

PLANNING  
FOR A

# GNARLY FUTURE

ONLINE LEARNING SERIES

REIMAGINING PLANNING TO EMPOWER YOUR COMMUNITY



GATEWAY AND  
NATURAL AMENITY  
REGION INITIATIVE™  
Extension  
UtahStateUniversity. 

WEBINAR SERIES SUMMARY AND FOLLOW-UP RESOURCES



Institute of Outdoor Recreation & Tourism  
UtahStateUniversity.



THE UNIVERSITY OF UTAH  
S.J. QUINNEY  
COLLEGE OF LAW  
Wallace Stegner Center for Land,  
Resources, and the Environment

Environmental Dispute Resolution Program

# PLANNING FOR A GNAR(LY) FUTURE: REIMAGINING PLANNING TO EMPOWER YOUR COMMUNITY

## WEBINAR SERIES SUMMARY & FOLLOW-UP RESOURCES

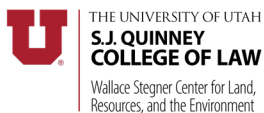
### Edited & Compiled by:

Elizabeth Sodja  
Gateway & Natural Amenity Region (GNAR) Initiative Coordinator  
Utah State University

### Organized by:

Jordan Katcher, Jake Powell, Danya Rumore, Jordan W. Smith

## THANK YOU TO OUR SERIES SPONSORS FOR THEIR SUPPORT:



# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>Overview of the Series</b> .....	4
<b>SESSION 1) REFOCUS: Values as Vision</b> .....	6
<b>SESSION 2) REFRAME: Focus on Assets, Not Deficits.</b> .....	10
<b>SESSION 3) REENGAGE: Mobilize Community Through Proactive Engagement</b> .....	15
<b>SESSION 4) REDEFINE: Solutions Beyond Boundaries.</b> .....	18
<b>SESSION 5) REIMAGINE: Planning, Not Plans</b> .....	21
<b>Conclusion &amp; Next Steps.</b> .....	25



## SERIES OVERVIEW

Gateway communities are the doorstep to our nation's national parks, public lands, cherished recreation areas, and iconic landscapes that draw millions of domestic and international visitors each year. Additionally, across the western United States many communities are being "discovered" and in the last three years, these communities have seen unprecedented change and growth. As a result, a growing number of gateway communities and the public lands surrounding them are experiencing complex planning and management challenges, including those more typical to urban contexts, such as housing affordability and transportation congestion concerns.

However, unlike urban or suburban communities, gateway communities often must confront these challenges with limited resources. These communities are grappling with rapid change in real time and the fate of these locales – as both tourism destinations as well as desirable places to live – rests on the planning and management decisions community leaders, planners, and residents are making right now.

Unfortunately, most available planning resources fall short of addressing the increasing complexity that gateway communities experience. These communities live at the nexus where issues of community, environment and public lands converge, adding additional intricacy and scope to the challenges. Too often, planning resources don't exist at all.

Since 2020, the Gateway & Natural Amenity Region (GNAR) Initiative has engaged, and worked with GNAR communities across the Intermountain West who are experiencing challenges in real time. Sometimes these challenges are unique to a community, but more often than not they are similar to challenges being faced by GNAR communities across the region.

As planners and designers by training, our team feels that planning is an essential tool in helping these communities thrive. However, recently we have been left wondering, why isn't planning able to fully address the challenges these communities face?



## SERIES OVERVIEW (CONT.)

This webinar series is the result of those conversations. The “Planning for a GNARly Future” webinar series is the start of our effort to change the current paradigm in gateway community planning.

The question we are asked most often is: “What communities have figured it out?” Our answer? No one. But there are many passionate and determined communities across the West who are trying, testing, innovating, and doing the best they can with what they have.

Our goal with this series was to highlight projects and practices we’ve seen used to successfully help address community challenges. What we found along the way were innovative ideas that led us to reconsider our notions of governance, management, and “planning.”

We hope you find the links and resources in this document helpful. If you have any questions or insights you’d like to share with us, please feel free to contact the GNAR Initiative Coordinator, Elizabeth Sodja, at [liz.sodja@usu.edu](mailto:liz.sodja@usu.edu).

**You can [view the full series of recordings on the Institute of Outdoor Recreation and Tourism’s YouTube Channel](#).**

### ABOUT THE GNAR INITIATIVE

The GNAR Initiative exists to help western gateway communities and their surrounding public lands thrive and preserve the things that make them special. The Initiative does this by leveraging our three pillars: research, education, and capacity building, to help communities and land managers throughout the West prepare and respond to challenges.

The Initiative is based in the Institute of Outdoor Recreation and Tourism (IORT) at Utah State University, and is a partnership of IORT and Extension at Utah State University and the Wallace Stegner Center Environmental Dispute Resolution Program at the University of Utah.

### SERIES REACH & IMPACT :

401 SESSION REGISTRANTS FROM:

25 STATES & 3 COUNTRIES

93 COMMUNITIES & REGIONS

400+ ADDITIONAL SESSION VIEWS  
ON YOUTUBE



# SESSION 1 – REFOCUS: VALUES AS VISION

## SESSION SUMMARY

Can you communicate what is important to your community in two sentences? If so, do those ideas affect the daily decisions, priorities, planning efforts, and the ultimate direction of your community?

This session discussed how a community can undertake a new kind of vision and values creation process when planning – one that leads to a functional vision and actionable values that can help rally the community around a shared identity that guides the future.

