Wasatch Choices 2040 and the Northwest Quadrant Master Plan:
A Cross-Scale Exploration of Regional Strategic Frames

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Abstract

A growing body of urban planning research acknowledges the importance of frames in the evolution of urban ideals. Frames are “mental structures that shape the way we see the world” and as a result, frames can “shape the goals we seek, the plans we make, the way we act, and what counts as good or bad outcome of our actions” (Lakoff, 2004). In urban planning contexts, strategic spatial planning frames help to shape a region’s identity, forge a sense of geographic interdependency, and manage development issues across a hierarchy of geographic scales. The methodological fulcrum of this report lies in the leverage gained by examining how spatial planning frames function across geographic scales. In that light we explore two recent planning efforts – each at a different scale – that illustrate relevant processes and thus offer insight into the significance of frames in regional planning endeavors. In the end, we bring to light novel conclusions, find questions that beg further discussion, and bring into focus the role spatial planning frames play in defining how a metropolitan region works and how it might be more constructively governed.

Part One: Planning, Cross-Scale Thinking and the Locus of Competition

The study and practice of understanding and managing human-environment interactions increasingly recognize the importance of scale and cross-scale dynamics. Challenges arise from the facts that biophysical phenomena and the processes of human causation and response are intricately linked, but incompletely understood, and the scales and levels at which they manifest are frequently mismatched. (Cash, et al, 2004)

In this society competitive advantage is based on exploitation of unique competencies and resources. A firm or a region competes on the basis of
what they have which is unique in relation to their competitors. Over the past two decades researchers have been paying more and more attention to regions as designated sites of innovation and competitiveness in the globalized economy. (Porter, 1990) A strategic perspective in the contemporary global economy is knowing how to develop such unique competencies and resources in order to foster competitiveness. (Seo, 2006)

**Introduction**

Recent academic and scientific studies have prompted a closer look at the relationship between regional planning and cross-scale thinking. Cross-scale is that which traverses the boundary of scale, from local, to regional, to national, and to international. We are convinced that cross-scale thinking is a useful way to consider the organization of cooperation and competition in a multi-level world – and in particular in identifying the arenas in which planners, elected officials, municipalities, and regional entities compete and cooperate.

We are impressed with two aspects of cross-scale dynamics as applied to regional planning. First is the interdependency or mutual connectivity of actions across scales. One example is provided by the way regional transportation investment decisions affect local land use decisions and vice versa.

Second, we are impressed by the impediments and limitations imposed by seeking to manage a problem at the wrong scale. Here we might cite as an example the difficulties imposed by relying upon inter-municipal competition to identify the most appropriate locations for regional-scale facilities. We think cross-scale thinking will be of value in addressing problems at their most appropriate urban spatial level.

These considerations prompt an exploration in our own backyard – an assessment of a four-county regional planning effort in comparison to a large-scale community development project. Thus we offer reflections on the *Wasatch Choices 2040: A Four-County Land Use and Transportation Vision (WC2040)* in light of the *Northwest Quadrant Draft Master Plan (NWQMP)*.
Wasatch Choices 2040 is a collaborative visioning exercise among the city and county governments of Utah's Weber, Davis, Salt Lake, and Utah Counties, The Wasatch Front Regional Council and the Mountainland Association of Governments – the metropolitan planning organizations (MPOs) responsible for these regions, and over 1,000 residents in 13 public workshops. During this process the public expressed their opinions, through survey questions and hands-on mapping exercises, regarding future land use and transportation within the region. With further analysis of this public input, common themes were developed and from this came forth a Vision Scenario culminating the most resonant themes as well as growth principles that helped frame and lend support to this desired outcome.

The Northwest Quadrant Draft Master Plan proposes upon zoning approval the eventual development of a project within Salt Lake City located west of the Salt Lake City International Airport and north from 2100 South Street to the edge of the Great Salt Lake. This area currently includes over 29 square miles (19,000 acres) of agriculture, industrial, and environmentally sensitive lands, ongoing mining operations, and areas in need of reclamation. The proposed design envisions a community of up to 60,000 new workers and 25,000 - 32,000 new households.

Below consider general criteria for regional plan-making and then reflect on WC2040’s strategic planning frames in light of the NWQMP in order to draw out its strengths and identify further paths forward. General regional planning criteria offer orientation for assessment. These will illuminate the way WC2040 orients thinking with respect to the articulation of new strategic spatial planning frames, the way they are used, how they change, how they have been deployed in the past and what they are in their present formulation.

