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# Community planners' perceptions on balancing wellbeing and development in Wasatch Mountain communities

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## I. Introduction

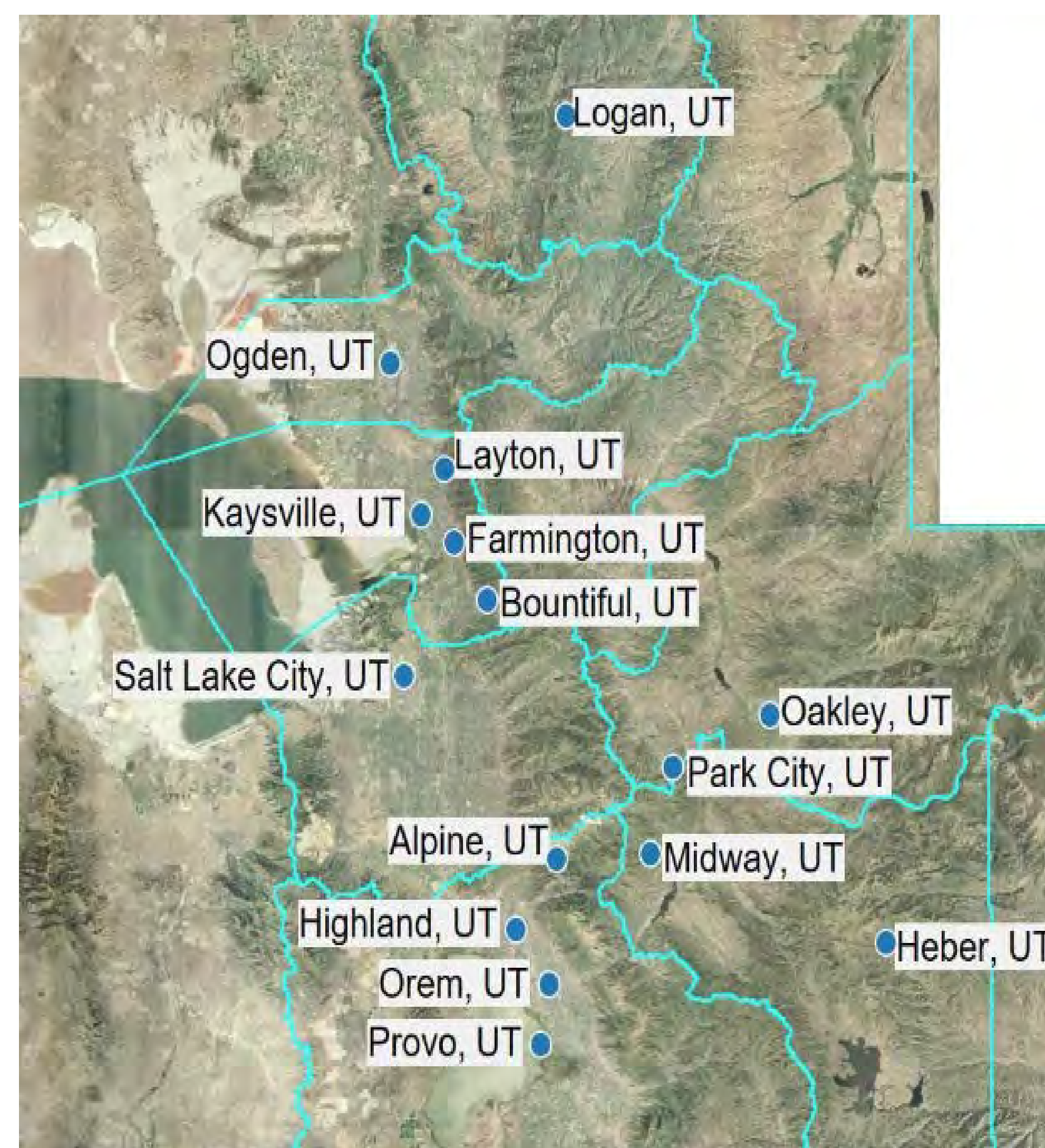
The Wasatch Mountains are home to 80% of Utah's population. As part of a larger study of the Wasatch Mountains for a growing Global Network of Mountain Observatories (GNOMO), this research was conducted to assess perceptions of city planners in Wasatch Mountain communities using qualitative interviews. Questions focused on perceived values or benefits and vulnerabilities or threats associated with living in or near the Wasatch Mountains as well as key issues for sustainability.



## II. Methods

Communities within a nine-county Wasatch study region were identified. Interviews were conducted with seventeen city planners representing large and small communities throughout the region (Figure 1). Interviews were audio recorded and transcribed using Nvivo qualitative analysis software. A quantitative coding scheme was used by two coders to reliably track topics mentioned across the interviews. Qualitative analysis was conducted to find key themes throughout the interviews and corresponding quotes were captured as evidence.