Participants learned about the unique planning approaches Springdale, UT, and Crested Butte, CO, undertook when creating their general and comprehensive plans, how they rallied the community during the process, and how these plans have impacted (or will impact) their communities' future development.

### FEATURING:

**Tom Dansie**, Director of Community Development, Springdale, UT

**Troy Russ**, Community Development Director, Crested Butte, CO

**Jake Powell**, USU Assistant Professor, Landscape Architecture and Environmental Planning

## RESOURCES

- TO WATCH THE FULL WEBINAR: [CLICK HERE](#)
- TO SEE THE POWERPOINT SLIDES FOR THIS PRESENTATION: [CLICK HERE](#)
- TO SEE THE CRESTED BUTTE COMMUNITY COMPASS: [CLICK HERE](#)
- TO SEE SPRINGDALE'S GENERAL PLAN & VISION: [CLICK HERE](#)
- TO SEE SPRINGDALE'S NEW NIGHTLY RENTAL ORDINANCE: [CLICK HERE](#)



## 5 PRINCIPLES FOR CREATING A "QUICK AND NIMBLE" VALUES-BASED VISION

***After observing and interacting with communities that have established values-based visions, the GNAR Initiative team developed five principles we commonly saw across the board. For communities interested in creating a values-based visioning process, these principles are important to keep in mind in order to ensure the vision is quick, successful, and impactful.***

### 1. Commit:

Focusing on what makes the community special can be nice in theory, but challenging in practice. Successful communities we have seen have all required a solid commitment from leaders, staff and community members, toward a new kind of radical accountability – *before* they start the process.

Your commitment is to a set of values or a vision statement that is no longer a lofty goal, but a literal commitment. This kind of accountability can be scary, and without a community-wide commitment to shifting the paradigm your chances of success are limited.

### 2. Co-create - The true goal of listening:

Too often, listening in the world of planning is used to check a box or verify that an idea or vision of the future is acceptable. This isn't enough when refocusing on values to create vision.

The kind of community outreach and communication required to refocus on values as the driving force for a vision requires dialog within and among different groups in the community. In a gateway community, groups include people that live, work, depend on, take care of, and spend time in the place. It's broader than you think!

The key is to start – and facilitate – a conversation, not seek a response. We have seen greater success within communities when the focus is on co-creating a shared understanding of what the community values rather than what individuals value. *(For more, check out our third session: "Re Engage: Mobilizing your community through proactive engagement")*.

#### Some possible questions:

What is special about our community?

What does our community cherish?

What is it about our community that is irreplaceable?



## 5 PRINCIPLES FOR CREATING A "QUICK AND NIMBLE" VALUES BASED VISION (CONT.)

### 3. Clarify:

Understand what these values mean to the community. Then decide *how* you will know if the community is (or isn't) heading in the right direction when the values are adopted into traditional planning documents and processes. Work with the community to decide how to make the values or vision measurable and actionable.

One simple way to translate values or vision into commitments is to add statements that begin with **"We will..."**

**"And this means..."** statements.

If you already have a vision statement that captures what makes your community special, it might be missing the clarity that operationalizes it. Decide how you will use this process to engage the community in solving the challenges that threaten the community's core values. This is the power of planning!

### 4. Catalyze:

Keep the vision and values front and center in all aspects of community development. If your community has committed, co-created, and clarified, you can use it to measure against all suggested changes, policies, and unforeseen challenges that are sure to come.

It is important to recognize that using a co-created vision as a measuring stick goes both ways. Local government ideas and actions will be held accountable to the values, and community members can also be held accountable for how their ideas and actions measure up to the values. The idea is that these values or vision become a north star; a guide to help keep every decision, policy, and action in alignment with what makes your community special.

If you already have a vision statement, look for ways that it can be used as a measurement device. Implement strategies that make it a central part of the decision making process at the government and community levels.

### 5. Cycle:

GNAR communities are at the leading edge of an unpredictable and "GNARly" future. Things are changing rapidly, so regularly check in with your community to see if the core values and vision you've identified are still what they will rally around. Do you need to revise it, or change it in some way?

This cycle of listening, adapting, and listening again helps keep the community focused on the path they want to take moving forward, rather than the obstacles that no one can predict or adequately plan for.





## SELECTED AUDIENCE QUESTION & ANSWER

**QUESTION: (To Troy) What engagement tools have you found to be the most effective? They can be a major expense so we're hesitant, but providing a forum for all populations of our county is a priority.**

**ANSWER: (TROY RUSS, Crested Butte, CO)** I don't know if people are going to like this answer, but there isn't a technology that's going to get everybody. I think the expense is willpower of the staff, and commitment of the staff. So as we've reached out to 1,600 people, yeah we had a Survey Monkey, but I think it was the Community Development Department's commitment to be outside. I sent my younger staff to happy hours at the bar, we went to employee meetings at the Stash [a local pizza joint], and the employers would let us speak at the employee meetings. We put posters up at transit stops. We were relentless. We set up in front of our post office. You know the Crested Butte post office has long lines and terrible service so we got a lot of feedback. We went in front of our grocery store. So I think the answer is to get that contact with the community, and then the trust built on itself. It started to snowball and we went up to the mountain and sat at the lift. We went down to Crested Butte South, we went down to Gunnison and sat in front of the grocery store, so it really is a commitment of time and perseverance and being accessible. I think I had a hundred coffee talks with people in town. I think it's just a staff's commitment.