**General principles for regional plan-making**

So how do we gauge the success or value of a regional plan? How do we account for the fact
that each region has a unique political atmosphere, economy, physical landscape, urban form, and cultural background? Each region’s unique context produces a wide variety of needs and possibilities, and therefore, a variety of visions and strategies. Any considerations must therefore start with this understanding of the distinctiveness of place.

In an effort to address issues of context and scale, we reflect on a regional-scale plan in light of a project-level effort within the same area. When looking across scales it is obvious that the purposes of a regional-level plan and the project-scale plan are closely related. A region’s competitive advantage is due to the combined effort of its individual parts, be that counties, cities, towns or project plans. The purpose of a regional plan is to provide guidance and insights for the smaller-area and project-level plans. The value of a development project is not limited to how it functions within its site boundaries but includes the ways it affects the surrounding urban scene. Therefore reflecting on a regional plan in light of a project plan will illuminate qualities of the regional plan that are important to its effectiveness. These qualities include its clarity, practicality, viability, comprehensiveness, simultaneity, and persuasiveness. As our deliberations approach these latter qualities, it will become clearer that an effective regional plan needs to influence the way people think about being part of a territorially organized political community that in many cases is larger in scale than that considered to be their “neighborhood”

**Clarity:** A regional plan should provide specific direction, helpful insights, and focus for smaller-area or project plans. This regional information should inform project design challenges such as sensitive lands, pollution, and incompatible uses. The regional plan should clarify the needs and goals of the region so that individual projects play a positive supporting role.
Plan clarity asks whether the regional plan brings to conscious attention the issues under debated about the direction and goals of the region. Does it help project designers understanding of forces of regional change that affect project-scale design?

**Viability:** A regional plan should suggest ways to support the strengths of the region at the project scale. The plan should identify these challenges and point out helpful resources.

Plan viability asks whether the regional plan identify Opportunities and limitations. Does it point to institutional and infrastructural support to help project planners know how to contribute to regional goals?

**Practicality:** A regional plan should resonate with those living inside the area. It should be make sense at the ground level and seem possible.

Plan practicality asks whether the regional plan too idealistic. Does it resonate on the ground? Does it show linkages between what we know and how to act? Does it break down goals and strategies into manageable objectives? Does it leave the project designers with a sense that ‘we can do this’?

**Comprehensiveness:** A regional plan should be as wide-ranging and inclusive. If the interdependent and cumulative qualities of local plans are not addressed at a regional scale then the cumulative effects of independent projects may compound to exacerbate problems at the regional scale.

Comprehensiveness asks whether the regional plan identifies all strategic components of a regional system. Does it have all of the necessary parts? Does it consider linkages to arenas at both larger and smaller scales? Has it identified important complementarities, contradictions and proximities?

**Simultaneity:** A regional plan should identify how the regional attributes combine to make a unique regional system. It should identify the dynamic organizing principles that direct the region’s trajectory through time. These connections should make logical sense to the
common observer and should ultimately lead to action.

Inquiries into simultaneity ask whether the region plan demonstrates how regional components fit together in a systemic whole. Does it offer a coherent structure and a dynamic trajectory? Does its logic work to guide action across scales? Does it posit a new way of thinking about how the region works or might work better?

**Persuasiveness:** A regional plan should provide a strong and compelling vision well worth pursuing. The persuasiveness of a regional plan lies in its ability to work with the region’s unique assets, structure, challenges and possibilities to weave a clear and compelling storyline about how to create a commonwealth that would otherwise have been out of reach.

Persuasiveness asks whether a plan is compelling. Does it provide a vision worth striving for? Will it mobilize support? Does it travel?

**Part Two: Focusing on Strategic Planning Frames**

Principles of planning practice leave one with a sense of dissatisfaction. Yes, they demonstrate that a regional plan needs to be multi-dimensional. Yet planning principles offer little regarding just how the planning process mobilizes support for a new way of thinking about a region and how it might work. To proceed, we need to be clear about the concept of ‘frames,’ the process of ‘framing’ and how it applies to spatial planning at the regional scale. We hear claims that strategic planning frames, when generally accepted, reshape thinking regionally and mobilize the power for regionally coherent action. Can this be so? Is this what the WC2040 does or seeks to do? To find out, we will offer an explanation of what a frame is, how this concept applies to regional spatial planning, and finally how frames are developed, supported and change.

