



**Envision  
Utah** How we grow matters.



TALKING TO UTAHNS ABOUT GROWTH

# VALUES MESSAGING GUIDE

# INTRODUCTION

## ■ TALKING ABOUT GROWTH

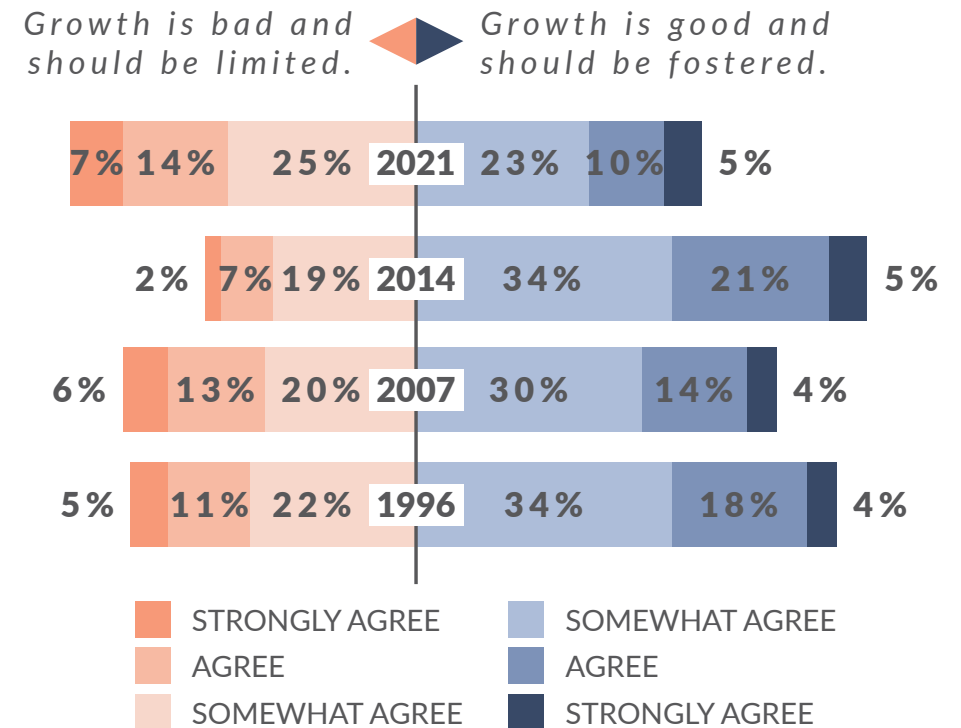
The tips and principles in this messaging guide will help you talk to Utahns about population growth – and the related issues of housing, transportation, and quality of life – in ways that are most likely to resonate with Utahns and lead to more productive conversations about *how we grow*.

This guide is based on findings in [Envision Utah's 2021 Values Study](#) as well as other research and surveys. The values study gives us insight into both what Utahns care about and why they care about those things. That knowledge can be a powerful tool to help us communicate with Utahns effectively.

# THINGS YOU NEED TO KNOW

## GROWTH HAS BECOME A BIG CONCERN FOR UTAHNS

More Utahns than ever believe growth will jeopardize their quality of life – a dramatic shift from 2014. It's the first time in 25 years that more Utahns have felt like growth is bad than have felt like growth is good.



## THERE ARE THREE MAIN REASONS UTAHNS ARE CONCERNED ABOUT GROWTH



**Housing** – Utahns worry that growth puts pressure on the housing market, driving prices up. This leads to a lack of affordable housing and a higher cost of living.

*This is such a large concern that it has become a top priority for Utahns, even higher than air quality and education.*



**Traffic** – Utahns worry that growth can lead to more traffic that makes it take longer to get around. They worry that more traffic also makes it less safe to get places.

