



GREATER SALT LAKE
**Municipal Services
District**



Photo Credit: Google Maps, 2016

Sandy Hills, Unincorporated Area of Salt Lake County

2021 Virtual Community Kick-Off Workshops Report

MSD Long Range Planning

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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And a big thank you to the residents of Sandy Hills, for whom and by whom this project is ultimately conducted.

INTRODUCTION + PURPOSE

Project:

This document summarizes the results of two Virtual Community Workshops held for Sandy Hills on February 18th and April 1st, 2021. The workshops are part of a larger long-range planning process for the unincorporated community.

In the winter of 2021, the Greater Salt Lake Municipal Services District (MSD), in partnership with the Sandy Hills Community Council and Salt Lake County Regional Development (SLCo Regional), kicked-off a long range planning process for the unincorporated community of Sandy Hills. The MSD initiated this process at the request of Salt Lake County. The purpose of the planning process is to collect data and community input to inform planning and decision-making for Sandy Hills. Ultimately, the project will culminate in a General Plan for the Unincorporated Community of Sandy Hills. The General Plan will consider regional influences, but will focus on the boundaries highlighted in Figure 1.

The following is an overview of the project process:

STEP 1: Form a long-range planning steering committee for Sandy Hills.

STEP 2: Host a community workshop with the steering committee and public to examine Sandy Hills’ Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT Analysis) and to identify items to Achieve, Preserve, Avoid, and Eliminate (APAE Analysis). Workshops were held on February 18th and April 1st, 2021.

STEP 3: MSD Staff conducts a technical assessment of Sandy Hills, including gathering and analyzing

demographic trends, economic conditions, and land use patterns.

STEP 4: Results of the technical assessment and community workshop are presented to the Sandy Hills long-range planning steering committee.

STEP 5: Staff works with the steering committee to identify desired planning products and an associated scope of work, based on assessment and workshop results. Notice of Intent to Prepare a General Plan was given in August of 2021, and the Salt Lake County Council adopted the 2021-2022 Sandy Hills General Plan Scope of Work on October 12th, 2021.

The project website for Sandy Hills Long Range Planning is regularly updated to include reports, process updates, and scheduled events: <https://bit.ly/lrp-sandyhills>.

The Greater Salt Lake Municipal Services District:

The Greater Salt Lake Municipal Services District (GSLMSD or MSD) was established in 2015. The MSD is a Local District, created under the “Special District Code 17B 2a-1101.” The MSD is comprised of five Metro Townships (Copperton, Emigration Canyon, Kearns, Magna, and White City), the Town of Brighton, and unincorporated Salt Lake County, including Sandy Hills. It was created under Utah Code 10-2a, part four, which allows Metro Townships to be recognized as municipalities. The MSD, together with the governmental alliance of the Metro Townships, has formed the first District of its kind in the United States.

