income of **\$27,206**
 - Rural west average was **\$26,141**
- Had an average rent of **\$880**
 - Rural west average was **\$789**
- Were seeing higher than the national average rates of housing unit and rental unit growth
- Were becoming more popular places to visit:
 - **82%** of respondents said the number of tourists visiting their communities increased in the last 10 years
 - **42%** said this increase was substantial

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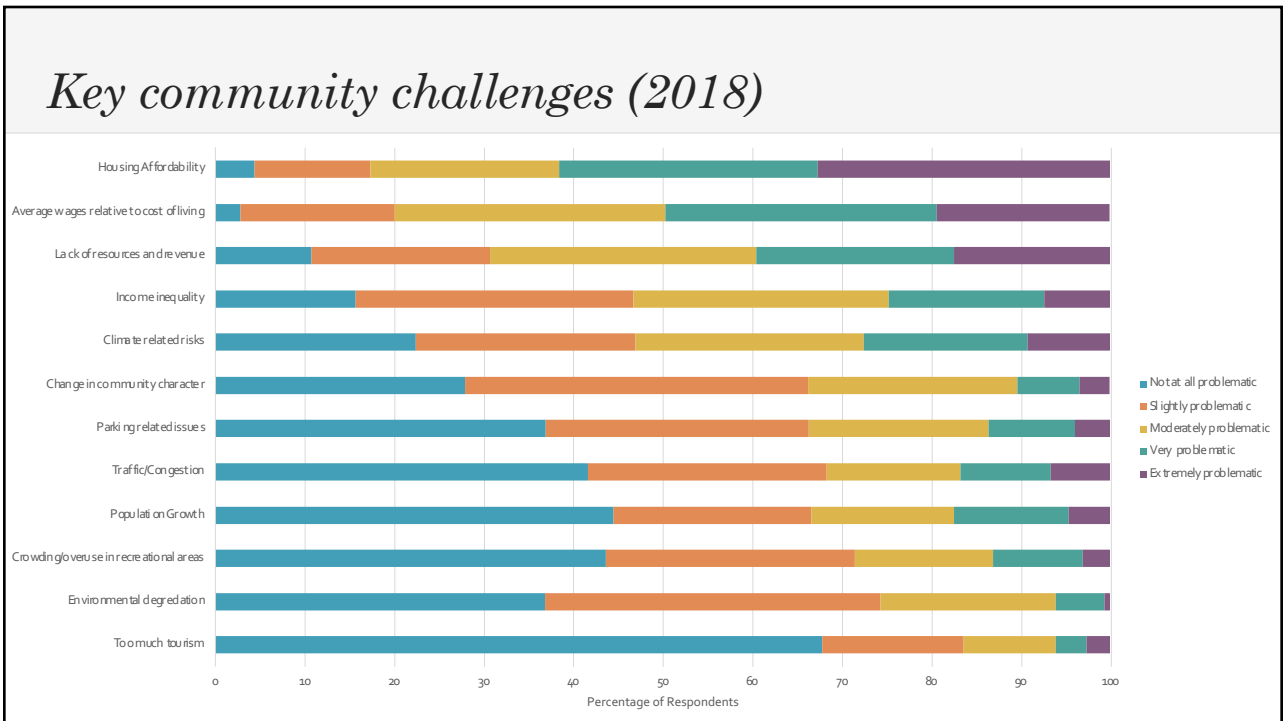
If you want all the details...

The screenshot displays the JAPA website interface. At the top, there is a search bar with the placeholder text 'Enter keywords, authors, DOI, ORCID etc'. Below the search bar, the journal's name 'Journal of the American Planning Association' is shown along with 'Volume 87, 2021 - Issue 1'. Navigation buttons for 'Submit an article' and 'Journal homepage' are visible. The main content area features the article title 'Planning and Development Challenges in Western Gateway Communities' by Philip Stoker, Danya Rumore, Lindsey Romaniello & Zacharia Levine. The article has 8,219 views and 0 CrossRef citations to date. It was published online on 27 Aug 2020. Below the article information, there are several action buttons: 'Full Article', 'Figures & data', 'References', 'Supplemental', 'Citations', 'Metrics', 'Reprints & Permissions', and 'Get access'. A 'Download citation' button with a DOI link is also present.

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Housing (2018)

- 83% of survey respondents said that **housing affordability was moderately to extremely problematic** for their community
 - 33% said it was extremely problematic
- 26 interviewees representing 24 of the 25 communities in our interviewee sample identified housing affordability as a **key issue** for their community
- 49% of survey respondents said their community was **not doing enough** to address housing affordability
- Only 8% said their community was **definitely doing enough** to address housing affordability

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Our findings suggest growth is **as much a or more threat** to community character and livability as increasing tourism.