Now that is very expensive, because your staff has other work to do. But it's that commitment to do it. We did not hire a consultant, we just were relentless on going out. An easy thing you can do, is we put a banner across Main Street whenever we had an important public. We put the banner up that said "Community Compass Meeting Tonight" and we put the date on it, so it's really simple technologies but it's more about being committed.

**(TOM DANSIE, Springdale, UT)** The additional comment that I would make is that we did many of the same things that Troy did, and in addition to our staff we utilized our Planning Commission. We sent our Planning Commissioners out to do the same thing; to have the coffee talks and to meet with their neighbors and to call up folks and do phone interviews. So that had the added advantage of getting the Planning Commissioners directly involved [and] building credibility for the process. Because it's one thing if a staff member shows up, we're pretty low on the respect poll in the community. But if a Planning Commissioner shows up and they're your neighbor and your friend and you know who they are, that comes up with a little bit more credibility.



# SESSION 2 – REFRAME: FOCUS ON ASSETS, NOT DEFICITS

## SESSION SUMMARY

It's been a rough two years, and it's hard not to be discouraged by the mounting challenges facing GNAR communities. What if you could find more solutions, instead of adding to the problem list?

This session taught participants how to see the opportunity in every challenge and help community members “reframe” community challenges into “probletunities.” Attendees also learned about the principles of Asset-Based Community Development, how it ties into “reframing,” and how they can tap into existing community resources.

### FEATURING:

**Danya Rumore, PhD**, Director of the Wallace Stegner Center Environmental Dispute Resolution Program and Professor of planning and law at the University of Utah, GNAR Initiative Founder

## RESOURCES

- TO WATCH THE FULL WEBINAR: [CLICK HERE](#)
- TO SEE THE POWERPOINT SLIDES FOR THIS PRESENTATION: [CLICK HERE](#)
- TO LEARN MORE ABOUT ASSET-BASED COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT (ABCD): [CLICK HERE](#)



## 4 PRINCIPLES FOR "REFRAMING"

**Dr. Rumore presented the following four key principles for reframing, suggesting people use these in all of their planning and community work, as well as in their broader lives**

### 1. Focus on the "probletunities," not the people:

Focusing on people means that discussions get personal, for yourself or others.

*Example of people focus: "I can't get along with that person" or "That person is a jerk."*

Focusing on the probletunities means staying focussed on the challenge/opportunity that brought you into conversation/interaction with each other.

*Example of probletunity focus: "This relationship is challenging. How might we make it better?"*

### 2. Focus on interests, not positions:

Position framing is focused on specific proposed solutions or strategies (the "what").

*Example of position framing: "The town needs to build more apartments" or "The town needs to relax its building codes."*

Interest framing focuses on the underlying needs and concerns (the "why"), which includes substantive, procedural, and relational/emotional needs and concerns.

*Example of interest framing: "This community is really special to me and I am really concerned about being able to work here and also afford to live here."*

### 3. Focus on assets, not deficits:

Deficit framing defines situations, people, and things by their problems or limitations.

*Deficit framing: "Those outspoken community members are a pain."*

Asset framing defines situations, people, and things by their assets, opportunities, and aspirations.

*Asset framing: "There are a lot of thoughtful people in this community who care about this issue. How do we tap into their ideas and energy?"*

### 4. Be responsive, not reactive:

Reactive framing means you see yourself as being "acted upon"; you are being driven by emotions .

*Reactive framing: "All of these people moving in are destroying this place!"*

Responsive framing focuses on your and others' agency to "act upon" the situation; you can communicate and validate emotions, but aren't being driven by emotions.

*Responsive framing: "I am really concerned about the rapid growth happening in our county. I want to be part of figuring out how to manage this growth in a way that protects what makes this region special."*



## EMPOWERING FRAMING & REFRAMING: HOW TO DO IT

### **Listen carefully to yourself and/or others to understand and identify:**

- The problem that brings you into conversation/interaction
- Underlying interests and emotions
- Assets, including aspirations, opportunities, and resources
- Opportunities for positive change

### **State or restate in a responsive way that focuses on the problem, interests, and assets.**

**This means:** You choose to see, think, and talk about the world in a way that empowers and inspires you and others to make positive change (i.e., to be part of the “problem solving enterprise”).

**This does NOT mean:** “Putting on rose-tinted glasses” and pretending issues aren’t real, or negating our or other people’s feelings and concerns.

### **Reframing can help people shift to a more empowering way of thinking about and seeing issues AND help people feel seen and heard.**



## AUDIENCE CHAT HIGHLIGHTS

*The interactive session involved participants responding to prompts through the chat function in Zoom. This is a condensed list of highlights from the chat, edited for clarity.*

### **PROMPT: What is one insight, observation, or takeaway from the session?**

- Involve the complainers in creating solutions.
- We're all just people working with other people!
- How to diffuse people.
- Responding to complaints with understanding and a desire to work together rather than avoid the complainer.
- Paradigm shift in the way we group issues
- Listening to understand is key; everyone wants a better community, not everyone articulates it like a veteran planner.
- How to build stakeholder and funding support for solutions
- Don't defend but reframe

### **PROMPT: Where is one place in your life/work where empowering reframing might be helpful?**

- During public comment periods
- With my teenage son.
- When I run into residents who have "complaints" at the post office, etc.
- Any time I talk to neighbors about short-term rentals
- Climate conversations - lots of folks super passionate and then there's the other end of the spectrum in the communities I work in.
- In efforts to engage community concerning cultural context desired and in the town vision

