



CONSERVE

RECONNECTING WITH NATURE

Rick LeBrasseur
Center for Green Space Design

rick@greenspacedesign.org



“Most seem interested in conserving open space in their community. Yet, defining open space on a physical and personal level is difficult.”

Our Utah communities are losing contact with nature; a nature which was once so heavily relied upon and was the foundation of our growth & prosperity. Yet this relationship can be reconnected, and can provide new and useful benefits to our well being and sustainability.

Utah is not immune to growth pressure – the population of the Greater Wasatch area is projected to grow to 5 million by 2050. Most of our past growth is due to natural increase, and Utah’s high birth rate is expected to continue. Urbanized land is projected to quadruple from 350 square miles to 1,350 square miles by 2050. Wasatch County’s farmland and ranchlands have decreased from 108,381 acres in 1997 to 69,612 acres in 2002. (Source: GOPB)

Green infrastructure strategies, unlike traditional conservation planning techniques, actively seek to promote more efficient and sustainable land use and development patterns, as well as protect natural ecosystems.

Sustainable infrastructure begins with comprehensive open space planning. The Center for Green Space Design (CGSD) has developed a comprehensive open space planning technique that is based on a careful inventory of the community’s cultural, ecological, developmental, agricultural and recreational (CEDAR) open lands and resources.

A basic organizing principle is foundational to developing a comprehensive green infrastructure network, and the CEDAR Framework provides this organization. Every community’s open spaces fall into one or more of CEDAR’s five broad categories: cultural, ecological, developmental, agricultural, and recreational. When open spaces are defined in terms of their CEDAR value, this all-encompassing definition becomes the basis for developing broad public support, as a range of citizens with varied interests will value an infrastructure that includes all of the particular types of spaces that they find important. When a community’s open space is not comprehensively accounted for, groups that would otherwise provide needed support are alienated.

These considerations are used to guide the development of a community’s open space system, or green infrastructure network, that is informed by the past, makes the most out of present opportunities, and addresses current and future needs. Urbanizing communities in Utah often overlook their open space assets. The CEDAR technique allows for minimal oversight when recognizing and assessing a community’s values and open spaces. When green infrastructure is limited to only one or two types of open spaces (recreational and ecological, for instance), sprawl occurs and the sustainability of the community is unrealized.

This community planning approach has been used in dozens of communities and has garnered attention in such publications as *Planning, Landscape Architecture*, and *Urban Land* and at various conferences.

The Center for Green Space Design is a non-profit which promotes the recognition of green infrastructure and open space assets, and we actively illustrate techniques that designers, planners, municipalities and communities can use to overcome impediments and grow in a sustainable fashion which protects valued open space assets through out public and community education and outreach efforts. As grey infrastructure is planned as each real estate development is contemplated, so must green infrastructure.

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1 CEDAR Framework. The CEDAR framework, as developed by the Center for Green Space Design, demonstrates how any communities open spaces can be classified into one or more of five broad categories: cultural, ecological, developmental, agricultural, or recreational (CEDAR) and inventoried in a comprehensive manner to help build broad based public support.

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Assembling support for comprehensive green infrastructure networks in the rapidly urbanizing and urbanized areas can be difficult. Utilizing the CEDAR Framework to organize environmental resources, common ground can be found and used to build a sustainable public infrastructure in a community. The Center for Green Space Design actively promotes these practices and offers communities a variety of tools that can be used to bring these visions to reality through comprehensive or general plan and zoning ordinance updates. Tips for navigating cross-jurisdictional boundaries can be tricky in promoting an anti-sprawl green space model ordinance.

Most seem interested in conserving open space in their community. Yet, defining open space on a physical and personal level is difficult. In addition, a community's understanding of open space often gets lost in their general plan language, being oversimplified and undeterminable.

Utilizing simple tools such as conservation easements, communities can better protect their open space assets and monitor development sustainably. Conservation subdivisions meet both the needs of the environment and development.

Communities in Utah are beginning to employ conservation subdivisions as a means of protecting valued open lands while respecting individual property rights. Used in conjunction with a comprehensive community open space plan, conservation subdivisions can permanently protect 50% or more of a communities remaining open lands while shaping growth into more desirable patterns and locations.



1 Hidden Springs; Boise Idaho: Community gardens and homes are ringed by fields of potatoes and permanently protected Conservation Easements. When homes are placed closer together, the result is easier maintenance, less infrastructure and more opportunities to meet your neighbors. (Project Credit – Frank Martin, Prairie Crossing)

2 Hidden Springs; Boise, Idaho: A new 1000 tree orchard was added, growing 30 varieties of apples and peaches and plums for a specialty market. A town firehouse, library and corner shop forms the heart of the community.

3 Sundance Springs; Bozeman, Montana: A well planned conservation subdivision leads to higher selling prices for developers, increased equity for homeowners, a strong sense of neighborhood identity and safety, and healthier communities. Built on former agricultural land along a stream, Sundance Springs utilized clustering ordinances to achieve high quality community diversity and open space connection. The underlying zoning allowed 1 unit per acre, for 146 lots. By clustering on 1/3-1/2 acre lots, the project was eligible for density bonuses, but only took a bonus to develop a small commercial area. Every lot backs up on open space, with 50% conserved across the site. Trails transition into sidewalks, connecting the entire neighborhood.



4 Blackhawk Station; Summit County, Utah : In this conservation subdivision, homes are clustered around natural open space – the connection to nature is ever present. A detention basin serves to clean groundwater and runoff before entering the watershed as well as a landscape pond for the community and children. (Project Credit – Center for Green Space Design)

