

Commentary: Better use of Jordan River Parkway Trail, North Temple Corridor could strengthen west side economy



(Chris Detrick | The Salt Lake Tribune) People outside of Gateway Inn 819 West North Temple in Salt Lake City Tuesday, October 17, 2017.

By Ivis García | Special to The Tribune • Published: April 7, 2019
Updated: April 07, 2019

Salt Lake City, like many major cities in the U.S., has an economic division within its boundaries, where residents have limited access to infrastructure, places or destinations that assist with basic needs, recreation or entertainment.

In Salt Lake City, that's the west side.

When people think about the west side, they generally focus on ethnic diversity, lower incomes and the perception of crime. And when an area struggles with lower incomes, families devote a higher percentage of their income to housing and transportation expenses than people with higher incomes.

Public and active transportation may be viable solutions for cost savings and convenience for those who live below the average median income. Increasing the use of the Jordan River Parkway Trail (JRPT) as well as the North Temple corridor for

active transportation by west side residents could lead to a solution.

Not many people are aware of the opportunity Salt Lake City has to create a major multi-modal transportation network. The city has the ability to link several types of transportation in one strategic connection, where the JRPT and North Temple meet, and that could help decrease the dependency on automobile usage among west side residents, provide transportation solutions and increase connectivity.

North Temple is clearly a corridor meant for transit-oriented development (TOD) because of the variety of transportation options available. Including a mixture of developments, such as housing, office, and retail into a neighborhood makes a place more walkable, especially when access to transit is within a half-mile. A secondary goal of TODs is to create a hub of commercial conveniences provided by small- and medium-sized businesses.

In contrast to North Temple, the JRPT is primarily recreational in nature. Given the land uses, mostly residential, surrounding most of the JRPT, with the exception where it connects to North Temple, it is not likely that most residents will use the trail for non-recreational purposes such as work and shopping. The population density along the trail is low and it currently does not support additional commercial spaces. In order to increase demand for the trail for non-recreational uses, greater density would need to be added in the form of more residential units and then an increased number of destinations that respond to that density (coffee shops, neighborhood supermarkets and the like). Right now, the area that connects between North Temple and the JRPT is being envisioned as a Transit Station Area (TSA) Zoning District, so there are plans to add density and destinations in the area.

Even if the TSA had an effect in increasing walkability, the JRPT would have to be redesigned to increase travel demand. The trail would need sufficient access and egress points, signage, restrooms, water fountains, benches, street lights as well as points of interest along the trail such as dog parks, playgrounds, art, restaurants, and shopping. Bus service as a way to travel around the trail will be needed in the future.

The intersection of these two corridors contains the perfect mixture of transportation choices making the land around the intersection an optimal location for mixed-use and mixed-income development projects. The availability of affordable housing eases housing cost burdens for lower-income families. Residents may find extra or disposable income in their budgets, and, in turn, may be able to support entertainment and recreational developments.

The area is pedestrian progressive and making great strides towards being one of the most walkable places in Salt Lake City.

Providing alternative transportation options for lower-income families helps keep costs down while keeping these families connected to their community. Adding destinations that provide options for deciding how to spend their personal time and limited funds will likely strengthen connectivity and west side community economy.

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Ivis García, Ph.D., is an assistant professor in the Department of City and Metropolitan Planning at the University of Utah. This essay summarizes the findings of her article, “Connectivity and Usership of Two Types of Multi-Modal

Transportation Network: A Regional Trail and a Transit-Oriented Commercial

Corridor,” published in the journal Urban Science

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