Growth, tourism, and development (2018)

However, **tourism development still presents challenges.**

- 16% of survey respondents said that too much tourism was moderately to extremely problematic for their communities
- 4% said it is extremely problematic

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“**[Tourism] is a love/hate relationship.** Everyone realizes to some degree that we’re reliant on it, but that doesn’t stop people from hating tourists. We don’t really have the infrastructure in place to deal with high-demand weekends, so in those times it feels like we’re being bombarded.”

“ I think **[tourism] is the double-edged sword.** We need the tourism dollars, but at the same time, during the peak days, we do get complaints about the tourists. There’s the frustration with tourists who are renting out single-family homes as though they were hotels. That’s a new trend. There’s the frustration that they’re loud, obnoxious. They do what they want and it’s impacting the neighbors and other residents.”

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*Growth,
tourism,
and
development
(2018)*

Based on our observation and qualitative data:

• **Certain issues seem to come to the fore as GNAR communities develop**

- Communities often quickly go from not being concerned about short-term rentals to being quite concerned, sometimes due to acute shortages of long-term rental/housing stock
- Communities often become eager for public transit solutions once they reach a certain point in development, in part due to the displacement of their workers
- Tensions between residents and tourists seem to appear once tourism reaches a certain level – or if the community attracts certain kinds of tourists
- Many of these communities experience tensions between “old timers” and “newcomers” as they grow

• **Certain kinds of GNAR communities tend to have certain kinds of issues (and don’t have other issues)**

- Geographic constraints may exacerbate housing issues, but also tend to prevent concerns about sprawl

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*Growth,
tourism, and
development
(2018)*

A lot of GNAR communities say they don't want to be like:

- Vail, Aspen, or Breckenridge, CO
- Jackson, WY
- Moab, UT

Or to be:

- "A tourist trap"
- A big city
 - Many say they want to maintain their "small town-ness"

On the other hand, some are concerned about becoming:

- "An abandoned small town"

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*A need for
proactive
planning,
additional
capacity,
and
planning
support
(2018)*

Common themes from interviews:

- Importance of proactive planning
- Importance of planning at a regional scale
- Challenges associated with local resistance to planning, local political tensions, and the difficulty of getting different regional entities working together
- Feeling overwhelmed and/or in need of additional resources and capacity
 - 40% of respondents said lack of resources or revenue is very or extremely problematic for their community
 - Another 30% said it is moderately problematic
 - "We don't have the staff capacity to deal with major crises."

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“We’re in this **big growth period, but we didn’t have design guidelines in place**.... From a municipal standpoint, **we need to get ahead of the curve** so we can prepare for what’s coming, but we need the time and staff and resources in order to do that.”

“The way that the city is **trying to be forward-thinking in planning isn’t really welcome**. [County] residents and commissioners are significantly more conservative than city residents, not just in a partisan political sense but in their attitude toward any change at all.”

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Enter COVID-tastrophe...

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NEWS DESK

WHY AN IDAHO SKI DESTINATION HAS ONE OF THE HIGHEST COVID-19 INFECTION RATES IN THE NATION

By Michael Ames
April 3, 2020



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FEATURED ARTICLES

CAN TOURIST TOWNS LIKE MOAB SURVIVE THE CORONAVIRUS?

by Jon Du Pre / April 27, 2020 / 4.2k / 13 comments

"I immediately started sobbing," says Ariel Atkins, expressing how she was overcome with emotion when she got the news that the coronavirus pandemic was forcing her family business to close.

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The Salt Lake Tribune


Robert Gehrke: Utah towns near national parks want tourists to visit, but hope they do so responsibly



(Photo courtesy Zion National Park) In this photo posted to the Zion National Park Facebook page on March 25, 2020, hikers stand and walk along a trail in the park. Rangers have encouraged visitors to practice social distancing to reduce coronavirus infections.





By Robert Gehrke • Published: 2 days ago
Updated: 2 days ago

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WORKLIFE What is Worklife? How We Work How We Live How We Think Hello Hybrid More 

HOW WE LIVE

The 'Zoom towns' luring remote workers to rural enclaves

(Image credit: Shanelle Shertin)



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“COVID-19 EXPEDITED AMENITY MIGRATION TO THE RURAL WEST BY 15 YEARS”

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\$18 an hour to work at McDonald's? Moab's labor shortage means higher pay — if you can find housing

'Workforce shortage is currently the number one issue challenging businesses in Moab.'