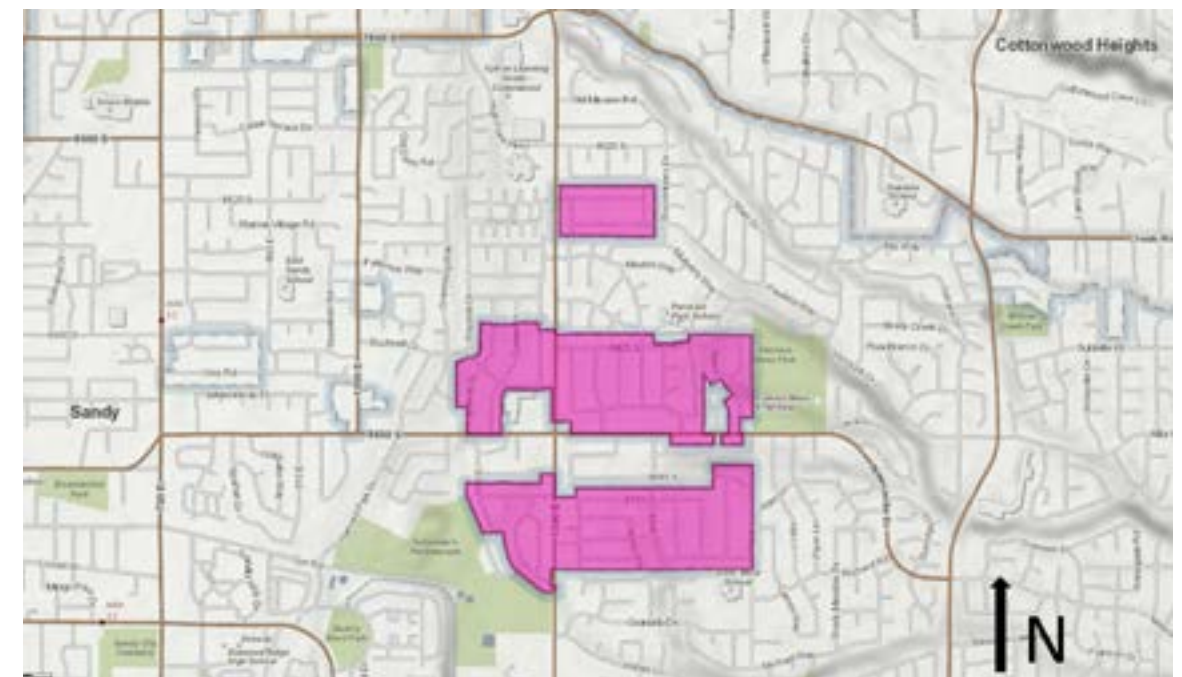
MSD Planning & Development Services (PDS) provides strategic planning and local technical assistance to unincorporated Salt Lake County, including Sandy Hills. PDS supports community management policies, plans, and programs that address a wide range of issues including land use, housing, transportation, and economic development. PDS manages Sandy Hills’ building permits and inspections, business licenses, code enforcement, and stormwater management. PDS incorporates the latest in business and technology solutions in order to serve its clients. The Salt Lake County Council is the land use authority for Sandy Hills, responsible for code updates, budgeting, and directives to plan. Thus, PDS must work with the County to develop long range planning products for Sandy Hills and move those products through the adoption process.

To learn more about the MSD, [follow this link](#).

Sandy Hills:

Sandy Hills is an unincorporated island of 2,118 residents in the northeastern quadrant of Salt Lake County (Esri Community Analyst, 2021). The community is surrounded on all sides by Sandy City, and is located just west of the mouth of Big Cottonwood Canyon. Although Sandy Hills consists of approximately 0.35 square miles of primarily residential development, the community still enjoys several assets just outside its borders. These include Flat Iron Mesa Park, Dimple Dell Regional Park, Quarry Bend Shopping Center, and several elementary schools.

Figure 1: Boundaries of Sandy Hills, Unincorporated Community.



Source: MSD Long Range Planning, 2021

THE MAIN EVENTS

The Sandy Hills Community Virtual Workshops:

The Community Virtual Workshops served as the kick-off events for the Sandy Hills Long Range Planning project. Twelve (12) members of the community participated in the workshops, which were held on Thursday, February 18th and Thursday, April 1st, 2021, over Zoom. At the time of the workshops, the COVID-19 pandemic was still significantly impacting Utah. Thus, the safest way to gather as a community and provide feedback was virtually.

The workshops consisted of a facilitated discussion of

both a “Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT)” analysis and an “Achieve, Preserve, Avoid, and Eliminate (APAE)” exercise. All participants were invited to provide input on these categories, and multiple staff members recorded notes from the exercises. The SWOT analysis is a strategic planning technique that helps identify the existing conditions and future opportunities for a community. Items are organized according to whether they are ‘Helpful’ or ‘Harmful’, and whether they stem from an ‘Internal’ or ‘External’ origin. Figure 2 shows how the SWOT matrix is organized.

