

San Juan County

Spanish Valley Area Plan

RESIDENT, LANDOWNER AND STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEWS
HELD IN MOAB, UTAH
SEPTEMBER 18-20, 2017

INTERVIEW 1 – Representatives of Six Families from a Local Subdivision

September 18, 2017 – 7:00PM

Background

Group interview of neighbors from a newer (+/- 11-year old) subdivision. Approximately six homes/families represented. The subdivision is controlled by an HOA, which provides limited design and maintenance guidelines. Most moved there from Moab, although some came from Salt Lake and Colorado. Most of the homes located on one-acre lots, the minimum size required by San Juan County when septic/wells are utilized.

Comments/Issues/Ideas

- The primary reason for living here is the relative isolation and distance from tourists and tourism impacts.
- The area is quiet and relatively affordable.
- Preservation of night skies is a critical concept. Moab has lost the ability to see stars, and is unlikely to be able to regain it even if they can reverse existing light spillover.
- Would like better buffers between residential and commercial/industrial uses. The lack of control in San Juan County has resulted in some incompatible land uses being located together. However, most moved here specifically because the area is in San Juan County, which has limited input and control.
- Would like to see parks, schools, trails, fire and safety and similar public uses and services.
- Would like it to be a place with no hotels and over-night visitors (Airbnb) or similar tourist-based uses.
- Don't see a need for stores or services that one can walk to; don't mind driving to Moab and beyond for basic needs.
- The neighborhood has a wide range of lifestyles and living conditions (families with kids, retirees, etc.), although it is getting too expensive for many to live here.
- The area has no continuity or real structure, no standards. Would like to have more, but not too much like in Moab. Striking a balance between free choice and too much control is a primary issue.

- Want the area to be its own place, not an extension of Moab. Do not want the area to be a city, and it should not have a discernible downtown like Moab. However, the area should have a destination to meet and come together, possibly centered around a park.
- Most believe that Moab will still be the commercial and social core of the area. However, this will be less true as areas further to the south develop as they are so much further away.
- There is an opportunity to be smarter and better-planned than Moab, particularly through the design and location of utilities and infrastructure (water, sewer and roads are key).
- The area should be more aligned with creating a community for its residents and less about accommodating the needs of tourists.
- The area should have a separate vibe than Moab. It should be a nice place to live, but not a “well to do” community. The Spanish Valley/Moab relationship is comparable to Eagle to Vail Colorado, or Bellevue/Hailey to Ketchum/Sun Valley Idaho. An affordable community where most residents will work and shop in Moab.
- The area should have discernible neighborhoods, but not like Moab.
- The area should be dominated by single-family residential, although there is room for a wider range of types and densities, including cluster. Some residents indicated they would like higher density residential located near commercial and industrial uses, while others believe it is important to integrate such uses within the overall layout.
- The eclectic design and land use structure is generally OK, although future buildings should be required to fit in better with the landscape. If a Walmart or other big box uses are located here, they should fit in like those found in St. George and Cedar City.
- Low-income and affordable housing is a critical issue that will be a big part of the future. Many believe that residents are hung up on maintaining and increasing their property value rather than maintaining the area as a good place to live.
- Moab has a real problem with Airbnb uses proliferating, and this is emerging to be an issue in the Spanish Valley as well. Should look at what Moab is doing and apply similar solutions when codes are developed.
- Building heights should be relatively low, no higher than 3-stories.

INTERVIEW 2 – Two Related Residents

September 19, 2017 – 1:20PM

Background

Resident 1 owns a ranch that is the south in the part of the valley. The Resident 2 owns a 2.5-acre property. Resident 1 grew up in Moab but moved out of state for several years before returning. Their children are all grown. Resident 2 moved to Grand County about 10-years ago before moving to their current place 4-5 years ago. They would like to have more flexibility to subdivide their property and/or develop additional residences and rental uses on their site.

Comments/Issues/Ideas

- Both moved to the area to get away from Moab. The ability to have a larger property and the affordable price of land was a major reason both moved here, although the quiet lifestyle and dark skies are what keeps them here.
- Both appreciate the flexibility San Juan County provides for development, although they are worried about increasing traffic, the proliferation of overnight-rentals and similar uses and the impact of development on the quiet life/dark skies.
- They are concerned that services are nearly non-existent (they won't even grade the roads), even though they pay taxes in San Juan County. Since the Spanish Valley is far from Monticello, they believe that the county doesn't care what goes on here; the Spanish Valley is low on the list of priority for the county.
- Colorado Outward Bound is generating a lot of traffic and light pollution. This is an example of "dumb" planning within the 1,000-foot commercial strip along the highway.
- There is no doubt that more people are coming, and it is critical to figure out a model to accommodate them. Many existing residents don't want more growth and want to preserve the area as it is now, although they have no right to expect that. Need to figure out how to accommodate a lot more growth.
- Existing zoning which requires one-acre minimum lot size and 1,000-foot commercial development strip along the highway both poor control models (unwise), particularly now that water and sewer are available.
- The area should have some smaller retail and grocery uses, and the Spanish Valley Road should become the Main Street of the area.
- Views, viewsheds and preservation of the landscape should be considered when developing the area.
- Drainages and water ways should be maintained as trail systems and used to delineate neighborhoods and land use areas.
- Community gathering locations are important, but should have a rural focus that builds upon the opportunities found here. Kens Lake, parks and greenways should be the place where people come together.

