

Railroad Town to Ski Hub GIS Powered Recreation Centered Revitalization

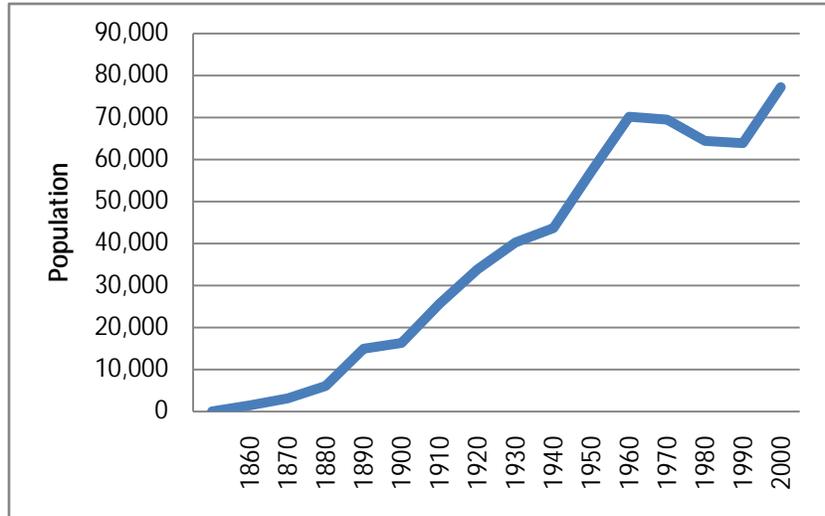
Josh Jones and Andrea Douglass, Ogden City GIS

Over the last several years Ogden City Utah has begun a dramatic transformation from an old struggling railroad town to becoming the international hub of the ski and board sports industry. An urban area nestled against Utah's Wasatch Front Mountains; Ogden is capitalizing on its geography. GIS is helping this community decide what it wants to become. In Ogden, you can golf, ski, mountain bike, and water ski, all in the same day. GIS is being used to plan, visualize, and develop outdoor recreational amenities and policy; as well as attract business and outside investment. Trail development, urban alternative transportation, resort planning, marketing, and project analysis all utilize the GIS. In the past four years Ogden has been able to attract many of the world's most renowned outdoor recreation companies to relocate. In Ogden, geography matters.

INTRODUCTION

Ogden City, in northern Utah, has historically seen many economic ups and downs. Ogden was incorporated in 1851, but its first real economic gains came with the completion of the transcontinental railroad in 1869. The railroad transformed Ogden into the junction city of the west; bringing people to Ogden from all over the country. With the coming of the railroad, Ogden's population began to grow. In 1860, just a few years after Ogden incorporated, the population was only 1,413. However, in 1870, just one year after the coming of the railroad, Ogden's population had grown to 3,127. The next two decades brought even greater growth with Ogden's population doubling to 6,069 by 1880, and doubling to 12, 809, by 1890 (Ogden Landmarks Commission).

Ogden would face many economic struggles in the years to come. The prosperity of the railroad could not sustain Ogden forever. The Great Depression hit Ogden hard like the rest of the country. Ogden recovered from these hardships as the result of an economic turn towards defense installations with the beginning of World War II. Great growth occurred during this time with the increasing number of jobs available within Ogden (Ogden Landmarks Commission). In



the 1960s, however, Ogden [Figure 1- Population growth of Ogden from 1860 to 2000. Source: U.S. Census](#)

took another turn for the worse. An economic downfall in Ogden led to a huge loss of population. In 1960 the population of Ogden was 70,179, but over the next three decades the population dropped to 63,909 (See Figure 1). There were many efforts made to regain economic vitality. The Ogden City Mall was opened in 1980 to revitalize Ogden’s downtown. It prospered in the 80’s and the early 90’s, but the prosperity was relatively short-lived as the mall was closed and demolished in 2002 ending another period of economic boom and bust (Ogden City Mall History).

Even though Ogden has faced a great deal of economic adversity in its history, today Ogden is looking to the future with a new perspective. Ogden is capitalizing on one of its most abundant natural resources- its geography. It is rebuilding its economy based on recreation and this time it is leaning on the use an incredibly valuable tool- GIS. Ogden City has embraced GIS

as a tool for economic revitalization. GIS is being used for planning, visualization, and analysis that promote recreational economic development.