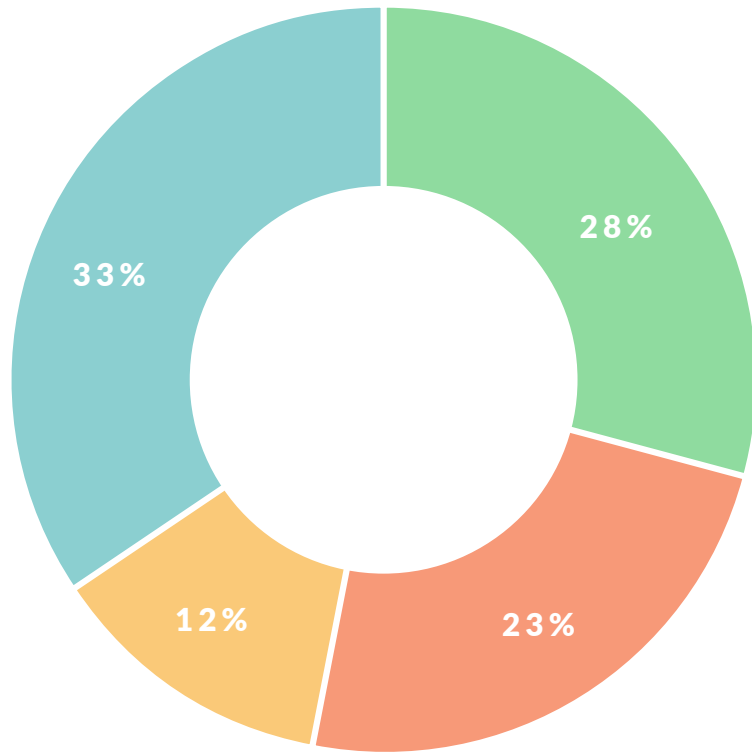


**Community and Family** – Utahns worry that growth can change communities. They might become more crowded, less quiet and peaceful, and potentially less safe or less family friendly.

# ALL THESE CONCERNS ARE TIED TO DEEPER PRIORITIES – OR VALUES – THAT MAKE THEM ALL THE MORE POIGNANT FOR UTAHNS

	<u>PRACTICAL IMPACTS</u>	<u>FEELINGS</u>	<u>VALUES</u>
HOUSING	Housing affordability and cost of living affect Utahns' <b>ability to save money</b> and can even mean that their children won't be able to <b>afford to live in Utah</b> .	As a result Utahns lose a sense of <b>financial security</b> and feel more <b>stressed, worried, and frustrated</b> about the problem.	Ultimately, housing affordability impacts whether Utahns feel they can <b>make things better for their families and for future generations</b> . Utahns experience <b>less peace of mind</b> and an overall <b>loss of security</b> .
TRAFFIC	Traffic, congestion, and more time in the car affect Utahns' <b>ability to get more done</b> and can make their communities or roads <b>less safe</b> .	This makes Utahns <b>feel more stress and frustration</b> . It even diminishes their overall <b>happiness</b> .	Ultimately, traffic affects Utahns' <b>sense of accomplishment</b> , their feelings of <b>safety and security</b> in their community, and their overall <b>peace of mind</b> .
COMMUNITY	Utahns worry growth might <b>change their communities</b> making them <b>more crowded, less safe</b> , and <b>less family friendly</b> .	This would make Utahns <b>feel more worried</b> and <b>less connected to their community and neighbors</b> .	Ultimately, loss of strong family and communities affects Utahns' <b>peace of mind</b> , their feelings of <b>safety and security</b> , and the <b>ability to make things better for their families</b> .

## MOST UTAHNS FALL INTO FOUR CATEGORIES BASED ON THEIR ATTITUDES TOWARDS GROWTH



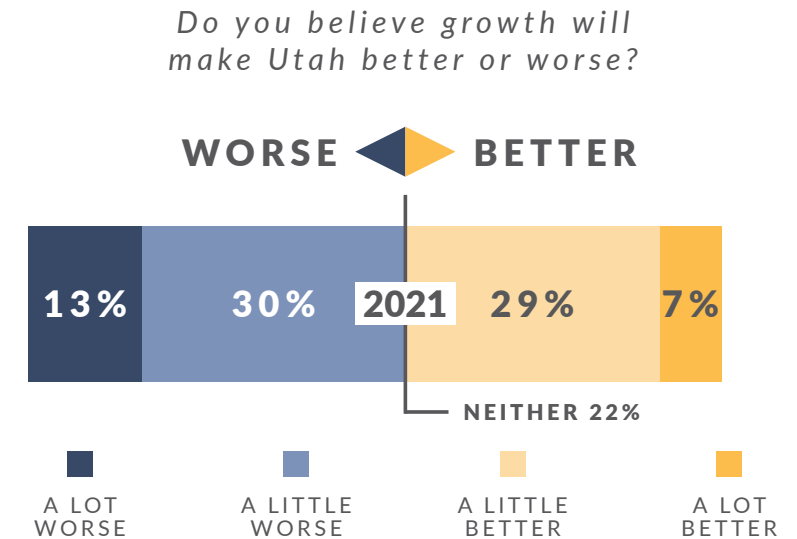
- 28 percent of Utahns feel like growth brings benefits and we should not try to stop growth.
- 23 percent of Utahns believe growth jeopardizes quality of life and think we should try to stop or slow growth. About one-third of these Utahns only “somewhat” feel this way. Another third feel very strongly about this.
- 12 percent of Utahns believe growth jeopardizes quality of life, but they think it would be bad if we were to try to stop or slow growth.
- 33 percent of people are a little bit on the fence. About of a third of these Utahns lean towards thinking growth is bad.

