

# Is River Restoration Sustainable for the Long-Term?

An Analysis of the Socio-Economic Impacts of the Ogden River Restoration Project

*River restoration helps rehabilitate heavily degraded streams to create an amenity out of a nuisance.*



Increases habitat and biodiversity, water quality, groundwater recharge, and pollination potential.



Promotes sense of place, community culture and education, and physical and mental health.



Restores floodplain connectivity, flood flow capacity, lateral and longitudinal connectivity, and hydrologic system resiliency.

## About the Project

Completed in 2011, the Ogden River Restoration Project was implemented on a 1.1-mile stretch of river in the heart of downtown Ogden, Utah. The river, which used to be abused, misused, and trashed, is now an oasis for recreation and has been praised for its success. A deeper understanding of just how much success the river restoration project has brought to the area is lacking, though. This study examines the changes in property value, jobs, housing units, sociodemographics, and zoning due to this project to better understand the overall success.

**47%**

increase in property values within a one-mile radius of the river restoration project

**37%**

increase in number of housing units, as compared to 21% in the entire city

**36%**

increase in number of jobs, as compared to 16% in the entire city

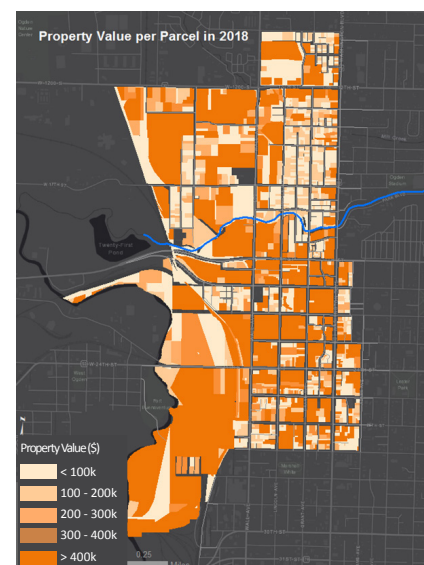
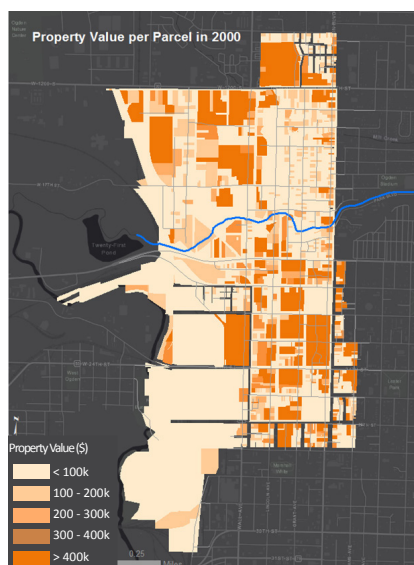
**34%**

increase in median household income, as compared to 29% in the entire city



## Property Value

Property value increased after the restoration project was completed from an average value of \$167,297 per parcel in 2000 to an average value of \$310,097 per parcel in 2018, an increase of 46.1%. While there is very little correlation between distance to the river and property value, this increase in property value corresponds to an estimated increase of \$37 million in property taxes per year for the study site area.



## Number of Jobs & Housing Units

The number of jobs in the study area increased by 6,255 jobs from 2002 to 2015, a percent increase of 36.3%. The number of jobs in Ogden City increased from 10,998 to 17,253 jobs between 2002 and 2015, an increase of 16.4%.

The number of housing units in the study area increased from 1,166 to 1,849 units, a percent increase of 36.9%. The number of housing units in Ogden City increased by 19,041 units, an increase of 21.3%.

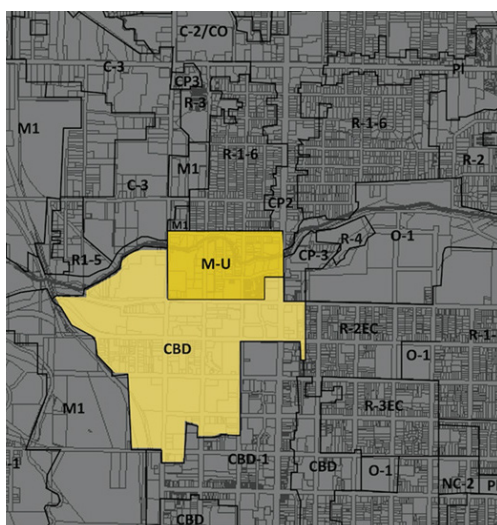
While it is difficult to quantify what amount of jobs and housing units came about due to the river restoration and what amount came about due to the City's redevelopment strategies without conducting separate analyses, these results show that the combination of both investment in natural capital and economic redevelopment strategies is a catalyst for bringing jobs and housing units to the area.