RECREATIONAL GEOGRAPHY

Ogden can boast of some of the most fantastic geography in the county. With the Wasatch Mountains, the Ogden and Weber Rivers, Pineview Reservoir and Willard Bay Recreational Area- Ogden attracts tourists from around the globe and lately has been attracting attention from Ski Industry heavy-hitters and the news media. The Wasatch Mountains serve as a majestic backdrop for Ogden. They are both beautiful and functional as they attract hikers, mountain bikers, climbers and the ski and board sports community. With three amazing ski resorts in its backyard, Ogden is a recreational paradise. Pineview Reservoir, another backyard favorite, sees boating, water skiing, and fishing. Pineview also is prime location for wind surfing in the summer. Frequent breezes also make it an ideal location for kite boarding in the wintertime. The Ogden River, which flows through the center of Ogden, and the Weber River, which borders Ogden to the west, offer kayaking, fishing and walks along the Ogden/Weber River Parkway. The city's motto "It's All Within Reach," really rings true, in Ogden- the recreational opportunities are endless.

ECONOMIC REVITALIZATION & GIS

There are several major projects that Ogden City GIS has worked on to promoted economic revitalization in Ogden.

The Trails Masterplan

One of Ogden's most treasured possessions is a network of trails along its benches. At the request of the Mayor, Ogden City GIS is developing a master plan for these trails. This master

plan will include existing trails that we want to keep and maintain, new trails that we would like to see developed in the future, and ghost trails that we would like to see eliminated. GIS has been used extensively in this process. Using aerial photography we have created a feature class of highly accurate trails. We have also generated slope maps, contours and used aerial photography to create proposals for new trails. ArcPad was also used in the field with a GPS as we determined whether proposed trails were actually buildable. Through this process we have been able to create a proposal that outlines the development of up to 100 miles of new trails.

The trail dataset has been used in planning and visualization. Last fall Ogden hosted a trails conference where some our work was showcased. One piece that was particularly interesting to those in attendance was a fly-through video that displayed our trails network overlaid on 3D topography that was produced using ArcGlobe. The use of GIS for 3D visualization sparks excitement about Ogden and what it has to offer.

The Gondola & Malan's Basin

Two years ago Ogden City was approached by a developer who had purchased a large quantity of land immediately east of the city limits. This developer proposed to build a resort village in a mountain basin that would be accessed via a gondola. The proposed gondola would depart from the city's intermodal transit hub and make its way through the city to Weber State University. From the university, the gondola would traverse the mountains, passing over a 200 foot waterfall and continuing on to Malan's Basin- the location of the proposed resort. This idea has been a huge selling point to the many ski companies that are moving to Ogden. GIS has played a key role in this process, as we have produced maps to help administration and the public visualize this plan.

Part of this proposal involves the sale, redesign, and development of the publicly owned Mount Ogden golf course and adjacent Weber State University property. These parcels of land would be redeveloped into a new golf course that incorporates clustered housing, new trail amenities, and mixed use housing and retail. The sale of the housing would be used to fund the construction of the gondola. Data for this proposal came to us from various planning and engineer firms. GIS has been used as a tool to integrate data in a variety of formats. We have received plans for the golf course redevelopment in PDFs, DWGs, TIFs, and even hardcopy transparencies- all of which needed to be incorporated with layers from our GIS database such as parcels, contours, streets, and slope maps to allow for analysis of the proposal. The ability to work with and georeference all of these formats has made GIS an indispensable tool in the proposal process. GIS has also been used to plan the routing and construction of the gondola, and visualize the finished project.

The River Project

The River Project is a redevelopment of a blighted area along the Ogden River that encompasses approximately 50 acres of land in downtown Ogden. Phase 1 of the project is already underway and two additional phases will follow. The mixed-use neighborhood will have retail fronting the Ogden River providing a unique atmosphere for dining, shopping and enjoying life. Larger scale convenience retail will front along Washington Boulevard. Parks, open space and the Ogden River trails provide a unique setting for this urban lifestyle (Ogden's Riverfront Neighborhood). In order to make this project a success, Ogden City Redevelopment Agency needed to acquire the property in the project area. GIS was used to display various stages of property acquisition for purchase, to display various neighborhood layouts and road alignments, and to court potential corporate tenants.