Figure 2: SWOT Activity Matrix



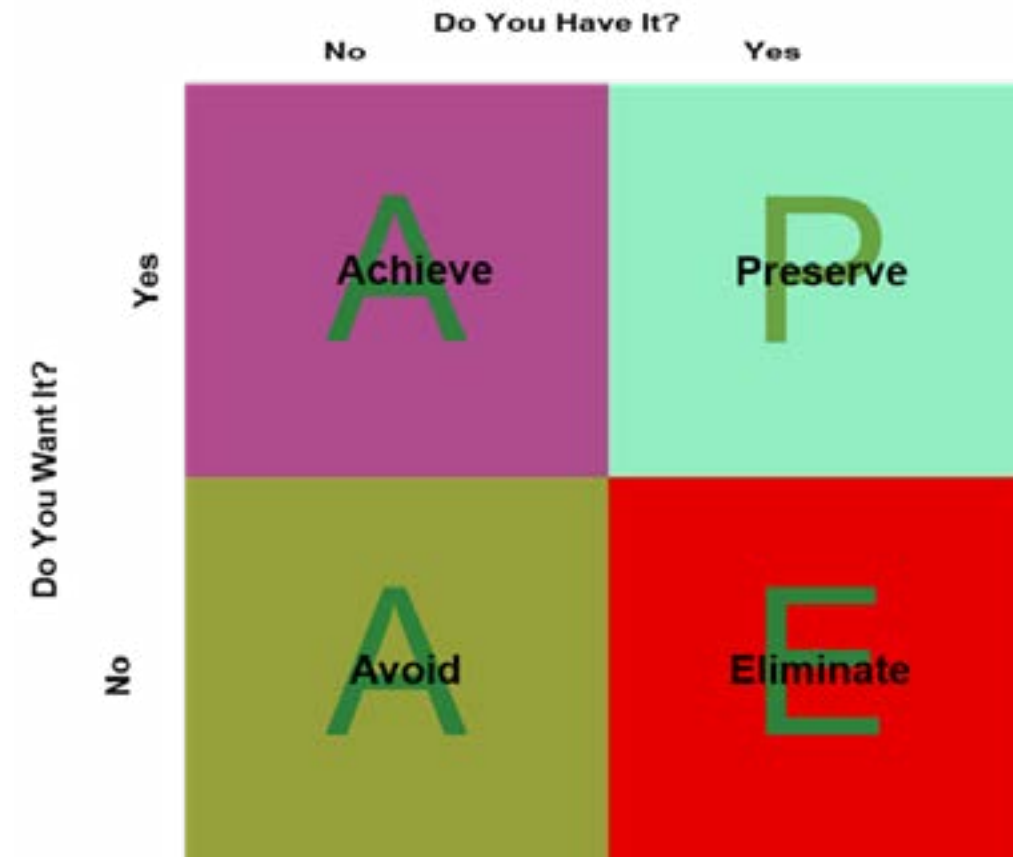
Source: MSD Long Range Planning, 2020

The APAE exercise, an integral component to problem solving known as the Goals Grid, helps explore possible problems and solutions to design a future direction for a community. Two questions drive the APAE activity: “Do we have it?” and “Do we want it?”. Figure 3 depicts the APAE matrix.

Beyond the results shared in the next section, one of the main take-aways from the meetings was that participants were grateful to have a chance to share

their voice and help shape the future of their community. Although Sandy Hills represents a small pocket of residents, many residents are actively engaged and want to work toward the betterment of their community. They value opportunities to speak with planners and elected officials and engage in planning and decision-making processes.

Figure 3: APAE Activity Matrix



Source: MSD Long Range Planning, 2020

THE RESULTS

Overview

Results from the SWOT and APAE activities are organized in each activity's respective matrix. Input from workshop participants is shown in black text. These items come directly from workshop participant comments. Sandy Hills residents also had the opportunity to participate in the SWOT and APAE activities via an online survey, but no responses were submitted. Underneath participant comments in the matrix, 'staff additions' are highlighted in purple. These additions were made based on data staff has collected thus far in the technical assessment and observations from the workshops and community at-large.

SWOT

Major Themes:

Strengths:

- 1. Sandy Hills' Location:** close to shopping, services, and employment centers, yet still providing unparalleled views of the Wasatch Front, the location of the community is a major asset.
- 2. Neighborliness:** participants overall noted the tight social fabric of the community, citing instances where neighbors looked over one another's homes, or blew snow from driveways after storms. One comment from a participant indicated that this may be more true for long-time residents, whereas newer residents have difficulty connecting with the existing social network.
- 3. Autonomy:** residents appreciate flexible regulations regarding home businesses, raising of pets, and other private property rights. Large lot sizes offer residents privacy and the independence to escape into their own world when they want it.