The image shows a classic McDonald's sign with the golden arches and the text 'McDonald's BILLIONS & BILLIONS SERVED'. Below it is a smaller sign that reads 'NOW HIRING \$18'. The background features green trees and a rocky, reddish-brown hillside under a clear blue sky.

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*What we are
seeing
across the
high-
amenity
West
(2021)*

Basically, what we saw in 2018 - at a much broader scale and on steroids

- Skyrocketing housing prices and total lack of workforce housing
 - Colliding pressure from Zoom Towners, second home-owners, short-term rentals, etc.
 - “It’s a crisis”
- Major issues with employee retention and related business closures
- Pressure on infrastructure and concern about infrastructure failure
 - Transportation systems
 - Fresh water and wastewater systems
 - Recreation infrastructure
- Major tensions between conservation and development
 - Build more housing? Or protect open spaces and recreation opportunities?
 - Worries about “urban sprawl” in rural areas
- Major tensions within communities

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*What we are
seeing
across the
high-
amenity
West
(2021)*

“Spillover effects” and impacts on:

- Nearby communities
 - Development of commuter-sheds
 - “Reverse commuting”
- Natural resources
 - Wildlife habitat and corridors
 - Dark sky
- Wildland-urban interface
 - Wildfire risk

And throw into the mix:

- Climate change concerns
- Risk of unsustainable development, especially amid demographic shifts
 - Risk of “zombie subdivisions”
- NIMBYism

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*What we are
seeing
across the
high-
amenity
West
(2021)*

How do we protect quality of life and ruralness and still provide places for people to live?

- Sandpoint, ID

How do we keep this a “real town” that is walkable and bikeable while accommodating more people?

- Whitefish, MT

How do we keep our small, quaint, rural character?
How do we not become Aspen - a place where only rich people live?

- Moab, UT

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*...in every
challenge
there is an
opportunity*

Pressure and opportunities to:

- Diversify economies
- Diversify communities
- Capitalize on the various forms of capital moving into communities (social, economic, intellectual, etc.)
 - Tax structures really matter!!
- Think about and plan for sustainability and resilience

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Question for the audience:

What are your reactions to these findings and observations (from 2018 and now)? Does this resonate for Idaho? How so or how not?

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*Where to
from
here?*

*My
advice...*

- Communities need to collaboratively figure out “what they want to be when they grow up”
 - What do people hold dear that they want to protect or enhance?
 - No growth (or “no change”) isn’t a vision!
- Then they need to use every tool at their disposal to get there
 - Zoning, codes and ordinances, housing and transportation plans/strategies, taxing and other revenue generation systems, community engagement, community development, educational campaigns, policies and programs, etc.
 - State policies can be a huge help or a huge hindrance
 - How do you get remote workers to “plug into the community and not just the wifi”?
- As part of this, communities need to consider and plan for uncontrollable sources of uncertainty and change - e.g., climate change
 - Scenario planning
- We need to deal with wealth inequality in this country

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*Where to
from
here?*

*My
advice...*

Focus on:

- Collaborating and planning across transportation, housing, and land use
 - Explore and consider tradeoffs of different strategies and approaches and be intentional about choices
- Collaborating and planning at a regional scale
- Helping communities and other involved entities understand what is at stake
- Providing resources, support, and technical assistance to help these “small towns with big city problems” deal with their challenges

Don't:

- Think it could never happen to your community or region, especially if it is near high quality natural amenities
- Lose time fighting over whether to grow or not



*The
critical
role of
planner
and
planning*

Planners and allied fields are:

- Going to be on the forefront of preparing for and responding to amenity migration and related pressures
- Well positioned to **exercise leadership** to help communities prepare for and respond to amenity migration and related pressures

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Leadership:
The “practice of mobilizing people to tackle tough challenges and thrive”

How can you mobilize people to prepare for and respond to amenity migration and the challenges and opportunities it presents?

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Question for the audience:

What do you honestly think of this advice?

What is YOUR advice?

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GATEWAY AND
NATURAL AMENITY
REGION INITIATIVE

A hub connecting people and resources to help GNAR communities and the regions around them thrive and protect the things that make them special

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Research

- What are the challenges?
- What are the opportunities?
- What are communities doing to prepare and respond? And what help do they need?