A frame is “a mental structure that shapes the way we see the world” (Lakoff, 2004, p. xv). Healey has stated that a frame is an “organizing principle that transforms fragmentary information into a structured and meaningful whole” (as cited in Fisher, 2003, p. 144) and provides a “conceptual coherence, a direction for action, a basis for persuasion and a
framework for the collection and analysis of data” (as cited in Rein and Schon, 1993, p. 153). As a result, frames, in the context of spatial planning, “shape the goals we seek, the plans we make, the way we act, and what counts as good or bad outcome of our actions” (Lakoff, 2004, xv).

*Strategic planning frames*

What is a strategic planning frame and how is it useful? A strategic planning frame is “much more than a framework of principles” (Healey, 2007, p. 183). Yes, it does provide “a selective focus, a way through the morass of issues, ideas, claims and arguments to identify one or more concepts, images or principles that are both ‘meaningful’ and orienting” (p. 188). Healey also emphasizes that a frame must have the “quality of inspiration,” a motivating “vision” supported by story lines and metaphors that create real meaning for its audience (as cited in Hajer, 1995, p. 183).

A strategic planning frame provides focus, direction, and parameters for action. It recognizes key regional issues and how these issues connect at a variety of scales that affect the success of the region as a whole. The process of framing purposefully and convincingly presents possible future trajectories and specifies how such choices may be best taken advantage of as well as how threats to such paths may be avoided. This type of influence can mobilize support from a variety of sectors and stakeholders.

A regional planning frame also provides identity to the area. This identity creates a conceptual visionary gathering place for stakeholders to convene and a common universal language for addressing key issues within the region. A regional planning frame facilitates development of a common understanding of the region and its various actors, communities and stakeholders. When strong enough, a regional planning frame contributes to a regional identity recognized not only throughout its locality but also extends worldwide. Once this regional identity is recognized and established beyond its borders, it becomes self-reinforcing.

Healey provides a case in point with the university town of Cambridge and the county of Cambridgeshire, England and what was known as the Holford Plan of 1950. This plan,
named after Professor William Holford who was appointed by the newly formed “County Planning Commission.” What was affirmed was a “preservationists’ viewpoint” (p. 124) seeking to protect the region’s incomparable beauty and what was “the only true “University town” in England” from a “multitude of unplanned events that will tend to change it” (as cited in Holford and Wright, 1950, p. vii). Holford’s protectionist frame established the means to project a regional identity that resonates yet today in the minds of many who do not know what happened next.

Over the intervening years, Cambridge’s very success as a university town generated a dynamic grounded in science- and research-based industries that could no longer be contained. By the 1960s it was clear that Cambridge’s future would be governed by the economic growth dynamic of a globally significant cluster of high-tech industries. But “The Cambridge Phenomenon” threatened as much as it promised. The next two decades involved a struggle to accommodate the demands of both growth and preservation. The ensuing co-alignment of interests eventually resulted in a spatial planning vision for the Cambridge region designed to both foster and encourage vitality and at the same time, protect historic character “of villages in their rural settings, of small market towns, and of a still-small city connected to it’s green surroundings ” (Healey, 2007, p.164).

Orfield et al. (2010) offers insight into how the Twin cities area of Minneapolis–Saint Paul deployed regional strategic frames. Historically this region’s highly fragmented and municipally driven atmosphere made it difficult to address its social, economic, and environmental problems. Cognizance of what benefits improved cooperation would bring to the region started taking hold in the late 1960s. In 1967, the Minnesota Legislature created what would be known as the Metropolitan Council to encourage coordination among over 200 municipal agencies that existed at that time.
By 1971 a new regionally-strategic frame, focusing on intercommunity fiscal differences and their negative effects lead to the passage of the first regional tax-based sharing program in the United States (Martin et al., 1983). Known as the Fiscal Disparities Act of 1971, it is considered by some to be the glue that allowed the Metropolitan Land Planning Act (MLPA) of 1976 to come into being (Orfield et al., 2010). The MLPA recognized both the interdependency of local governments and the untoward effects of inter-municipal competition, so it had the Met Council screen general plans for consistency with a regional air, water, infrastructure and economic development plan.