The 21st Street Pond Development

Immediately west of downtown Ogden lies the 21st Street pond and adjacent county landfill. Over past decades, this area has suffered from improper zoning and had largely been abandoned by the city. A beautiful pond which was once an excellent fishery was contaminated and its use prohibited. Beautiful scenic areas on both sides of the Ogden River were used as junk and salvage yards. This is all changing. The landfill is about to close and their final task will be the formation of a large bowl on the east side of the fill. The landfill will be converted into an immense amphitheater that will serve as an event venue. The remainder of the fill will be covered with native grasses and will be converted into a cycle-cross track. The pond has been drained, dredged, remediated and filled again. It will be lengthened for use as a slalom water ski course and be stocked with fish once again. Zoning has changed and all junk and salvaged yards will be removed from the river frontage. The plan will incorporate retail, trail, and potentially housing developments, all of which use GIS as part of the planning process.

The Junction

The old Ogden City Mall was demolished in 2002 to make way for the new Junction mixed use development. Construction of the mixed use development is underway and brings housing, entertainment, office and retail back to the traditional center of downtown. The Children's Tree House Museum opened in the summer of 2006. The Salomon Center, opening in June of 2007, will house two restaurants, Gold's Gym, an indoor climbing wall, Flow Rider and Sky Ventures and Fat Catz bowling lanes and family amusement. Also opening in June will be the Miller Megaplex Theaters which will house 13 screens. Two 4-story office buildings and a 28-unit condo tower will be completed in the fall of 2007. Other retail, restaurants and housing are proposed for the future (Downtown Redevelopment). To promote The Junction Ogden City

GIS in conjunction with Weber State University Graphic design students created 3D modeling using ArcGIS, 3D Studio Max, Archicad, and Google SketchUp. The finished products are available on Ogden City's website at the following address: <http://www.ogdencity.com/mall.weberproject.html> .

CONCLUSION

As the city capitalizes on its geography, people and companies are coming to Ogden again. The vision of a recreation centered economy has been a powerful tool in the revitalization of Ogden City's economy and its neighborhoods. This vision has taken Ogden from being just another dot on the map, to being in the forefront of the minds of the news media, and recreation centered companies who are looking for a cost effective place to do business. In the last few years the following companies have moved to Ogden: Descente, Kahuna Boards, Goode Ski, Snowsports Interactive, Nidecker Snowboards, Rossignol, Scott, Amer Sports, Suunto, Salomon, and Atomic. The news media has also taken notice as well, and Ogden has been feature in the following publications: National Geographic Adventure, The Wall Street Journal, The New York Times, Outside Magazine, and Men's Journal. Ogden City has been named the 2006 #1 Digital City by the National League of Cities (Digital Cities Survey, 2006). In April 2007 Forbes Magazine ranked the Ogden area as the 11th best place in the nation to do business. In May 2007, Sperling's BestPlaces named the Ogden area the 6th best place to live in the nation. Ogden City has come a long way from its railroad days. It is showing the world just how unique it is and using GIS as one of the main tools to do it. Ogden was once known as the junction city of the west, where you couldn't go anywhere without going to Ogden. Today Ogden City GIS has become a junction in city government and you can't do a project without coming through GIS.

Works Cited

Digital Cities Survey. (2006). Retrieved May 11, 2007, from Center fir Digital Government:
<http://www.centerdigitalgov.com/surveys.php?survey=cities>

Downtown Redevelopment. (n.d.). Retrieved May 09, 2007, from
<http://www.ogdencity.com/index.php?module=ibcms&fxn=mall.main>

Ogden City Mall History. (n.d.). Retrieved 05 09, 2007, from Ogden City:
<http://www.ogdencity.com/index.php?module=ibcms&fxn=mall.history>

Ogden Landmarks Commission . (n.d.). *Ogden City History*. Retrieved May 8, 2007, from
ogdencity.com: <http://www.ogdencity.com/index.php?module=ibcms&fxn=about.history>

Ogden's Riverfront Neighborhood. (n.d.). Retrieved 05 09, 2007, from ogdencity.com:
<http://www.ogdencity.com/index.php?module=ibcms&fxn=mall.riverproject>

CONTACT INFORMATION

Mr. Josh Jones
Ogden City
2549 Washington Blvd
Ogden, UT 84401
US
801.629.8757
joshjones@ci.ogden.ut.us

Ms. Andrea Douglass
Ogden City
2549 Washington Blvd
Ogden, UT 84401
US
801.629.8775
Andreadouglass@ci.ogden.ut.us