Education

- Getting students out working in GNAR communities, doing research, and developing tools
- Training for public officials and community members in GNAR communities

Technical assistance

- On-the-ground planning, urban design, and collaboration assistance
- Online toolkit and related tool and resource development
- Connecting service providers and resources with communities
- Peer-to-peer learning forums

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Help wanted! (2018)

GNAR communities want assistance with their planning, development, and sustainability issues

- Strong interest in:
 - Model ordinances
 - White papers on key topics
 - Case studies and lessons learned
 - Best practice guidelines for GNAR communities
 - Help with charrettes and design workshops
 - Models for regional collaboration
 - Information about different funding options
 - Forums (in person, webinars, etc.) for peer-to-peer learning and sharing innovative ideas
- 95% said an online toolkit to support planning in GNAR communities would be helpful

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<https://www.usu.edu/gnar/toolkit>

UtahStateUniversity | Gateway & Natural Amenity Region (GNAR) Initiative

Home About Research Education GNAR Network Toolkit Services WNSC Our Team

TOOLKIT

GNAR Toolkit

The GNAR Online Community Toolkit is designed to be a resource for planners, public officials, community members, consultants, and all others who are working in communities with access to significant natural amenities and recreation opportunities. This toolkit provides resources, case studies, model ordinances, and other tools to help GNAR communities plan for and respond to the unique planning, transportation, economic, community development, and sustainability challenges and opportunities they face. The toolkit is a living resource; it will grow and adapt in order to provide the most useful and up-to-date information possible.

Have ideas for topics we should address, thoughts about tools we should link to or develop, or suggestions for how to improve the toolkit? [Add them to our list!](#)

You can use the toolkit to share your case studies, resources, and lessons learned, just email them to: liz.sodja@usu.edu

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https://www.usu.edu/gnar/gnar_network

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Home About Research Education GNAR Network Toolkit Contact WNSC COVID-19 Resources

THE GNAR NETWORK

The GNAR Network

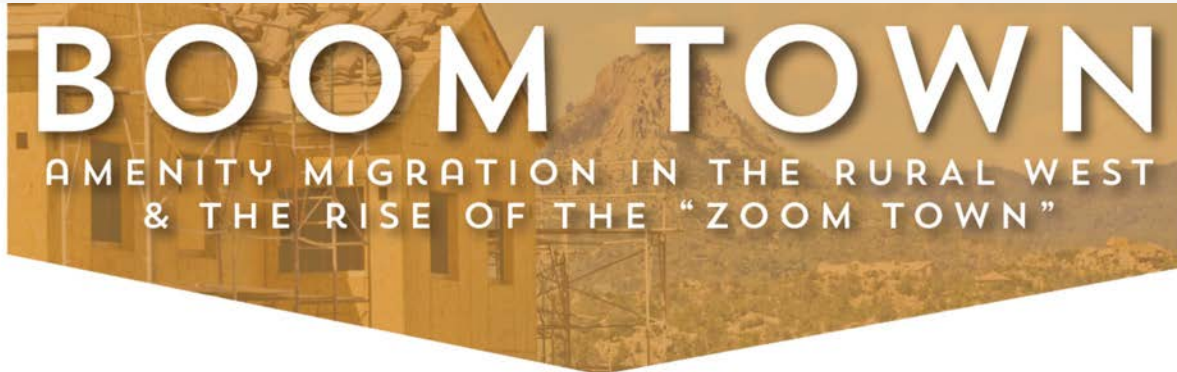
The GNAR Network provides a forum where representatives of gateway communities can meet, share ideas, and identify immediate and high-priority needs that would allow them to make more informed decisions as they respond to the spread of COVID-19 and mitigate its impact on the well-being of their residents and their local economies.

Join the GNAR Network Today!

Receive the latest research, resources, webinars, and networking opportunities with other GNAR Communities straight to your inbox.

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<https://www.usu.edu/gnar/amenitymigrationseries>



[>> CLICK HERE TO DOWNLOAD FULL SERIES SUMMARY <<](#)

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<https://www.usu.edu/gnar/gnarlyproblems>



JUN 15:

Vail InDEED: An Innovative Approach to Increase the Home Supply for Year Round Local Residents

June 15 - 2:00-3:30PM MDT

Many gateway communities have adopted similar housing policies and regulations to improve affordable housing access, whether they be inclusionary zoning, commercial linkage, or development impact fees, and yet, the one thing we all have in common is we all face housing

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https://www.usu.edu/gnar/gnarly_blog/index