Weaknesses:

- 1. Infrastructure:** the community's infrastructure is outdated and in need of improvement and maintenance. In some instance, particularly in newer developments, desirable infrastructure (such as sidewalks) are entirely lacking. Participants cited poor street lighting, needed sidewalk repair, and overgrown storm drains.
- 2. Nuisance Properties:** due to weak land use and building codes, enforcement of nuisance properties is difficult. Participants commented on abandoned and dilapidated buildings, unmaintained yards, and the conversion of single-family homes into multi-family rentals with absentee landlords.
- 3. Lack of Community Gathering Places:** Sandy Hills is primarily a residential community, with no civic buildings or other community centers. Some nearby businesses have gone under during COVID, and the community feels the impact of disappearing third places.

Opportunities:

- 1. Improve Community and Regional Communications:** participants saw an opportunity to engage residents through a community newsletter, features in MSD communications, and posts over various social media platforms. Participants also saw an opportunity to form a closer working relationship with Salt Lake County government.
- 2. Enhance Existing Outdoor Spaces:** the community expressed appreciation for nearby parks and open spaces. They saw opportunities to enhance these places by adding family-friendly activities and introducing new amenities for pets. Participants also mentioned the opportunity to improve streetscapes and safety by maintaining existing street trees.

Threats:

- 1. COVID-19 Pandemic:** Sandy Hills is feeling the impacts of the pandemic. Participants in the workshop felt threatened by loss of employment and services, diminishing community gathering places, budget concerns due to loss of revenue and/or funds being shifted to fight the virus, and an increasingly digital world (leading to social disconnect).
- 2. Development Pressure:** the community is largely built out, and participants felt that existing parks and open spaces may be threatened by development pressures. Simultaneously, nearby development is leading to increased traffic and other infrastructure impacts.
- 3. Lack of Regional Planning:** participants noted the need for collaborative planning efforts between Sandy Hills, surrounding Sandy City, and other County and regional planners and elected officials. The current lack of regional collaboration leads to miscommunication and conflicting visions and priorities.

Figure 4: Sandy Hills SWOT Results

		Helpful	Harmful
Internal Origin	Strengths	<p>Close knit neighborhoods; helpful neighbors Neighborhood participation; sharing snowblowers; involved families Community effort; people watching others' homes Security; safety; low crime rate A good road network - meant that Sandy Hills is close/connected to regional destinations Easy access to freeways Lots of nearby shopping Influx of young families with kids Benefit of being unincorporated County - less regulation/constraint, more freedom "Rural setting in an urban area" - Ron Home occupations Larger lots / privacy / flexibility in using property Flat Iron Mesa Park / Open Space Viewshed Less expensive housing+ starter homes Pet-friendly community Annual Swm Party at Crestwood Swimming Pool Single Family Homes</p> <p>Staff Additions: Community pride. This was evident as residents shared their feedback. Sandy Hills' residents are passionate about their neighborhoods and want to foster a higher quality of life for all residents.</p>	<p>Building codes: not enforcing, homes becoming dilapidated/unsafe/abandoned Turning single-family homes to rentals; no enforcement; no recourse for nuisance prop - mostly because code doesn't exist Really old infrastructure: sidewalks, curbs, and gutter deteriorating Newer areas with no sidewalks; not safe for youth walking to/from school Storm drains not cleaned/maintained - trees and weeds growing out of them Community largely built-out; development pressure on green spaces Very little street lighting; old gas lights are deteriorated - need maintenance/updates Surrounding shopping centers going out of business Lack of resources Community can be closed-off to newcomers; 'protecting' themselves from 'takeover' Treated as the 'step child' of the County Individuality; i.e. neighbors may try to maintain privacy and/or isolation from other community members, making it harder to connect as a community Outdated and weak codes/ordinances Traffic increasing Kids relying on Internet and not interacting as much</p> <p>Staff Additions: No clearly distinguished community boundaries. Some residents may not consider themselves as belonging to the Sandy Hills community because they don't know the difference between Sandy City / Sandy Hills / Unincorporated. Limited capacity for ageing in place. Homes are not accessible for persons with mobility disabilities.</p>
	Opportunities	<p>Good parks; work to promote and enhance - perhaps add pet-friendly features Leverage safe atmosphere; ability to be out and about at night comfortably (perspective from white male) Pets welcome - less regulations on number Utilizing Next Door and Facebook social media platforms Bringing back the Sandy Hills newsletter Improved communication within community and between community and County Engaging volunteers / interested residents Hiring an intern to help with community communication and organizing Including Sandy Hills news/stories in the MSD newsletter Include residents in budget preparation / prioritization of services Area for fun and games outside for kids Form a better relationship with Salt Lake County and with politicians Establish tree height and maintenance ordinances</p> <p>Staff Additions: Plan additional community events, particularly those that connect residents with resources such as health screening, community codes, and information about opportunities to get involved in planning and decision-making. Find alternative transportation solutions to connect residents to nearby amenities like Dimple Dell, Flat Iron Mesa Park, schools, and grocery stores. Neighborhood social organization to promote neighbors-helping-neighbors, welcoming new residents/families, and bridging the gap between new and long-term residents.</p>	Threats
External Origin			<p>Loss of shopping options Over-exceeding infrastructure Worried about crime increasing, loss of open space, loss of social network (general fears of regional growth) Resident turnover Loss of employment opportunities Difficulty getting volunteers / engaging residents Lack of regional communication / caring from representatives Possible loss of services - like diminishing recycling options - this comment rooted from budget concerns, worries over fiscal responsibility Loss of common gathering spaces during COVID (schools, libraries) Fragmentation Digital world / social disconnect Fiscal sustainability - mention of wasted money on studies that go nowhere Taxes rising / people on fixed income Lack of infrastructure maintenance Inability to control traffic / speeding Development pressure / population increase pressure Sandy City and conflicting priorities Lack of multi-jurisdictional collaboration/planning</p> <p>Staff Additions: Potential natural disasters, including fire, earthquake, and landslides. Over 20% of Sandy Hills' housing units were built prior to 1970, and were thus likely constructed using unreinforced masonry (Esri Community</p>