Through the years the Met Council created tools to guide urban growth. It engaged debate about the concept of urban containment. Previous to 1975 the Met Council established a well-defined urban growth boundary. However from 1976 on gubernatorial intervention weakened the focus on urban containment. By the 1990s the Met Council was unable to restrain suburban sprawl (Orfield et al., 2010). The regional plan adopted in 2004 reframed this issue altogether. Rather than limiting sprawl at the fringe, the Met Council’s new focus is on hub and spoke development around transit centers.

As can be seen, a region’s strategic planning frame needs to accommodate both stasis and change. It orients and consolidates thinking sufficient to permit coordinated action, entertain contradictions, and eventually yield to yet another frame. Strategic planning frames are emergent social products with the ability to shape perception, dialog and action through the persuasiveness of their organizing principles.

If new strategic frames accumulate sufficient power to enroll others, to travel across significant institutional sites of urban governance and to endure
through time, then they are likely to have significant effects in shaping the future. They have transformative potential. (Healey, 2007, p. 185)

Thus the utility of a strategic planning frame lies in the way it lends to the process of governance the qualities of generativity, coherence, coordination and justification.

*Strategic planning frame development, support, and change*

If strategic planning frames provide for both stasis and change, we might well ask how they come about, get developed, gain support and change? Strategic planning frames come about through an “interactive learning process” specific to a social, territorial, cultural and institutional context (Lundvall, 1992). The power of place has a central role in their creation. Healey elaborates:

“The social processes by which frames are produced are deeply affected by the institutional contexts in which they are located and the history of struggles over meaning and values which have preceded them.” (Healey, 2007, p. 184)

Spatial frame-making interprets what we presume to be essential about how an urban region works. Frame-making can proceed as though it were a technical exercise to be shaped by a single set of like-minded actors. But for it to resolve political contradictions, reflect a rich understanding of urban dynamics, and promote a broad conception of urbanity, frame-making has to reach out to multiple communities, project a variety of values, and unite diversity behind a theme that is big enough to be engaging.

For those who participate in spatial frame-making, the process involves to greater or lesser degree a simultaneous:

- reorganization of conceptual boundaries and identities;
- extension of trust while quieting fears and territorialities;
- acknowledgement of shared values to re-align inclusions and exclusions;
- densification of networks while re-defining ‘permissible’ associations; and
- elevating deliberation about the locus of cooperation and competition.
Different events can precipitate active frame creation. External sources such as war, recession, technological advancement, population migration, catastrophe, and resource depletion may force a region to reframe its strategies to meet new challenges or opportunities. But a region may also proactively choose to create new regional strategic frames in order to preserve certain environmental, social, intellectual, economic, and cultural assets or to promote their deployment. Intentionally proactive reframing is becoming more and more common (Bartholomew and Ewing, 2009).

The creation of a regional strategic frame requires effective leadership. The process has at times involved just a few key players but more recently seems to require a public participatory process for the strategic frame to gather strength and mobility. Effective leaders encourage new strategic frames that suggest new possibilities to inspire the public perception of regional prospects. To develop momentum, a strategy-making process needs to engage in deliberation about what matters in daily life, how to get improvements and whose concerns take priority. The spatial strategy-making process is inherently political in that it invariably alters the cultural context in which governance occurs. This requires building constituencies and mobilizing their support.

As such, spatial strategy-making must launch a public discussion of how to understand urban dynamics and the choices inherent in emerging trajectories of urban system performance. Such discussion will provoke reaction but may also encourage acceptance. A proposed frame will resonate differently according to the values and concerns of affected parties.

“A critical and difficult moment in strategy-making is the shift from creating a frame to promoting it. The art of spatial strategy-making that helps to shape the future without becoming restrictively hegemonic is to maintain a critical attitude while taking a strategy forward, allowing its sense to evolve in continual interaction with multiple constituencies” (Healey, 2007, p. 286).

For any regional strategic planning frame to succeed and naturally evolve, a conscious effort needs to be placed on developing and expanding the supportive capacity of inter-organizational networks. Network participants range from those who use knowledge to those who generate knowledge in various urban sectors. Emphasis should be placed on
knowledge development, effective information dissemination and cross-sector coordination.

In effect, a frame should encourage the emergence of a new social field where a more discursive form of regional policy making integrates formerly isolated issues, organizations and sector domains. Where such networks are active, frames become more effective and frame adjustments occur in a more timely and natural way. Just as “a producer has more incentives to innovate when it serves a variety of user industries and when it uses inputs from a variety of supply industries,” a region has more inclination to innovate and update its frames when a larger variety of network connections exist (Seo, 2006).