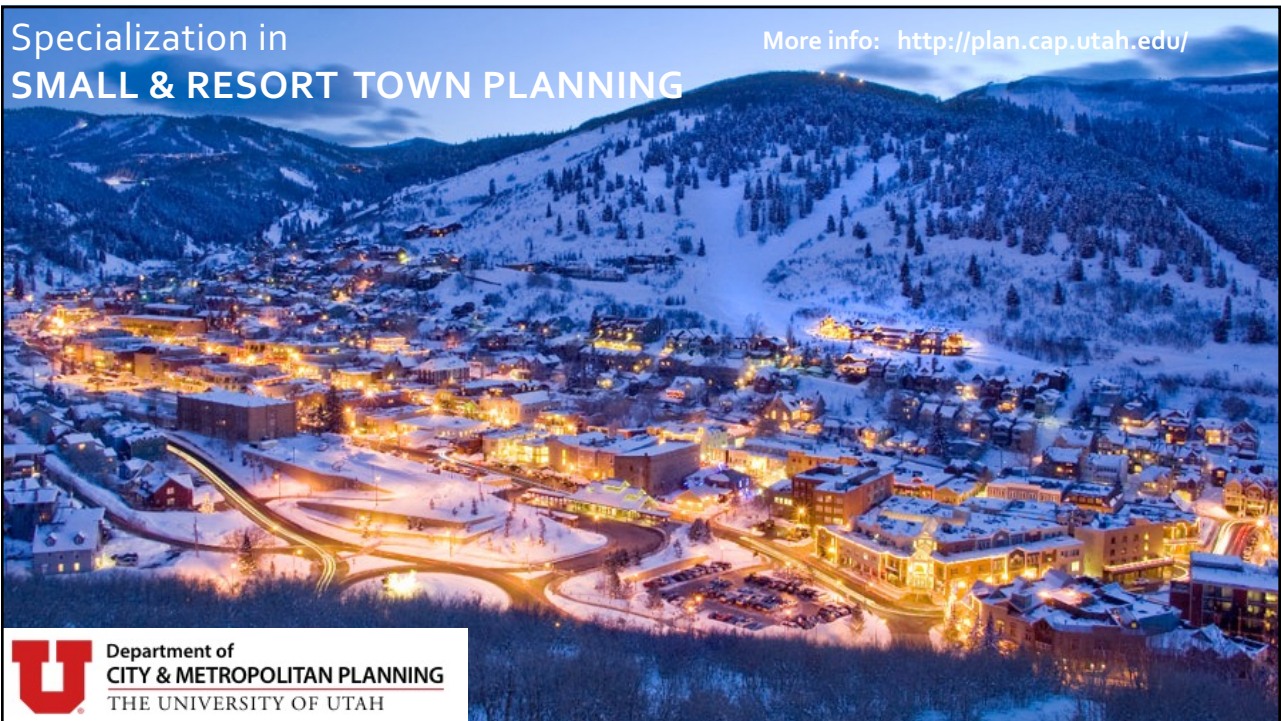
Check out The GNARly Blog



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Specialization in
SMALL & RESORT TOWN PLANNING

More info: <http://plan.cap.utah.edu/>



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GNAR COMMUNITY GENTRIFICATION & SPILLOVER EFFECTS:

Integrated Housing, Transportation, Land Use Challenges and Strategies in Gateway Communities



- **2021 survey of western GNAR communities**
 - How are they doing now?
- **Case studies of 6+ GNAR communities**
 - Tell their stories
 - Derive lessons learned from their challenges and interventions
 - Develop policy, planning, and other recommendations
 - From the local to the federal level
 - Draw attention to the challenges and needs of these places
- **Peer-to-peer learning opportunities**

Thanks to the National Institute for Transportation and Communities (NITC) for funding our 2018 study and upcoming spillover study

Thanks to APA ID for cost match!



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HELP US HELP YOU

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How you can get involved

- Integrated housing, transportation, and land use “spillover” study
 - Provide cost-match/sponsorship: expand our database of case studies and related efforts
 - Help us identify good case study communities
 - Fill out our survey if it comes to you and/or forward on to relevant public officials in GNARs
- Join our GNAR Initiative email list
- Watch and/or share our past and future webinars
 - November peer-to-peer learning session on integrated housing, transportation, and land use challenges and strategies in GNARs - date TBD
- Write a blog sharing lessons learned, best practices, ideas, cautionary tales, etc.
- Help us build a toolkit page
- Mentor and work with students
 - Spring workshop class - looking for student mentors/projects!
- Sponsor the GNAR Initiative

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- Research and thought leadership

<https://sjquinney.utah.edu/stegner-center/edr/>

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Question for the audience:

Any final thoughts, suggestions, or ideas?

Particularly regarding how we can help you (and the communities you serve) and/or how you can help us help you?

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GATEWAY AND
NATURAL AMENITY
REGION INITIATIVE

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https://www.usu.edu/qnar/research/planning_challenges

Stoker, Rumore, Romaniello, and Levine (2020) "Planning and Development Challenges in Western Gateway Communities," *Journal of the American Planning Association*.

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