INTERVIEW 3 - Resident Couple

September 19, 2017 – 3:40 PM

Background

Moved to Moab eleven years ago, renting a condominium then to current property a year later. Live in a cul-de-sac with a shared well close to the county border. Accessed directly from the highway, it takes them 10 minutes to get into Moab, while those living just to the east need at least 20 minutes via Spanish Valley Road.

Comments/Issues/Ideas

- Many people want to build small homes on their properties that they can rent out or subdivide and sell – they don't think this is a good idea for permanent residents, and don't like the idea of too many "overnighters" in the area.
- San Juan County has discussed converting the old airport into residences, although nothing has happened.
- San Juan County and Grand County do not get along, and don't want anything to do with the other. They are surprised that San Juan County is backing this planning effort, particularly since they are so disengaged, don't maintain the roads and don't have any ordinances that work at present.
- They believe that San Juan County doesn't care about the Spanish Valley, and that the area is on the bottom of the list when it comes to maintenance, etc. They are out of sight/out of mind. Can't believe things will change and get better in the future.
- Despite access to water and sewer, don't see things improving in the future. They feel stuck with the poor conditions that exist.
- They have been personally impacted by poor land use decisions. An unfavorable use was allowed to be constructed immediately adjacent, which has impacted their ability to sell the property.
- Pessimistic that San Juan County has any interest doing something so far from Monticello.
- Would be comfortable with the area becoming a residential enclave. High prices have impacted many in the community, and many have become "priced out".
- Motel tax has been used to promote tourism up to this point. However, there are some who think that since tourism is thriving, the tax should be used for improving police and other services, which are stretched thin by the tourists. This is a contentious issue.
- The area isn't sure who or what they are. Would like to see the area remain primarily a bedroom community to Moab, with some industry and jobs as well.
- Retail in Moab has always struggled, requiring residents to drive to Grand Junction for reasonably-priced items and better selection. The development of a Wal-Mart could improve access to goods, although it would likely result in the loss of 3-4 local stores and businesses.
- It is difficult to get good and dependable residents for service jobs, and in some cases foreigners from China and similar locations are brought in for those purposes.
- Despite all of the issues, bringing water and sewer to the area is a good idea.

INTERVIEW 4 – Resident

September 19, 2017 – 4:30 PM

Background

Originally from a major east coast city moving to Moab area in 2006, originally living in a trailer for six months before moving here. Owns a manufactured home located on a one-acre lot. Like other residents, have septic and shared well.

Comments/Issues/Ideas

- Envisions the area to be primarily a residential community, with limited commercial to serve local needs.
- San Juan County doesn't care about the Spanish Valley – out of sight, out of mind.
- Provided a copy of the Draft San Juan County Spanish Valley I-O Infill Overlay Zone – thinks it makes some sense, certainly a step toward providing better control of development. Keeps commercial separate from residential uses, which is a big problem, particularly within the 1,000-foot highway zone.
- Would like to see some smaller corner stores and similar uses, but no gas stations as they tend to be a major impact on residences.
- Flood waters flow down west cliffs during heavy rains, which impact the west side of the highway and Pack Creek. Need check dams, avoid development on the west side of the highway.
- Need to take a careful look at storm water, the role of drainages and ravines, etc. as development plans are made.
- Lack of acceleration/deceleration lanes at highway is a big problem. Left turns off the highway into the area can be a death trap, particularly with fast-moving trucks and semis trying to keep us speed as they climb up roadway.
- Preservation of night sky is a critical issue and concern.
- The use of CC&R's and other development control would help.

INTERVIEW 5 – Resident

September 20, 2017 – 12:15 PM

Background

Works in Moab, has lived here for several years.

Comments/Issues/Ideas

- Not afraid of growth like many neighbors
- The area needs some commercial, particularly along the highway.

- The Spanish Valley is the stepchild of San Juan County. Roads here are the last to get maintained and fixed.
- Building inspection used to be easy, but has gotten more difficult since the county hired the same inspector used by Grand County.
- One-acre lots are too large for most people to handle. Some residents are worried that the water will be fluoridated and/or chlorinated.
- Concerned about the water source and quality. Will it be adequately tested and controlled?

INTERVIEW 6 - Meeting with UDOT representatives. Held at SITLA Conference Room in Moab City Center building.

September 19, 2017 – 2:30 PM

- It will be a long time before a 4-lane highway is installed south from the county line. Focus is completing 4-lanes from county line to Moab.
- A copy of the existing corridor agreement was provided, which was approved by both counties and Moab in 2015. Any changes would require approval by all parties. Addresses segment from Millcreek Road to city. Addresses existing access to private properties by inclusion of frontage road system. Was completed prior to the existing water/sewer agreement and corresponding growth implications. San Juan County hasn't really followed the plan, with roads implemented contrary to the agreement.
- Key UDOT standards to consider include:
 - No driveways closer than 1,000 ft. apart
 - Minimum one-mile between controlled intersections (acceleration/deceleration lanes for now)
 - If traffic increases, the distance between intersections can increase as part of decreasing speed, like Moab situation. However, the fact that there will be limited development on the west side of the highway indicates that the highway will be different here than when it passes through the middle of the city in Moab.
 - Lighting – all intersections require lights, according to standards. Improvements to address preservation of night skies would be a betterment.