# PRINCIPLES FOR TALKING ABOUT GROWTH

## ■ VALIDATE GROWTH CONCERNS AND CHALLENGES

More Utahns think growth will make things worse than think it will make things better. Their concerns about growth are real and deep-seated. It's important to acknowledge the fact that growth is a challenge and can have a negative impact on quality of life if we don't address it deliberately and carefully.

Validating Utahns' concerns about growth can be a good chance to emphasize the importance of planning and preparing for growth. It's also important to still be optimistic that Utah will stay a great place to live if we plan ahead and grow in the right ways.



## ■ IT'S IMPORTANT TO FRAME GROWTH...

### *As a product of all the good things about Utah.*

As long as we have beautiful outdoors, a strong economy, a hot job market, and a relatively affordable cost of living, we're going to grow. Because of these things, our children stay in Utah and others—many of whom already have Utah ties—want to join us.

### *In a regional context.*

How one community grows will affect surrounding communities. Similarly, no one community can absorb all the growth, and not every community can refuse to take it on. It will all work out better for everyone if each community plays a collaborative role in accommodating the growth.

### *In generational terms.*

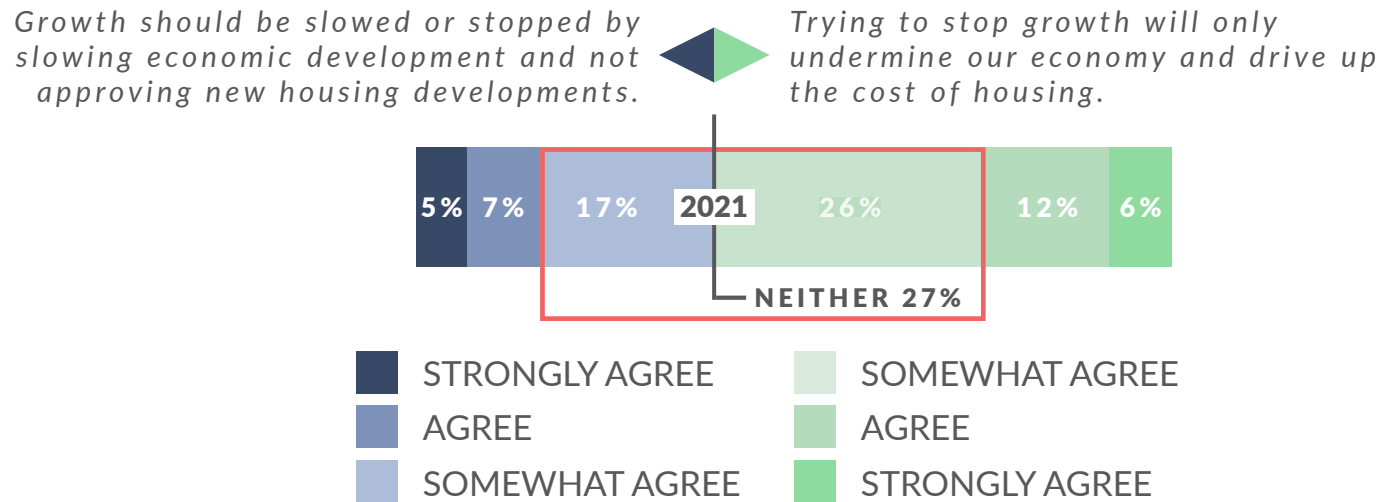
How we decide to accommodate growth now will not just affect quality of life today, but quality of life for our children's and grandchildren's generations.



# MOST UTAHNS COULD BE PERSUADED TO CHANGE THEIR ATTITUDES ABOUT GROWTH

Only a small percentage of Utahns identify with extreme statements about growth. The majority are in the “somewhat” camps or on the fence about their attitudes.

