

11.201, Gateway: Planning Action
Prof. Xavier de Souza Briggs
Lecture 20

I. Questions from the class

1. Is Home Rule in the US like it is in Utah?

Home Rule in the US varies from state to state. Developers ask if higher level of government (state and federal) will impose stricter home rule on localities. In general, authoritative local government is the norm, as in Utah's case. Localities can be very defensive about what they get to decide.

2. How does sprawl work? What is a boundary of a locality?

Portland drew an urban boundary many years ago forcing development inward. Utah Valley is very linear because it is between the mountains and the Great Salt Lake. These are the natural growth boundaries. A lot of land is privately owned, not federally protected.

3. What is the Wirthlin Values Tree?

They were consultants for Regan and Thatcher. The diagram in the reading is the value tree. Rather than a poll using crude data, they did in-depth 2 hour interviews with many questions that asked, "why," to create a value hierarchy.

4. How viable was the central business district?

Economically, it suffered from suburban retail, malls, etc. The Mormon church owns many parts of downtown. In the 90's, with Vision Utah, the city was healthy and development wanted to experiment with density and politicians were elected to fight that. Downtown is not very dense. Envision Utah and core organizers believed the moment was right because concern over sprawl and growth would continue if not checked. Robert Gross believed this needed to be done without demonizing the suburbs. Many efforts in the country have modeled themselves after Vision Utah.

5. How important was Robert Gross?

He was very important. He had a substantive command over law and corporations. He was able to validate himself to many parties. He approached people, one by one, and held many meetings with many parties. He was the right messenger with tools for building trust and had credibility with others. He made creative civics work.

6. How much did the whole process cost?

Envision Utah budget was between 2-4 million dollars, about \$1 per resident. They also leveraged state, county and local government funding too. They were very reliant on national foundations, philanthropy funds, and regional planning efforts.

7. Was there compromise over sustainability?

This was not really answered during research. Utah is not in the air quality non-complaint part of the country. They did not look at water or air quality choices.

II. Slide Presentation

[Slides are not available for this lecture due to the many copyright images used.]

- Slide 4: Utah is a major growing region in 1990-96. Cities in cold wet climates are losing populations to cities in hot dry climates.

- Slide 5: Utah is the #6 growing city in the 1990's.
- Slides 10-12: Different ways population was looked at include modeling, mapping, scenarios in newspapers with oversimplified images
- Slide 13: Examples of using images to visualize what population growth scenarios would look like.
- Slides 14-15: Tools of Envision Utah (e.g. a chapter on energy efficiency).
- Slides 17-19: Public awareness and marketing promotions
- Slide 20: The mining company wanted to green its' image with a master planned community. The slide images are photos from the development.

III. Success

What are the benchmarks of success? How should we think of the success?

- It was simple, but that got a lot of people thinking and that is success.
- Percent of population who knew about it was high.
- Appearance of local growth issues in elections and politics. Envision Utah saw increase in number of politicians interested in serving or inviting Envision to come in. The support of local politicians was also high.

Was success based on Utah being homogenous?

- Broader ideas can be replicated, a communication strategy and political network is important.
- Homogeneity was important because people shared a similar story and the Church was a core institution. Parts of the area were 95% white.
- But we cannot be paralyzed in thinking of successes by describing it as a homogeneous location.
- They did struggle with top-down consensus not working and needed to create constituency for ideas. How do you work in more decentralized fashion to create shared learning among different schools of thought? For example, they thought environmentalists were extremists

IV. Class Discussion Question

1. What are lessons for planning and implications for planning from the Utah case?
2. Where do you see yourself within the case, what role?