Thus the capacity to develop, support and change strategic planning frames depend upon the innovative and integrative capacity of a region’s inter-organization networks and their ability to attune their thinking to emergent possibilities.

Our local history of regional strategic frames

Historically the western United States has and continues to exhibit a strong spirit of independence and local-government control when it comes to land use decisions with an emphasis on personal property rights and a lingering inclination towards the ideas of manifest destiny. The state of Utah and specifically the Wasatch Front perpetuate these values in a frame of reference that shape choices toward land use and urban development.

The Plat of Zion represents urban Utah’s earliest framing of how cities would be built and function. Originally conceived by Joseph Smith in 1833 and later put into practice by Brigham Young, the Plat of Zion was a plan whereby cities would be organized around a one-mile square grid of large blocks and wide streets and where agricultural lands would be protected on the perimeter. Cities would be limited to 20,000 inhabitants before the process would be repeated at a new location. Historically this early “framing” emphasized community and sustainable practices. Revolutionary for its time, it has recently become a counter-point to development patterns that have been the norm in Utah for these past many decades.
Population growth along the Wasatch Front has been generally positive throughout the past 50. Currently over 80 percent of the state’s population is located along this 100-mile narrow corridor from Ogden to Provo. Rapid growth coupled with traditions of local land use controls, protection of personal property, a fragmented political climate, and the physical constraints of the land created a very challenging situation for local governments. Much of the 1980s and 1990s was a period where most communities exhibited a “[...] ‘bunker mentality’, causing citizens to entrench themselves within the smallest defensible unit [...]” (Envision Utah, 2005. p. 11). This was, in most cases, was defined by the municipality you lived in.

By 1988 concerns about growth prompted a diverse group of local leaders, officials, and stakeholders to form the Coalition for Utah’s Future with a focus on “reframing the discussion” on growth. Surveys confirmed public concern. The Coalition knew that any effort would have to appease the advocates for local control and decision-making. The form chosen would be a public/private partnership with key stakeholders present at the table.

In 1997, the Coalition of Utah’s Future created Envision Utah to coordinate both public and private interests around urban growth. The initial focus area was to be the Greater Wasatch Area. Its broadly based efforts soon resulted in a Quality Growth Strategies report. The report promoted a strategic planning frame focused on increased densities, extensive light rail transit and development focused on corridors, transit stops and activity centers. It gained neither strong endorsements from the real estate industry nor gubernatorial political support.

*Wasatch Choices 2040* completed in 2007 is a significant contribution to recent efforts in regional plan making. It presents a publicly supported vision for long-range regional transportation and land use planning. It advances the idea that thoughtful patters of urban land use are an effective adjunct to transportation investments in controlling urban traffic congestion and atmospheric emissions. The document has been well received and has been adopted by elected officials throughout the region.

Interestingly, there is a subtext to *Wasatch Choices 2040*. It is that there has been an important shift in the locus of competition. With the globalization of financial and material flows, comes the organization of a global- and continental-scale urban hierarchy. Positions
within the hierarchy are not stable but change as metropolitan regions gain and lose competitive advantage. The relevant arena for competition no longer resides at the municipal scale where localities compete for tax ratable and favorable public service packages. Such competition has always been a zero-sum game and is often arguably a negative-sum game. There has now emerged a region-wide incentive to re-structure the game. With the locus of competition now re-organized, those who fail to cooperate locally, fail to win globally, slide gradually down an urban hierarchy and squabble over diminished returns. By setting aside the competitive impulse and learning to cooperate, localities embrace a larger future potential.

A shift in the locus of competition requires a change in regional spatial strategy. It requires at least a shift toward sector-wise integration of land use and transportation but potentially much more. And it requires a shift in governance strategy toward inter-jurisdictional cooperation. A general acknowledgement of this subtext may account for the broad endorsements Wasatch Choice 2040 has received.

Detailed aspects of the required shift are considered in the section below.

**Part Three: Wasatch Choices 2040 - How Does it Guide?**

*Wasatch Choices 2040* argues that competition for jobs, utility, and transportation infrastructure resources, and economic development is no longer among the municipalities within a regional context, but between metropolitan regions. “It is not a question of Sandy competing with Ogden, or Salt Lake City competing with Provo; rather, it is a question of the Greater Wasatch Area Competing with other metropolitan regions, such as Silicon Valley, Denver’s Front Range, Austin, Singapore and New Delhi” (*WC2040*). This acknowledgement represents a very large yet gradual frame shift for officials along the Greater Wasatch Front.