In other words, lots of people feel somewhat negative towards growth or ambivalent about it but could be persuaded to feel positive—or even more negative—about taking proactive steps to accommodate it.

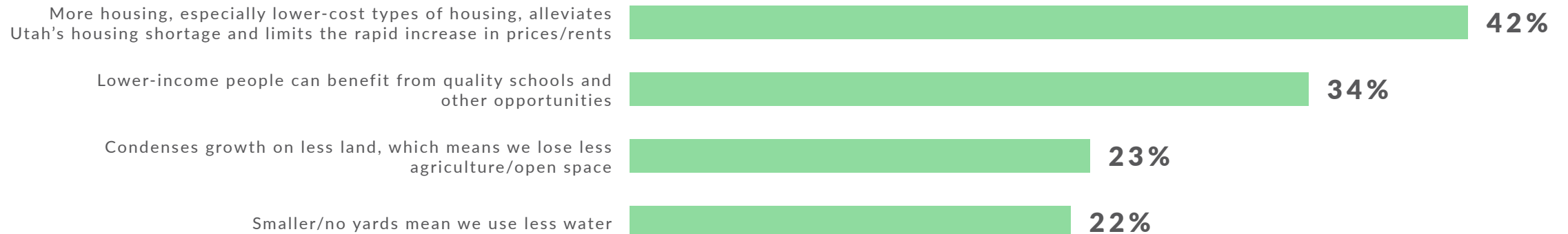


## ■ UTAHNS HAVE COMPLICATED VIEWS ON HOUSING

Although housing costs are one of the primary drivers of Utahns' negative views about growth, Utahns understand that more housing – and greater housing variety – can be the solution to housing affordability . . .

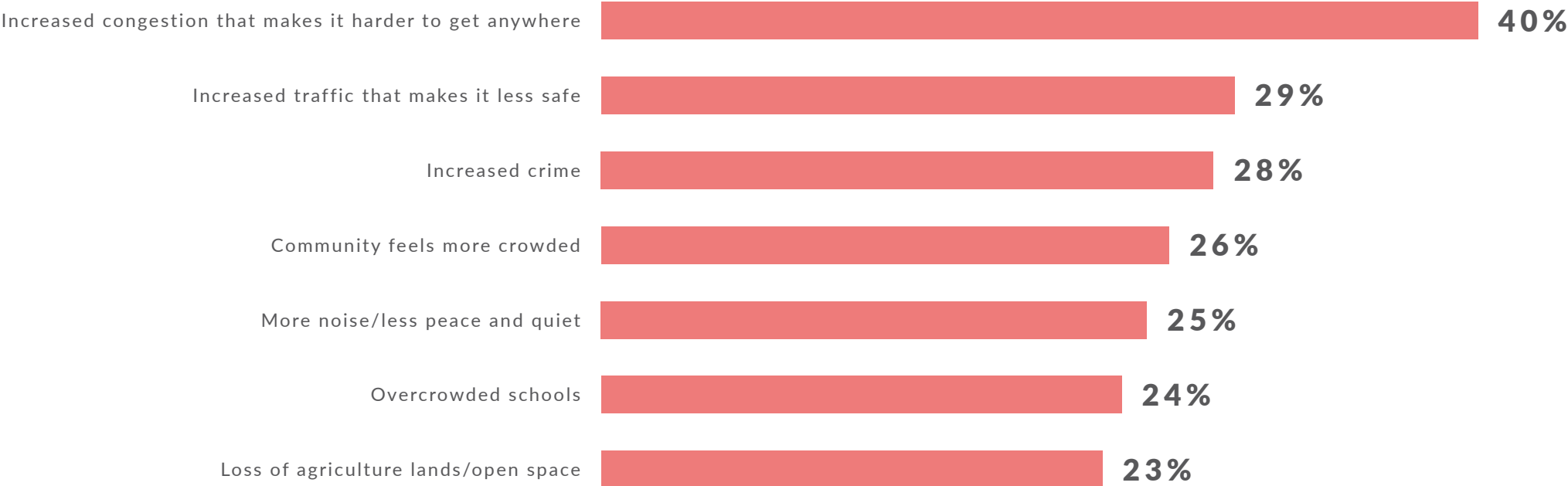
### BIGGEST BENEFITS OF ALLOWING GREATER HOUSING VARIETY

*FREQUENCY OF TOP-3 BENEFITS SELECTION*



. . . But they also see a lot of downsides to greater housing variety.