### **PROMPT: To what extent is your community framing its planning and community development efforts around shared community values? Do you think greater focus on shared community values would be helpful?**

- When we began to draft a new General Plan we created committees including community and business representatives.
- We are using it in some areas (tourism planning) but it gets siloed.
- Working with a community that has used the term 'touchstones' to use in decision making/values-based decisions to guide policy development for their community plan. Each policy has to support at least one touchstone and not compromise others... So far it has been helpful!
- In Lake Tahoe, Nevada, a lot of the planning values and vision in our plans are based off the community shared values of Keep Tahoe Blue and preserving the lake. I think this focus has led to water quality and environmental wins within the basin.
- Wanting to be prepared for future community meetings and how to frame/direct the discussion.
- We are hosting values-focused workshops with transportation planners for the state of Utah. The feedback was great.

### **PROMPT: What do you think about the idea of taking a more "asset-based" approach to planning and community development in your town/city?**

- I love it because more people agree about the assets of communities.
- Love the idea! Brings people to the table to fix, not to fight
- Love it! Positive approach gets more action behind it :)



## AUDIENCE CHAT HIGHLIGHTS (CONT.)

- I think a more asset-based approach can lead to more positive and constructive input on a planning effort.
- Helps to define individuals version of the probletunity to be able to move forward as one
- We've found that an asset-based approach helps city planners walk away from the conversation with more solutions.
- Love the idea of fixing not fighting lol
- Position-based arguments seem to be addictive - the ability to reframe and refocus is such a strong tool
- Whether or not a conversation is "new" to a community, it could be helpful to frame every difficult conversation as a "new" one; people may be more inclined to leave defensive positions at the door if a tone of positivity is established early.

### **PROMPT: What did you find most relevant or actionable for your community/region and how might you put these ideas into action?**

- To get a shared vision and a list of community values down on paper first. I think this will be helpful in future planning processes.
- Frame complaint as an asset. Too much growth? Great place to live!
- Working in tourism I sometimes feel siloed from planning processes. These reframing questions feel like a way to persuade others there's a "there there" when opening dialog
- Having conversations around values, then working together on a shared vision & mission.
- Forming the discussion around the values people want
- Perhaps work with an organization or APA chapter and hold like a mock planning commission meeting or strategic planning session to help build community visions and values and go over the do's and don'ts
- Annual "Reframing Boot Camp" for GNAR community planners to meet virtually, get new ideas, network, and get reinspired about common issues. Sessions could be issue-based (ex: transportation, housing), and virtual so cost isn't a barrier.
- I think a "one-pager" (or something similar) that explains asset-based community development in the simplest way possible would be great. More folks in City Hall could use it & distribute it as a model for conversations going forward.
- That might be a live online class with homework and/or brainstorming sessions.

### **PROMPT: Would further training on (re)framing and/or asset-based community development be helpful for you, your community, and/or other GNARs? If so, what might that look like and what are some assets that might help the GNAR Initiative make that happen?**



# SESSION 3 – REENGAGE: MOBILIZING YOUR COMMUNITY THROUGH PROACTIVE ENGAGEMENT

## SESSION SUMMARY

The eternal question: How do we get community members to show up and engage before a decision is made, instead of the angry mob showing up afterward?

This session started by examining recent approaches communities have used to shake up their public outreach efforts, get richer, more engaged feedback, and use community engagement as a way to heal their community, not just check a box. The webinar portion was followed by an engaging peer-to-peer conversation between communities that discussed what participants want out of community engagement and how we can all do community engagement differently as a whole.

### FEATURING:

**Jordan Katcher, MCMP**, Initiatives Facilitator for the Environmental Dispute Resolution Program and Adjunct Instructor in the University of Utah's Department of City & Metropolitan Planning.

## RESOURCES

- TO WATCH THE FULL WEBINAR: [CLICK HERE](#)
- TO SEE THE POWERPOINT SLIDES FOR THIS PRESENTATION: [CLICK HERE](#)



## 6 PRINCIPLES FOR "RE"ENGAGEMENT

***Based on practitioner experience and observations, the GNAR Initiative team came up with these six principles to showcase ways that communities can reframe how and why they conduct community engagement and inspire one another to think creatively to tackle a wide range of challenges together.***

### **1. Establish a consistent communication stream:**

Instead of focusing on how to communicate on a project by project basis, focus on how to communicate on an ongoing basis. Utilize consistent and reliable outlets, such as:

- Newsletters/Mayor Letters
- Water Bills
- Community bulletin boards (print/digital)
- Town/city website

### **2. Follow through on promises (and be accountable when they fall through):**

If there is distrust in a community, whether or not it happened before you entered the situation, start by taking steps to rebuild community trust. People want to be heard, listen to them.

### **3. Build intentional, proactive relationships:**

Don't wait for a project to engage a particular group/demographic in your community. Build relationships now. Understand who is showing up and who isn't – why? How can you meet people where they're at? (For additional examples, see pg. 9 for some insights from our first session.)

Relationships shouldn't be transactional. Find ways to interact with and support different community groups all of the time, not just when writing a new ordinance or updating a general plan. Showing up consistently matters.

### **4. Rewrite the script:**

Honestly assess how community residents can interact with your community.

Is it easy or is it hard? Are your materials outdated?