Figure 1 Study Communities



## III. Results

Interviews with city planners revealed three consistent themes regarding community issues associated with the Wasatch Mountains.

- **Natural Hazards** must be considered in community development. Earthquakes, landslides, flooding, and fire were all mentioned as hazards. Planners look for techniques to mitigate these hazards to create safer environments.  
*"How can we better improve this so that in event of emergency or hazard we're better prepared to handle that?"*
- **Transportation** is an increasingly relevant issue given continuing growth in Utah. The increasing number of people in the state leads to more cars on the roads leading to a negative effect on air quality and traffic problems.  
*"One of the biggest challenges, I think for all of the Wasatch front, is our lovely I-15 that separates a lot of our communities and splits them."*
- **Balancing nature preservation with foothill development** is a delicate issue for planners as they work to ensure a future well-being for residents and their community.  
*"I think it's going to be balancing those natural resources... mainly water, with recreation, transportation – just trying to be good stewards of the land so we don't ruin it for the next generation."*

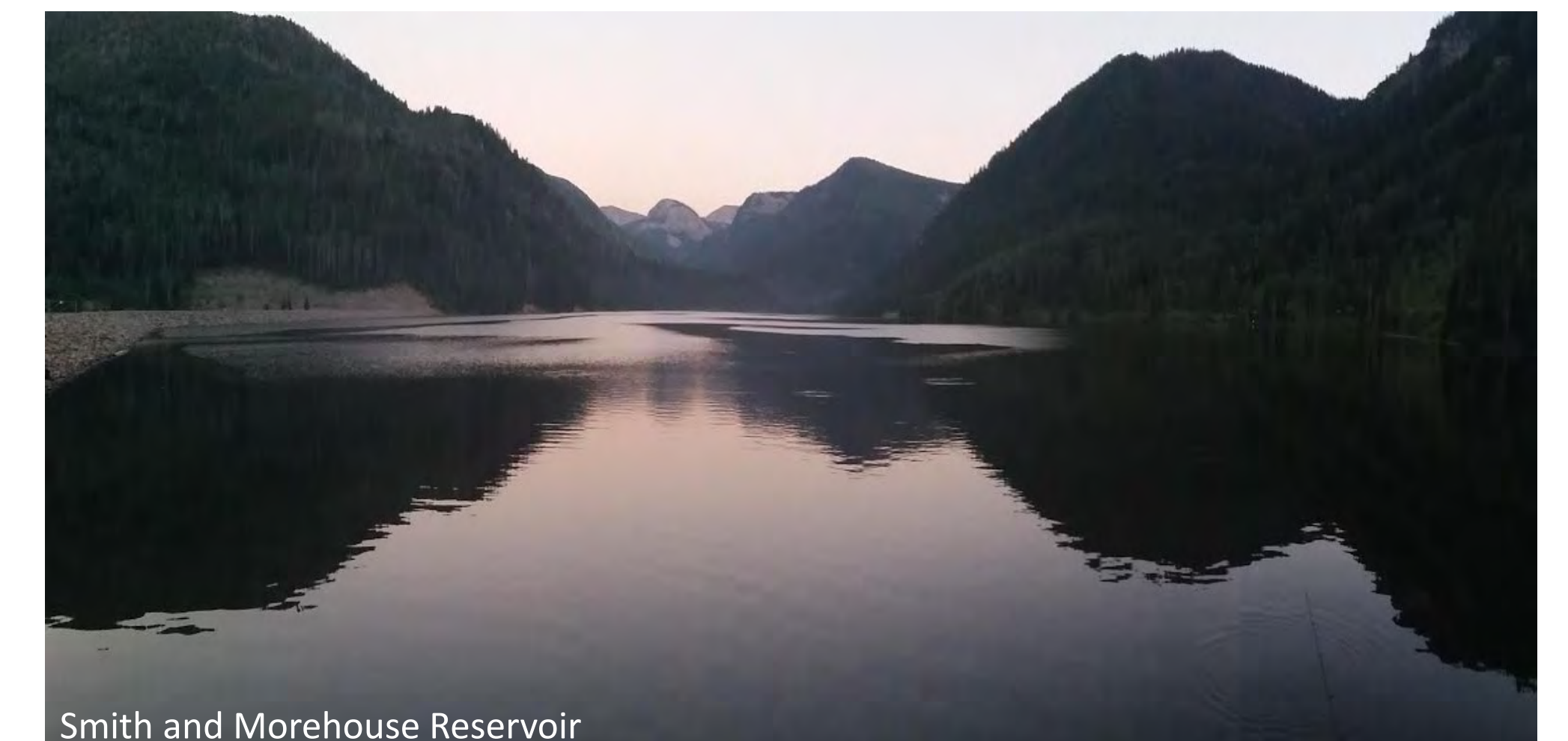
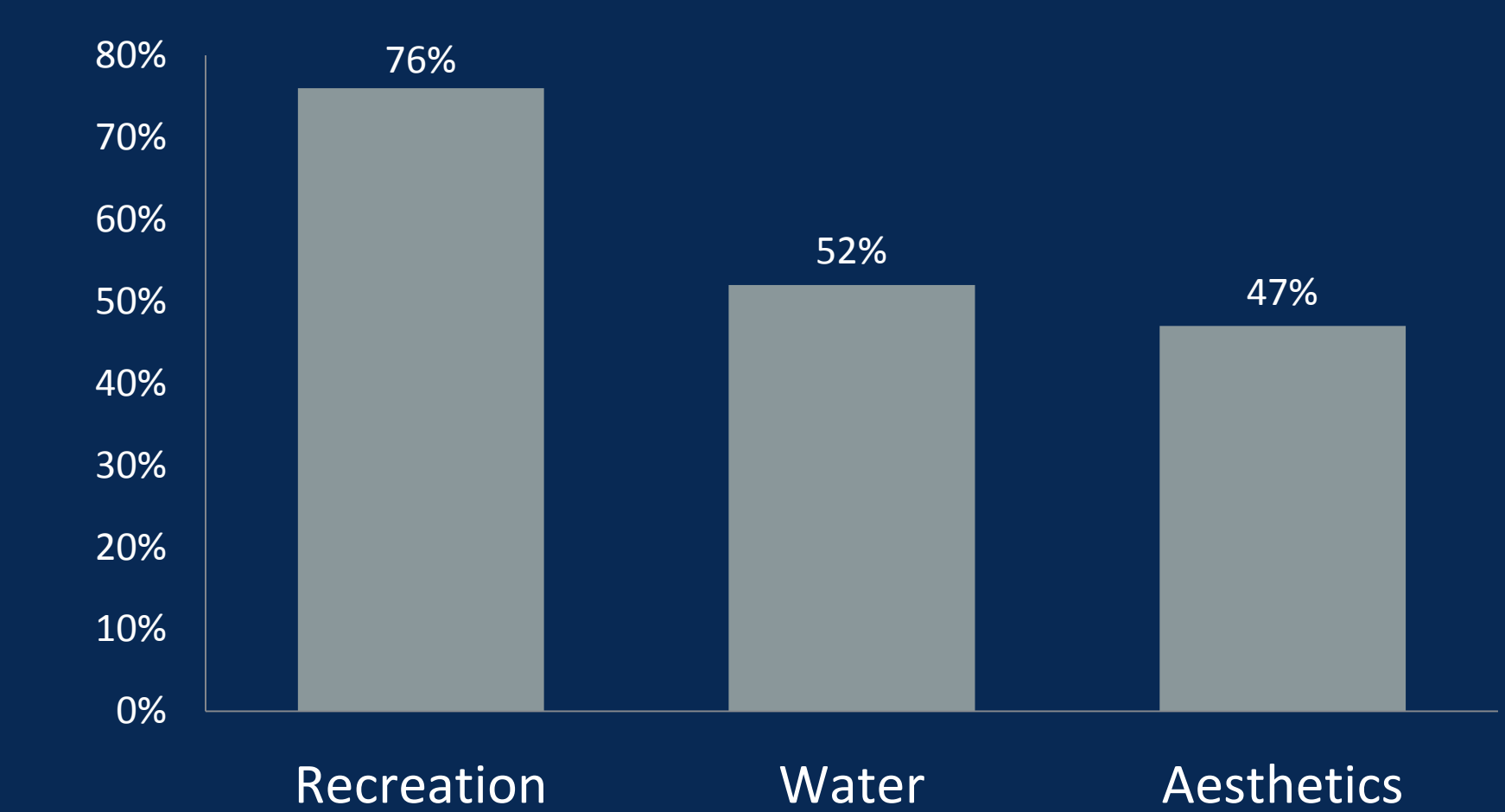


Figure 2 – Top benefits related to the Wasatch Mountains mentioned by planners



## IV. Conclusions

Now that we have a basic understanding of the perceptions of city planners we can compare this to the perceptions of other key stakeholders in the area. This will help create a multi-dimensional understanding of the environment we live in and what issues we need to understand to best manage the balancing of growth and development with the natural environment in the future.

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