**BIGGEST DOWNSIDES OF ALLOWING GREATER HOUSING VARIETY**  
*FREQUENCY OF TOP-3 DOWNSIDES SELECTION*



# SUGGESTED MESSAGES

- The following messages were all crafted to illustrate how to talk about a range of growth-related challenges effectively. They were also tested in a random-sample survey of Utah adults to determine which messages residents found to be most compelling.

These messages are not necessarily meant to be delivered word for word; instead, they serve as illustrations of the kinds of messages that are most likely to resonate with Utahns and lead to productive conversations.

## ■ MOST EFFECTIVE MESSAGES

Utah is growing so much because it's a great place to live. We have a strong economy, a hot job market, and beautiful outdoors – which means our kids want to stay here and others want to join us. But growth can also ruin the good things if we're not careful and deliberate in how we keep up with and accommodate the growth.

### WHY THIS MESSAGE WORKS

- Frames growth as a product of the good things about Utah.
- Frames growth as our own children and grandchildren—not just outsiders.
- Relates back to “community & family” priorities.
- Validates the concerns about growth.
- Establishes the need to be deliberate in planning/preparing for growth.

*This is an especially effective message for those who feel negatively about growth.*

“When we add more housing near jobs and good public transportation, people spend less time on the road, which alleviates traffic and air quality issues for everyone.”

“If we are proactive in planning for and accommodating growth, we can manage it in a way that will preserve our quality of life. If we just let it happen or even try to fight it, it will leave a mess of poorly managed growth for our children and grandchildren to deal with.”

### WHY THIS MESSAGE WORKS

- Frames growth as targeted, thoughtful, and in strategic locations.
- Appeals to higher-level priorities related to traffic.

### WHY THIS MESSAGE WORKS

- Frames growth in generational terms.
- Validates the concerns about growth.
- Establishes the need to be deliberate in planning and preparing for growth.

*This message was one of the most compelling for people who feel negatively about growth.*

## ■ OTHER EFFECTIVE MESSAGES

The people who work in your community, including teachers, firefighters, and police officers, should have access to housing they can afford in your community. More small-lot homes, townhomes, duplexes, and apartments can create this affordable housing for your community members.

### WHY THIS MESSAGE WORKS

- Focuses on housing as a “community & family” issue.
- Reframes who the growth is—local community members.

“ We make our roads safer and less congested by adding a variety of transportation options and by carefully planning housing and job centers in tandem with transportation. ”

### WHY THIS MESSAGE WORKS

- Appeals to concerns around traffic.
- Establishes the need to be deliberate in planning and preparing for growth.

“ More housing, especially lower-cost types of housing, alleviates Utah’s housing shortage and limits the rapid increase in prices/rents. ”

### WHY THIS MESSAGE WORKS

- Appeals to concerns about housing affordability.

*This message did particularly well with those who feel negatively about growth.*



“ If we share growth across all our communities by adding more housing options with well-planned transportation and quality open space, we can keep housing costs down, reduce how much time we spend in a car, and preserve quality of life for more Utah families. ”

### **WHY THIS MESSAGE WORKS**

- Incorporates top three concerns about growth.

“ When we add more housing options in all of our communities, we give more Utahns the chance to be a part of strong communities and benefit from great schools. ”

### **WHY THIS MESSAGE WORKS**

- Appeals to “community and family” values.
- Appeals to desire to be neighborly and fair.

## WORDING RECOMMENDATIONS

Use **housing options/choice/variety** instead of **density**

Use **public transportation** instead of **mass transit**

Use **equal opportunity to succeed** instead of **equity**

Use **walkable** instead of **dense** or **urban**

# HOW WE GROW MATTERS

- The purpose of talking to Utahns about growth is not to convince Utahns that all growth is good all the time. Rather, it is to find ways to focus our conversations on *how* we grow rather than *if* we grow.

If we can focus on how we grow, we can find ways to ensure our communities continue to provide the quality of life factors that Utahns are looking for—things like the values found on page 4 of this guide. On the other hand, if conversations focus on resisting growth and we don't grow thoughtfully, we will start to lose the things Utahns value most in their communities.

For more information and resources related to *how we grow*, please see Envision Utah's "[Creating Communities: A Guide to Walkable Centers](#)" and other resources at [EnvisionUtah.org](https://www.envisionutah.org).