Have you first walked through the process that you're asking community members to walk through? By creating, and then piloting, processes internally, this can create an opportunity to better understand if you're creating any additional barriers or confusion for community members. Make sure your materials and processes are as simple, accessible and streamlined as possible.

### **5. Embrace conflict (don't run from it):**

Have a wicked problem? Engage your community in the problem-solving enterprise

Bring in community members to better understand complex issues and create innovative solutions. When you bring them in, always ensure that residents understand how their feedback is going to be utilized: Where does the project go after residents are involved? How do they know whether their feedback was used or not? How can they stay up-to-date with progress?

### **6. Humanize one another:**

Remember to focus on the fullness of people, not just the sides they're showing you. Incorporate centering exercises into engagement to help regulate emotions and enter into a calm state.

Allow creativity into your spaces for new ideas and thoughts, and express genuine gratitude to your community for their time and insights.





## AUDIENCE CHAT HIGHLIGHTS

***The interactive session involved participants responding to prompts through the chat function in Zoom. This is a condensed list of highlights from the chat, edited for clarity.***

**PROMPT: What words come to mind when you think of community engagement?**

- Open Communication
- Public Hearings
- Ongoing!
- Community-led
- Public meetings, surveys
- STP - Same Ten People
- NIMBY
- Nothing about us without us.
- Listening
- Meetings, open house, survey
- Volunteer opportunities
- Accessible
- Accommodations
- Public hearings, vignettes, surveys
- Inclusivity
- Representation and opportunity
- Planning
- Public participation
- Present
- Reaching out so residents feel they have a voice
- Citizen committees
- Advertising the meeting

**PROMPT: To what extent would additional training in the “how” of (re)engaging your community be helpful for you, others in your community, and/or other GNAR communities?**

- It would be very helpful for me and our council and staff
- Very beneficial
- It would be super helpful to mix things up here from the usual engagement checkbox

approach

- Survey development and alternatives to this approach
- It would be helpful for community councils to hear about re-engaging
- Templates of best practices and tools would be helpful
- It would be helpful, although a written concise guide best practices/case studies could be good too
- I think it would be helpful to see examples from other communities
- Ideas for how to engage underserved communities (seasonal workers, different ages, etc)
- How to reach the working middle class that are often left out.

**PROMPT: What is one insight, observation, or takeaway from the session?**

- Creative engagement
- Spend time fixing “little” things
- I didn’t even know there were formal engagement hierarchies
- Consistency is really important for building the habit of consistent engagement
- Going to where people are. Love going to wing night at the FD or peanut butter night!
- Share problems & boundaries with public.
- Different types of interaction with residents bring different results (feelings)
- The importance of considering the whole person when receiving feedback about proposed projects.
- Bike tour
- “Dream Play Build” is the book by Rojas... it is awesome



# SESSION 4 – REDEFINE: SOLUTIONS BEYOND BOUNDARIES

## SESSION SUMMARY

Sometimes local challenges are a result of a “problem-shed” that extends beyond the borders of the community. Does your “solution-shed” also extend beyond your community borders?

This session shared examples of regional planning efforts that have successfully linked communities, federal land agencies, and other stakeholders together to build regional solutions for local problems. It also discussed fundamental steps a region can start taking to work together and establish mutually beneficial collaborations to tackle local challenges.

### FEATURING:

**Devin Middlebrook**, Sustainability Program Manager, Tahoe Regional Planning Authority; Mayor, South Lake Tahoe, CA

**Emily Friedman**, Coordinator, Zion Regional Collaborative, Washington County, UT

**Mikey Goralnik**, Senior Community Design and Development Planner, Mariposa County, CA

**Elizabeth Sodja**, GNAR Initiative Coordinator

## RESOURCES

- TO WATCH THE FULL WEBINAR: [CLICK HERE](#)
- TO SEE THE POWERPOINT SLIDES FOR THIS PRESENTATION: [CLICK HERE](#)
- TO SEE THE MARIPOSA COUNTY INTEGRATED MOBILITY & HOUSING STRATEGY 2023: [CLICK HERE](#)
- TO LEARN MORE ABOUT THE TAHOE STEWARDSHIP PROCESS: [CLICK HERE](#)
- TO LEARN MORE ABOUT THE ZION REGIONAL COLLABORATIVE: [CLICK HERE](#)



## 7- STEPS TO START COLLABORATING REGIONALLY

***After conducting interviews with community leaders and stakeholders from over a dozen successful regional partnerships, the GNAR Initiative team came up with seven steps we observed as important for setting a regional collaboration up for success.***

### 1. Map your “Problem-shed”:

What is the problem? Define it as explicitly as possible.

What is the “issue of mutual concern” that will bring people together? This is the thing that everyone, no matter their background, agency, organization, or political affiliation, cares deeply about. This is the thing that will bring people back to keep engaging, even if they have a heated discussion or don’t agree with everything.

*(Some examples: Affordable housing, the health of the local lake, quality of life, how to respond to a global pandemic, etc.)*

### 2. Map your “Solution-shed”:

Who needs to be in the room? Who do you need to talk to?

Who can be (or must be) part of the solution? If you’re trying to come up with solutions to an issue happening on local public lands, and the land manager isn’t in the room, your group will be limited in what they can accomplish.

Does this need to start with “grassroots” (ie: bottom-up) or “grasstops” (ie: leadership-led) engagement?

### 3. Start the Conversation:

First off, when do you start? Would it be best to do this as part of a plan update? Or is it related to a specific project? Or has a crisis come up that needs to be addressed immediately?