Source: Sandy Hills Community Virtual Workshops, 2021

APAE

Major Themes:

Achieve:

- 1. Representative Land Use and Enforcement Codes:** the community desires an audit of existing codes and upgrades to fit the needs of today's residents. This includes nuisance codes that are more enforceable and landscaping / tree ordinances that promote aesthetics and community safety.
- 2. An Engaged Community:** participants hoped to foster greater participation from community residents. They hoped to get more residents involved in planning and decision-making processes so that Sandy Hills' voice was more likely to be heard by representatives.
- 3. Quality Infrastructure:** the community expressed a desire for updated infrastructure and new infrastructure in places where none currently exists (i.e. signage and sidewalks). Participants also hoped to achieve better Internet speed and coverage, at a reasonable price. And participant comments included the desire for community public transit service.

Preserve:

- 1. Existing Infrastructure and Assets:** participants pushed the maintenance and enhancement of existing community amenities, including existing infrastructure systems and parks, recreation, and open spaces – especially nearby Dimple Dell Park and Flat Iron Mesa Park. They also hoped to preserve Sandy Hills' history in the future through storytelling, interpretive signage, or some other measures.
- 2. Community Voice:** participants wanted to preserve the Sandy Hills Community Council, noting the important role it plays in gathering resident input and communicating residents' concerns, feedback, and vision to decision-makers.

- 3. Air Quality:** participants recognized that the air quality in Sandy Hills is generally better than in other places in Salt Lake Valley. The community hopes to preserve its good air quality into the future.

Avoid:

- 1. Fiscal Burdens:** participants had money on their mind at February's community workshop. They particularly wanted to avoid raising taxes, imposing fees, or burdening fixed-income residents. Participants also mentioned that quickly rising home values are leading to property tax increases that cause additional hardship for residents. In addition to burdens on residents, participants cited a desire to avoid overspending or misappropriation of funds by local government.

Eliminate

- 1. Abandoned, Dilapidated, or Unmaintained Properties:** participants emphasized the need to eliminate existing vacant, dilapidated, and unsafe properties. They cited illegally parked vehicles, absentee landlords, unkempt lawns, and dying street trees as issues in need of additional regulation and enforcement.
- 2. Outdated Rules and Regulations:** consistent with the SWOT analysis, participants identified the need to bring existing County codes in the area up-to-date, to better reflect the needs and desires of the Sandy Hills community.