*WC2040* ties this shift in regional thinking to successful economic development. It recommends enhancing collaboration, coordinating facilities development, broadening planning participation, harmonizing local and regional plans, promoting collaborative
expertise, and sharing information. The *Wasatch Choices 2040* process has become a national model but how effective will it be in guiding smaller scale plans? To address this question, we compare the strategic frame elements of *WC2040* to comparable elements in the *Northwest Quadrant Draft Master Plan*. This exercise illuminates qualities of the regional plan that are important to its success.

Each of the regionally strategic planning frame elements considered below is meant to support this overarching frame and the its associated recommendations. These elements are synthesized in the blue paragraphs below.

**Regional infrastructure and its relationship to urban growth**

*Rather than having infrastructure improvements accommodate urban growth, growth should be organized to effectively use existing and planned infrastructure investments and corridors. New growth should be contiguous to existing growth, emphasize compact development, avoid sprawl, and reduce its impacts on critical lands and natural resources.*

*WC2040* supports the preservation of future infrastructure corridors throughout the region while promoting redevelopment, compact design, and contiguous growth. It promotes redevelopment and infill to protect the urban core, reduce impacts on sensitive lands, and to strengthen community character and identity.

The *NWQMP* acknowledges regional transportation infrastructure investments and plans. It uses compact development principles to avoid sprawl within the project protecting critical lands and natural resources. The *NWQMP* is, by and large, a greenfield project, that is new development that lacks substantial constraints imposed by prior development. It is adjacent to existing development in some respects yet *WC2040* is not clear on what parameters define “contiguous”. The proposed project is in close proximity to the International Airport, industrial centers, and existing transportation corridors. Yet *WC2040’s* emphasis on redevelopment and infill is not sufficiently developed to guide this project appropriately.
This strategic planning frame highlights the importance of clarity, viability, and practicality. What is the specific definition this region will use for “contiguous growth” and “infill”? How should individual municipalities weigh the effects of contiguous versus infill development? How do these same municipalities guide the timing and placement of growth to best take advantage of the benefits of infill and contiguous growth? In what areas within the region will infill and redevelopment most likely occur? What regional and municipal assistance is available to encourage desired outcomes? How should infrastructure demands within infill and continuous growth areas be handled?

**Land use and travel demand**

_A closer concentration and more varied mix of land uses can reduce traffic congestion, travel demand, and the future need for added roadway capacity._

WC2040 promotes the development of multi-modal transportation systems accessing regional employment, housing, educational, and activity centers. It also encourages future residential and commercial areas that are in close proximity to each other while providing a balance between jobs and housing throughout the region.

The *NWQMP* promotes compact neighborhood designs with efficient internal circulation among its various development nodes. It incorporates mixed land use patterns in many of its development nodes. Development nodes and recreational amenities are well linked with walkways and cycling paths. These design features will reduce automobile dependency and encourage walking and biking.

The *NWQMP* also features options for transit ridership and touts easy linkages to the regional roadway network. It emphasizes its proximity to the Salt Lake City International Airport, nearby employment centers and future West Bench communities. Its adjacency to Interstate I-80 and I-215 facilitates access to the regions principle highway corridors. Yet its relative remoteness suggests that person trips might be longer than the regional average. How is one to know?

It appears the *NWQMP* responds to the intensions of this frame element. Yet in so doing, it
uncovers questions about the travel demand effects of land use designs internal to the project relative to the effects of land use patterns in the area around the project. In this regard, the project’s adjacency to the Great Salt Lake and to several large-scale, single-purpose land uses does not portend a ready integration of the project into its local setting in ways other than those related to employment.

**Land use and multi-modality**

*A closer concentration and more varied mix of land uses can accommodate a greater variety of travel mode to help reduce traffic congestion and the need for added roadway capacity.*

While WC2040 acknowledges that land use planning remains a function of local communities, it stresses the need for regional coordination and a comprehensive understanding of how land-use and transportation impact one upon the other.

The NWQMP plan, when viewed internally at the project level, supports the principles of WC2040 offering a variety of land uses and multiple modes of travel. Design principles that encourage and facilitate the use of multi-modal transportation systems within the development include mixed land-use, street connectivity, and access to transit, sidewalks, and trails. Designs at the project level seem consistent with regional objectives.