Next, who’s going to start it? Find a convener - who is it going to be? What are the implications of different stakeholders (or an outside facilitator or group) being the initiator? Also, where will you meet? Are there locations in the community that may not feel welcoming for all parties?

Finally, how will you engage the community and bring them along for the ride?

### 4. Make Room:

Make room for differences: The most successful regional collaborations are skilled at making room for differences in thought. Communities, agencies and organizations will each bring different values and perspectives to the table.

Make room for past history or “baggage”: It’s there whether you want it to be or not, so acknowledging any elephants in the room can help address concerns and make room for more pressing topics.

Stay curious! Don’t go into it thinking you know what “the answer” or solutions will be, you might be surprised what others bring to the table.



## 7- STEPS TO START COLLABORATING REGIONALLY (CONT.)

### 5. Think About Longevity:

If this needs to keep going, where will it live? This is a logistical hurdle many regional collaboratives face after the initial novelty or highs from early wins begin to wear off.

How does it keep going? Do participating members have it written into their position requirements? Are there formal or informal agreements around participation?

What shape does that take?

### 6. Communicate Progress:

Communicate your progress to the public.

If you engaged or asked for public feedback around an idea or project, make sure to show people where their feedback went and what progress is being made. Otherwise, they may not choose to participate in the future.

If it's an ongoing collaborative, give regular updates or have a public site with meeting minutes to keep the local community updated on what's going on. *(See pg. 16 or watch session 3 for more ideas around this)*

### 7. Don't get Discouraged:

Regional collaboration is a long process. Longer than you think. This is relationship building.

You WILL hit barriers. People won't always agree on what the "right" solution is, and people may be skeptical, especially if previous planning efforts didn't result in much change.

Always celebrate wins – even the small ones!

Collaboration is hard work, but it doesn't always have to feel like it. Making meetings a positive experience can help collaboration begin to feel more like friends facing a challenging together, rather than different stakeholders seeing a problem from different sides of a fence.



# SESSION 5 – REIMAGINE: PLANNING, NOT PLANS

## SESSION SUMMARY

In the summer of 2019, a global pandemic wasn't on anyone's radar. With increasing risks from natural disasters like drought, fires and floods, it can be challenging for gateway communities to know how to plan (or if they can plan) for potential challenges.

This session gave an overview of different scenario planning approaches, and how "scenario thinking" can help communities navigate an uncertain future, address risk, and increase resiliency.

### PRESENTERS:

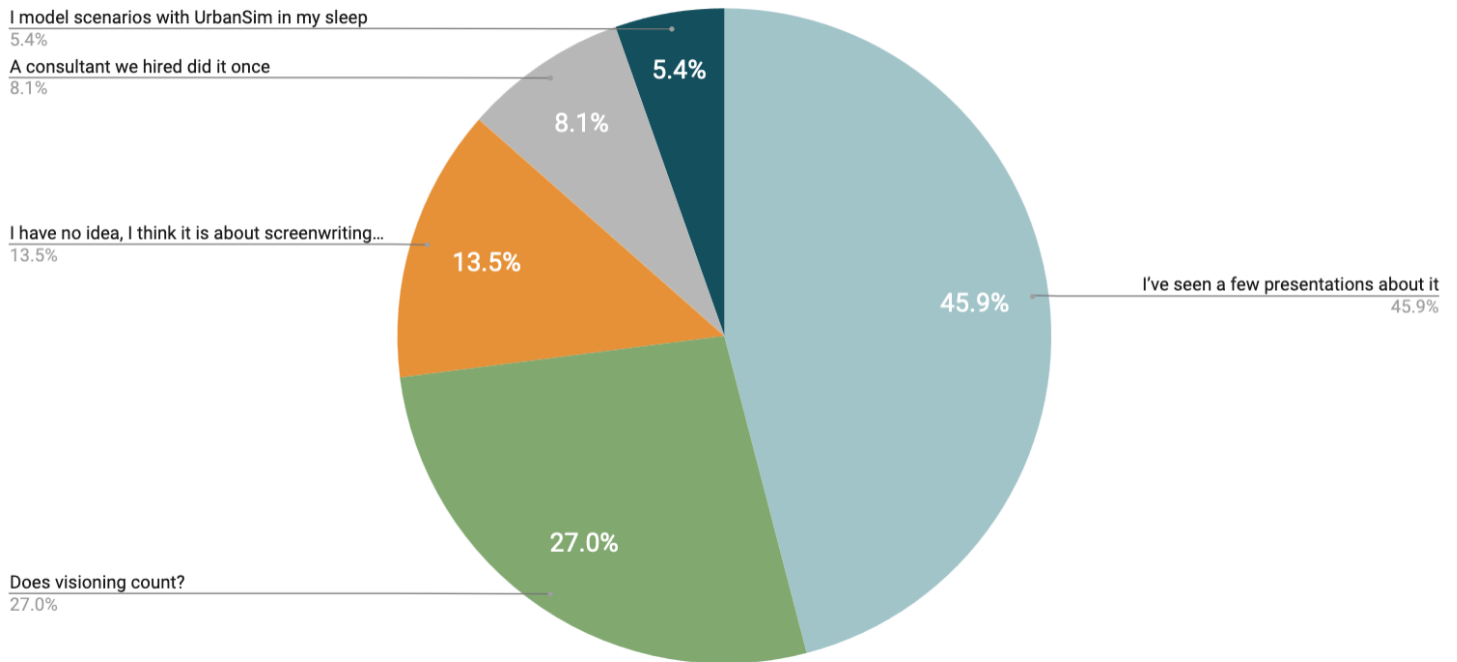
**Dr. Robert Goodspeed, PhD, AICP**, Associate Professor of urban and regional planning at the University of Michigan's Taubman College of Architecture and Urban Planning.