Figure 5: Sandy Hills APAE Results

		No	Yes
Do You Want It?	Yes	<p>Achieve</p> <p>Farmer's Market Internet service - better speed / coverage / lower price Community newsletter More citizen participation / increased lobbying Community gathering place(s) / multi purpose community center Upgraded land use and building codes (audit to fit today's needs) Greater advocacy to Legislature about issues important to residents Public transit - bus route / traffic calming; old White City 33 line Redevelopment of vacant gas station Enforcement of nuisance laws / increased safety Historic representation (i.e. showcase Sandy Hills' history) Introspection / use of data in decision making / County striving to serve better Updated infrastructure / new infrastructure in places without, including sidewalks and signage Enforcement of animal control / education of animal policies; leash laws developed and enforced Safety inspections on vehicles (may be beyond scope of this project) Ordinance on tree heights and maintenance (safety concern)</p> <p>Staff Additions: Increased access to healthy foods. Only the very northern portion of Sandy Hills is within a half mile walk to a grocery store. There is a 7-Eleven near the borders of Sandy Hills, but that does not necessarily provide access to healthy and sustaining foods. Opportunities for multi-generational housing or ageing in place. Retrofits for the 149 units built before 1970 that are likely unreinforced masonry. Safe routes to schools attended by Sandy Hills</p>	<p>Preserve</p> <p>Maintain Infrastructure Right to have voices heard; opportunities to communicate info to decision makers Community Council (as platform for advocating for / listening to residents) History: Erikson Family mink farm / Little Cottonwood Canyon railroad / airport history Existing open and recreation spaces, including Dimple Dell Park Nearby equestrian opportunities Air quality (better than the valley in general)</p> <p>Staff Additions: The viewshed of the Wasatch Front. Sandy Hills' gridded street pattern. Unlike adjacent areas, which feature cul-de-sacs and dead ends, Sandy Hills' streets are connected. This offers numerous transportation benefits. Uniqueness of homes and residential architecture. Mature trees and rich landscaping. Sandy Hills has very few yards that consist solely of grass. Plants and trees, especially native or drought-resistant vegetation contribute to sense of place and are better for air and water quality.</p>
	No	<p>Avoid</p> <p>Raising taxes, imposing fees, burdening fixed-income residents Overspending; fiscal irresponsibility; misappropriation of funds Increased crime / package theft Increased air pollution Rising home values in the sense that they increase property taxes for those who may not be able to afford tax increase</p> <p>Staff Additions: Development that incompatible with the scale and character of Sandy Hills.</p>	<p>Eliminate</p> <p>Unmaintained / unsafe trees - worried about falling limbs / damage Speeding Vacant / abandoned / dilapidated buildings (absentee landlords) Crime Archaic / outdated rules and regulations Illegal parking / abandonment of vehicles Unkept vacant properties Irresponsible home-based businesses (i.e. people working on cars and leaving them sitting in public parking lots)</p>

Source: Sandy Hills Community Virtual Workshops, 2021

NEXT STEPS

The results of the community workshops are being shared with participants, staff members, and members of the Sandy Hills Long Range Planning Steering Committee. MSD Staff will also host a follow-up activity to assist the Sandy Hills community in prioritizing the issues (or potential solutions) that were raised during the workshops. The prioritization of these items will help staff and the steering committee as they develop a vision and plan forward for Sandy Hills.

MSD Staff is also working to complete the technical assessment of Sandy Hills. The Technical Assessment will be compared to results from this workshop report in order to gain a deeper understanding of the existing conditions and challenges and opportunities facing Sandy Hills. Since these workshops were conducted, Sandy Hills did move forward in their pursuit of a General Plan for the community. The adopted Scope of Work for this Plan can be found on the project website below.

Those interested in the Sandy Hills Long Range Planning process should check the project website often for updates: <https://bit.ly/lrp-sandyhills>. Questions and comments can be directed to:

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Figure 6: Sandy Hills February Community Virtual Workshop Invite



Source: MSD Long Range Planning, 2021

