

## **Jordan Rising: Clean Waters, Strong Community, Prosperous People**

### The View from the Balloon

Rising in the hot air balloon above the surrounding forested floodplain, visitors to Jordan Rising take in a stunning panorama: the result of an extensive public private partnership that celebrates the natural, social and economic abundance of the Salt Lake Valley and Wasatch Front. Though still new, the place has become an exemplar for the region, calling the area's existing natural, social, and economic systems to a higher purpose through strategic built interventions and programmatic initiatives.

Visitors will see the result of Salt Lake County and the surrounding city's sustained commitment to stewardship of the river. Their commitment has fortified the river's health and resilience by reshaping its banks and moving the levees away from the river's edge to allow for more spaces for seasonal flooding, pollutant filtration, nutrient replenishment, and biodiversity. From the roadside raingardens (green infrastructure) that both clean the water and provide connected migration corridors for wildlife to the celebratory squeals rising from the beach below, every visitor understands that the surrounding communities have profoundly committed to nursing the Jordan River back to full health. The river is part of everyone's life as evidenced by the hikers, bicyclists, mountain bikers, and kayakers commuting along the Jordan River to the nearby TRAX stations.

One of the most significant early implementation ideas—pulling the levees that had constrained the river away from the main channel—yields a thriving native forest and verdant wetland channels. The seasonal flooding also creates varied recreation opportunities, greater invertebrate and fish populations, and a richer ecological diversity at the river bank. The flood zone adapts and responds by getting stronger: restoring nutrients, disrupting invasive species, and revealing new micro-ecologies within the Central Valley and Redwoods reaches. New canopy, understory, wetland pools and high meadows create diverse, resilient habitats for a complete ecological regime of birds, butterflies, pollinators and mammals.

Complementing the thriving river, the economy of the adjacent Jordan Rising development is a hub of community pride and activity. Intensified land use has created a complete community where office workers, senior citizens, affordable housing residents and recreational enthusiasts want to live, work and play. This economic engine has office uses, thriving retail, residential apartments, condos, and townhomes that are all oriented toward connecting residents with the restored river while also providing exceptional mountain views. Because the development was able to be master planned, all of the stormwater connects into the “bioswale boulevard” that runs down the center of the community's main street. In the morning, it is not uncommon to see commuters moving via bike, scooter, or even kayak to get to one of the two regional TRAX rail stations. These commuters report, and scientific studies confirm, that the daily immersion in nature resets their brains and allows them to focus more intensely on the day ahead.

Recreation and social opportunities abound at Jordan Rising, and this is abundantly clear floating above the landscape in the hot air balloon. Looking down to the left a pitch and putt golf course pleases families and seniors alike, impressing them with the certified, integrated pest management that uses no harmful pesticides or fertilizers that might pollute the river. Straight

ahead, a soccer game is beginning, and the skaters are grinding the coping at the skatepark. (In the winter, this area converts to an ice skating ribbon). Below the balloon, a local band is warming up at the riverfront amphitheater, and next to them the new swim beach is thronged with people swimming, splashing, and laughing. Volleyball is just getting started and people are playing various informal games on the sand. On the paths, numerous people can be seen walking and playing with their dogs. Beyond the beach, a small craft pull out is thronged with kayakers and stand up paddleboarders on this warm day, with seasoned paddlers and people who just want to rent a boat to get on the water.

Throughout Jordan Rising, extensive trails—for people walking, biking, even on horseback—feature new interpretive elements, telling both the natural and cultural histories of the river and its people: the importance of native plants, indigenous settlements, the first pioneer crossing of the Jordan River in November 1848, and subsequent settlement on both banks of the river. Viewers can imagine the multiple reshapings of the landscape, and know that Jordan Rising respects and interprets all of these diverse histories for future generations.

As part of the “whole community” approach to the Jordan Rising development, a robust, interconnected social infrastructure is in place to build connections between people who may not normally cross paths, including people who have been traumatized by, or are currently suffering from homelessness. Particular attention has been placed on the edges of the Jordan Rising transformation with numerous new trail connections to adjacent neighborhoods and businesses facilitating easy, low-cost, low-pollution access for all. A new homeless job training and navigation center, surrounded by a community garden, offers wrap-around support for all community members and the surrounding native landscape, recreational programming, and service jobs help ensure that people can be lifted out of poverty and into productive and prosperous lives. This is a place of empowerment and support; a place where those who have lost a sense of community can rebuild those bonds.

Coming down from the balloon, descending below the canopy, visitors know that Jordan Rising has become the model for the entire Wasatch Front, positing a holistic approach to create ecological, social, and economic resilience. It is a place centered on clean waters, and the energy and excitement flowing from the river to the surrounding area has created stronger communities and a more prosperous populace. This is Jordan Rising.