## RESOURCES

- TO WATCH THE FULL WEBINAR: [CLICK HERE](#)
- TO SEE THE SLIDES FROM THIS SESSION: [CLICK HERE](#)
- FOR LINCOLN INSTITUTE'S BRIEF ON EXPLORATORY SCENARIO PLANNING: [CLICK HERE](#)
- TO ACCESS THE "HOW TO USE EXPLORATORY SCENARIO PLANNING" GUIDE: [CLICK HERE](#)
- TO LEARN MORE ABOUT DR. GOODSPEED'S BOOK: [CLICK HERE](#)



## AUDIENCE POLL: HOW FAMILIAR ARE YOU WITH SCENARIO PLANNING?



## AUDIENCE QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

*Throughout the session, participants were encouraged to ask questions of Dr. Goodspeed. A selection of these questions is included here.*

**QUESTION:** You mentioned solutions that didn't soak up all the staff time in preparing data. What are those solutions/software packages?

**ANSWER:** City data and tools are very resource-intensive. I was mentioning a tool called Urban Footprint. UrbanFootprint.com is the company Peter Calthorpe, spun off from Calthorpe Associates. And it's very good at allowing you to sketch land use scenarios and model them very quickly, very easily. It is not an exploratory scenario planning tool, although they do have a module called the Risk and Resilience Module that allows you to look at some environmental hazards. It's not a sales pitch. My recommendation is you start from the substantive topics and scoping your project, the type of project you want to do. In some of the resources, including my book, but also some free resources, you can kind of get a sense of all the different tools and make sure there's a good alignment.

**QUESTION:** What kind of push back might be expected from city planners against incorporating scenario planning?

**ANSWER:** I think all of you are experts in your local planning context, so I hesitate to make generalizations. I think planning cultures and institutions vary widely. So I just suggested some of the different forces. Really, I feel there's more appetite than ever and the barriers have more to do with people trying to understand the method, find the resources, and try it. And I'm hopeful some of you are

## QUESTIONS & ANSWERS (CONT.)

on the team pushing the field forward.

More and more I learn of exciting projects. So I don't perceive there to be as much resistance, aside from all of the challenges that come with doing things differently and pushing against the grain. You have to meet your planning mandates. And that city council member has been there for 20 years. They're geared a little bit differently. I think the smart practitioners navigate that and say, "Hey, we're going to keep what we like from the old stuff, but I got some new ideas that I think are really going to help us solve problems."

### **QUESTION: Are there any scenario planning approaches that are better with deciding/choosing between tradeoffs than others?**

**ANSWER:** Thinking through tradeoffs is key to scenario building. Are there any scenario planning approaches that are better with choosing between tradeoffs than others? Yeah. Absolutely. There are tradeoffs between very specific decisions and land use patterns. It could be transportation investments, it could be policies. And therefore, you're in a realm of scenario planning, which often is what the scenarios are used for. The scenarios themselves are describing very concrete options. And then in order to compare them, you need some kind of models or method to model impacts and so forth. So if it's transportation, you're doing transportation modeling. If it's land use, you need some kind of land use impact analysis tool. Urban Footprint will do that, but others like Urban Sim will do it too.

That's where I think it can be a little confusing, because some subfields of planning have their own scenario planning traditions. Like transportation [scenario planning] is well-established in guidebooks, etc. But maybe your project wants to look at transition and resilience. Well, those models won't talk to each other, but you might need that to happen.

I guess I would step back and point out that in planning, we produce plans at different levels of specificity. There's a real privileging of very concrete ones, because they empower you to tell your MPO board, "If you do this, this bad thing will happen," and then say, "This one is better." And there's a feeling that we should spend all our resources on that. There's an example from the Bloomington MPO, and they had nine different socioeconomic land use futures cross with 12 different infrastructure options, just grids of impacts. And it was because there is very little consensus, a lot of conflict on their board between suburban [neighborhoods and the] state, the DOT was shoving a freeway into them and the city wanted two-way streets, so they modeled everything.

My point is, there's a missed opportunity to have that more conceptual consensus building. You just get lost in a in a tit-for-tat about numbers with engineers. Really, the logic of projects which are more conceptual, like some normative ones but certainly exploratory [scenario planning], is trying to build challenging worldviews, build more consensus around goals, and get people to see connections between decisions and different sectors and so forth.



## QUESTIONS & ANSWERS (CONT.)

**QUESTION:** In your experience, is this process more defensible against lawsuits when compared to traditional forecast model regional planning?

**ANSWER:** So number one, I'm not a lawyer. So check with your lawyer friends. But here's what I know about the legalities of it. Regional transportation planning has to follow regulatory mandates. In the regulations there is a specific provision that names scenario planning as something you can do. Although I think some aspects of the federal regional planning mandates kind of push you towards forecasts, there are plenty of models [for scenario planning in transportation] and there's no legal issues there.