Again, while the NWQMP responds to the elements of the frame, there seems to be a weak correlation between internal (local) objectives and external (regional) realities. The physical distance between the project and existing municipal services prompts questions as to whether this planning frame is defined clearly enough to guide discernment regarding its intent. A diversification of modal choice within the project can be successfully achieved while at the same time little or no shift occurs outside, primarily due to the urban fabric surrounding the project – one that encumbers support for multi-modality.

**Demographics, regional housing demand and needed structure types**

*The region is constructively considered to have a single regional housing*
market with inter-related market segments defined by tenure, size, structure-type, and price points. Regional demographic and economic trajectories will substantially change the structure of regional housing market demand so as to require a greater variety of product than has been offered in the past.

WC2040 stresses the need for a regional approach to housing including policies and land use decisions that facilitate a variety of housing types and an adequate supply of moderately priced housing near regional job centers with housing and development centers easily accessed by public transportation.

The NWQMP reflects the principles of the WC2040 regional housing model by providing a diverse inventory and by addressing affordability, access to public transportation, and a jobs-to-housing balance.

The Wasatch Front is expected to experience new demographic patterns and trends witnessed by changes in family size, rates of in and out migration, and fertility/mortality rates. Shifts in the region’s occupational structure will add a further dimension of change. Stronger regional guidance with comprehensive inventories and demand analysis is needed to ensure effective municipal and project-level responses to this region wide objective. Otherwise, there is little assurance that these add up to anything that makes sense at the regional scale.

**Protect and enhance the environment**

*Communities should promote design features that protect and enhance the natural and built environment.*

WC2040 promotes the protection and enhancement of the environment by encouraging conservation of water, energy, regionally significant sensitive lands, open space, irreplaceable natural resources, and improvement of air quality. WC2040 also encourages improvements to the built environment and access to areas of natural beauty and recreation.

The NWQMP supports the principles of WC2040 through recommendations that the city
maintain a desirable level of environmental and cultural quality through development that balances components of environmental, social, and economic sustainability. The plan encourages a respect for the needs of other communities in the region and globally as well as the needs of future generations, and seeks to preserve and enhance natural ecological functions.

In promoting environmental enhancement, the NWQMP recommends the protection of natural resources, systems and environmentally sensitive areas through green design, resource protection buffers, as well as the designation of natural areas, conservation development zones, and greenways.

Plans get articulated with greater detail at the project level than the regional level. Yet there are certain aspects of regional environmental quality that are not specified that do impact project-scale plans. For example, local projects now and in the future will increasingly encounter issues of sensitive lands. Sensitive lands are the locus for a number of ecological processes such as hydrological processes and wildlife migration, and as such should be managed at a regional scale.

Regional noise studies need to define noise contours to better shape local development projects. Regional air quality studies need to define criteria for major facility and project locations. Regional development compatibility studies are needed to gauge compatibility with industrial, agricultural and natural processes, emissions, odors and noise.

*Ensure public health and safety*

*Communities should promote design features that promote healthy living and physical activity to ensure the safety and well being of residents.*

WC2040 promotes public health through facilitation of physical activity. Transportation facilities should promote and encourage physical activity. Access to all modes of transportation should be provided. Housing should be easily accessible to other destinations enabling routine use of walking and biking trails and public transportation. Communities must also provide a safe and adequate culinary water supply, sanitation, fire
and police protection, and emergency services.

NWQMP also seeks to create a vibrant, safe, and highly connected community providing for access to trails and alternative transportation modes. Physical activity is facilitated with public paths, trails, and on-street bike routes to school, employment, shopping, and other destinations. Walkability is further enhanced through compact development patterns with convenient routes to a variety of destinations within walking distance of most housing.

Generally the NWQMP reflects the public health and safety emphasis of this frame. Yet it is important to note that the relative success of this approach may fail outside project boundaries. When local trails or on-street bike routes are not networked with surrounding communities and important off-site destinations, the benefits of health-promoting designs within the project are constrained. In addition, a focus on public health and safety at the project level raises the question as to whether it would be prudent to coordinate the location and provision of such services at the municipal or regional scale.

Moreover, the particularities of the Northwest Quadrant raise questions concerning the adequacy of this frame element. Where, one might reasonably ask, is guidance on issues of noise pollution? Similarly, where are the tolerance thresholds for odors wafting off the Great Salt Lake and what implications would these have for suitable land uses along the affected parts of the lakeshore? Will the activity of so many households and employees add critically to emissions of volatile organic compounds already prevalent around the International Airport and if so what are the consequences and mitigation options?