Another lens on this issue is now California and Oregon. Your state laws are mandating you create scenarios. In Oregon I think it's only in the big metros. In California, it's all the regions through SB 375. So we have affirmative requirements. But to my mind, the problem is that these requirements are too strict because they have to be land-use scenarios. There's a lot of creative use of scenarios that you can add on or go beyond the mandate. Or maybe the mandate is narrowing people's minds to a certain way. But that said, I don't actually know the types of legal challenges you're worried about. It could be under environmental review or others.

But you know, I think any time you're doing things differently, it makes people nervous. You definitely want to consult. There may be issues there, but I'm not aware of any kind of major reasons not to. In fact, I think at the federal and state levels there is a growing awareness. You might need to say which scenario is like yours, there's a little nuance there.

So yeah, no one's going to say "no" to scenarios, but you might have to be a little thoughtful about exactly how to set it up. I think it's a similar tale with master plans and plans. A lot of states have mandates [around plans], but it's important to remember they're often defining minimums, not maximums. I thought "Imagine Madison" was so inspiring because they looked at the mandates and said, "All right, we have a future land use map, but there's nothing stopping us from looking at uncertainty, doing our own analysis, adding some growth areas, other kinds of ways to prioritize." And I'm sure the state folks just went down the checklist and said, "Great, you have the six elements the law requires, you're good to go." And so I think that's a nice framework to have in mind, too.





# CONCLUSION & NEXT STEPS

We chose the five sessions for this learning series based on projects and practices that gateway communities have successfully used to address their unique challenges. During the course of this series, communities' innovative approaches led us to reconsider our notions of governance, management, and "planning."

A brief summary of each session is below:

## **SESSION 1) REFOCUS: Values as Vision**

This session discussed how a community can approach their visions and values creation process differently. From Springdale, UT, participants learned that a community "vision" can be a functional –not just ornamental– element of a plan, and how Springdale uses it in their day-to-day decision-making. From Crested Butte, CO, participants learned a radical new approach to comprehensive plans, and how the town hopes to use their "Community Compass" to navigate the complex and highly-charged moments when multiple important community values (like historic preservation and affordable housing) come into conflict with each other.

## **SESSION 2) REFRAME: Focus on Assets, Not Deficits**

This session taught participants how to see opportunities within challenges. Dr. Rumore discussed four elements of "reframing," and shared examples of how community leaders can navigate heated conversations by helping residents (and themselves) "reframe" community challenges into "probletunities." Attendees also learned about how the principles of Asset-Based Community Development tie into "reframing," and how they can be leveraged to tap into existing community resources.

## **SESSION 3) REENGAGE: Mobilize Community Through Proactive Engagement**

This session highlighted recent approaches communities have used to shake up their public outreach efforts to get richer, more engaged feedback. Participants learned that community engagement can be a way to connect and heal their community, not just check a box. The webinar portion was followed by an engaging peer-to-peer conversation between communities that discussed what participants want out of community engagement and how we can all do community engagement differently.

## **SESSION 4) REDEFINE: Solutions Beyond Boundaries**

This session shared seven fundamental steps local and regional leaders can take to establish mutually beneficial collaborations. Representatives from the Tahoe Regional Planning Authority, Mariposa County, CA, and the Zion Regional Collaborative then shared their examples of regional planning efforts that have successfully linked communities, federal land agencies, and other stakeholders together to build regional solutions for local problems.

## **SESSION 5) REIMAGINE: Planning, Not Plans**

This session introduced participants to the idea of "scenario planning." Dr. Goodspeed gave some history and background to the concept, as well as an overview of different scenario planning approaches and



## CONCLUSION & NEXT STEPS (CONT.)

tools that exist. He also discussed how, even short of formal or technical scenario planning processes, communities can engage in “scenario thinking” to help navigate uncertain futures, address risk, and increase resiliency.

### NEXT STEPS FOR THE GNAR INITIATIVE:

At the conclusion of the series, participant feedback and insights were compiled from each session. The GNAR Initiative team used this feedback, in conjunction with additional research data from the last two years, to pursue and receive several grants to develop a new educational offering: The GNAR Academy.

The GNAR Academy seeks to fill in the gap between the limited capacity and needs of gateway communities by providing accessible training to help communities better understand and advocate for their own needs. The goals of the GNAR Academy is to:

- (1) Create low-barrier training that is accessible for gateway community leaders
- (2) Covers planning topics and challenges from a small, rural, gateway-specific lens
- (3) Provide opportunities for communities to network and meet with others working on similar projects
- (4) Increase community capacity to become more self-sustaining and resilient to their unique challenges

Our aim is to complete a set of initial GNAR Academy offerings by the end of 2023, with a goal to introduce more in-depth courses starting in 2024.

**To stay up-to-date on the GNAR Academy and other GNAR Initiative offerings and resources, please [sign up for our email newsletter](#).**

**If you have any additional thoughts you'd like to share, please email the GNAR Program Coordinator Elizabeth Sodja at [liz.sodja@usu.edu](mailto:liz.sodja@usu.edu), or check out our website at [GNAR.USU.EDU](http://GNAR.USU.EDU).**



PLANNING  
FOR A



GATEWAY AND  
NATURAL AMENITY  
REGION INITIATIVE™  
Extension  
UtahStateUniversity. 

# GNARLY FUTURE

ONLINE LEARNING SERIES

REIMAGINING PLANNING TO EMPOWER YOUR COMMUNITY



Department of Environment and Society  
Utah State University  
Logan, UT 84322-5215

Extension  
UtahStateUniversity. 