**Part Four: Wasatch Choices 2040 - How Might it Further Guide?**

The following three elements have been mentioned in WC2040 but may benefit from further development at the regional scale. In their respective ways, each addresses an aspect of the debate over the balance between infill and greenfield development.

*Educational infrastructure*
New development and growth will create the need for additional educational facilities and service. It is unclear how much of the expected growth is due to relocation from within or outside of the region. It is important that Salt Lake City and other county municipalities provide incentives to encourage redevelopment and infill while reinventing their school facility model to adapt to neighborhood changes. The WC2040 does not provide guidance to help frame the issue of analysis to help inform the tradeoff between infill and new development and the life cycling of neighborhoods through changes in age structure.

**Growth, water demand, supply and management**

The NWQMP is a large project and may have significant impacts on water supply. Numerous similar projects of this nature will have a cumulative effect on regional water demand and supply. This reflects a need for study development and improved expertise at a regional scale.

While this project addresses water inflow internal to the project, it implies that a similar project upstream could impact storm water management here. The NWQMP is one of a whole series of sites within the region that are prone to flooding and have drainage issues. There has been a precaution to gage the sites vulnerability within Salt Lake City. As more water is brought into the area, and impermeable surfaces increase, internal flooding becomes an issue. This site is not unique in that regard, rather it is one in a series of such sites that should be dealt with on a regional basis.

**Growth, travel, land use and air quality**

As growth and development increase in the Salt Lake valley we will find ourselves increasingly out of compliance with National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS). If this continues, federal funding for highway projects may be withheld, or project approval denied (Clean Air Act of 1970).

A project of this scale raises issues to this nexus of concerns. It is difficult to address air quality at the project scale without addressing it at the regional scale. Regional guidance
should inform the need for and location of development with respect to “vehicle miles traveled” (VMT), congestion, and atmospheric emissions. As Portland has done and Atlanta is now required to do, regional guidance requires a regional spatial strategy that addresses the balance between greenfield and infill development as it relates to these issues.

Part Five: The Locus of Competition, Frames, and Cross-Scale Governance

What do we know about the emergence of inter-regional competition? With globalization of financial and material flows, comes the organization of a global- and continental-scale urban hierarchy. Positions within the hierarchy are not stable but change as regions gain and lose competitive advantage. Porter’s (1990) concept of “clusters,” or groups of interconnected firms, suppliers, related industries, and institutions that arise in particular locations, has become a new way for companies and governments to think about economies, assess the competitive advantage of locations, and set public policy. A major challenge before the world’s urban regions has become one of establishing and maintaining the conditions in which these clusters form and prosper.

Establishing and maintaining these conditions has a great deal to do with transportation, land use, environmental quality, housing, education, cultural diversity, and recreational amenities. Securing these conditions require cooperation among localities. But inter-local cooperation doesn’t come naturally. The competition that seems functional at one scale is dysfunctional at another. So, in what arenas do we want to succeed? It depends. Hopefully the answer isn’t just, “In the arena where we can successfully compete.” Hopefully, the answer also includes, “In the area where cooperation pays off.”

So what is required to understand the possibilities of cooperating locally to succeed regionally? Intra-local cooperation will necessitate a broader vision of how a metropolitan region works. Some of the questions that we ask include;

- What are the essential functional parts of a region, how do they work together and what values are threatened when they don’t?
- Can the functional parts of a region be coordinated to overcome sprawl, congestion
and pollution, assure a viable economy, preserve regional amenities and guarantee affordable arrangements for working families?

• Do localities need to pull together to better address our dependence on fossil fuels in and increasingly carbon-constrained world?

• Does cooperating locally to succeed regionally involve distributing more equitably the benefits and burdens of metropolitan development among localities?

• What will we learn about inter-regional competitive advantage as we take up cooperative approaches to managing a metro-region?

• Can we encourage implementation of cooperative measures?

• Can we monitor improvements in competitive advantage and by what measures?

• Can we establish the value of cross-scale thinking in common parlance?

• Can cross-scale thinking become part of common sense?

We need to bring these questions into focus, share strategic information, develop expertise and build the relationships that will help provide answers.

**Part Six: Acknowledgements**

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**Part Seven: Citations**