**6,255**

new jobs in the study area

**683**

new housing units in the study area



## Zoning Changes

The study site area underwent several zoning changes a few years before the river restoration project was completed as part of several redevelopment strategies put forward by the City. The city created a Mixed Use (MU) district from a residential zone to set standards of development to match a master development plan the city created for the area. The areas outside the MU zone were rezoned from manufacturing to the Central Business District (CBD) zone to again have more control on design and allow for increased housing and more appropriate uses along the river instead of the manufacturing uses that had existed previously. This focused investment along the river has created a desirable location for homes and businesses to locate, creating a hip neighborhood from what used to be a decaying area of Ogden's urban core.

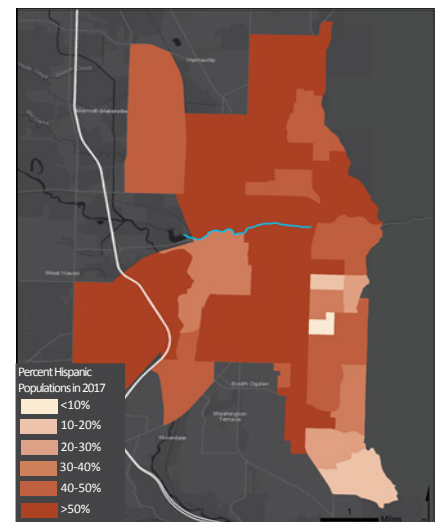
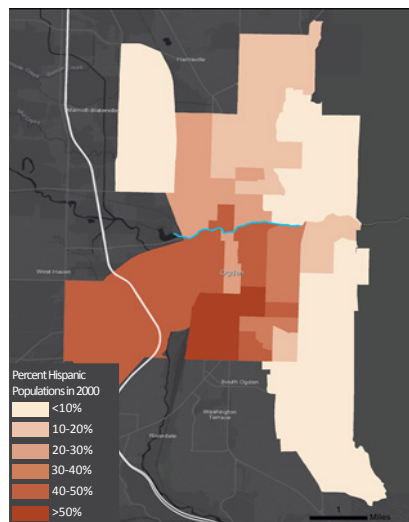
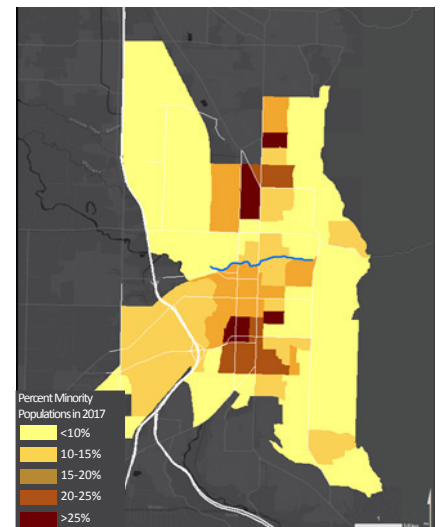
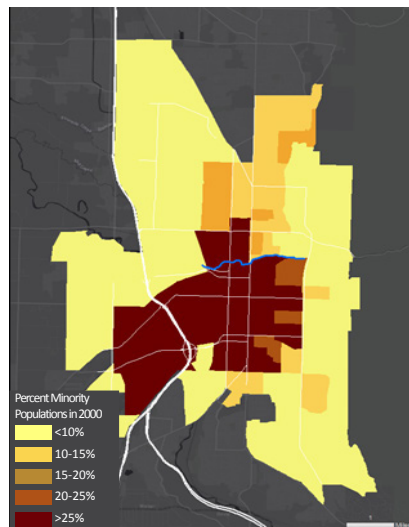
## Minority Populations

The percent minority populations (Black or African American, Native American, Asian, Pacific Islander, or some other race) within the study site decreased from 29.0% in 2000 to 15.2% in 2017. Within Ogden City, the percent minority populations decreased from 10.2% to 7.2%. Hispanic populations remained stable at approximately 30% of the population.

These shifts in demographic composition point to the possibility of green gentrification and inequality occurring. As lower-income, minority-majority areas of cities are redeveloped, these areas can push minority populations to other areas of the city or other cities entirely.

**33%**  
decrease  
in minority  
populations

**310**  
minority  
persons  
displaced



## Median Household Income

The median household income in the study area increased by 34.1% between 2000 and 2017. The median household income within Ogden City increased by 29% between 2000 and 2017.

**34%**  
increase  
in median  
household  
income

**\$29,804**  
to  
**\$31,569**  
in study site

**\$45,224**  
to  
**\$63,630**  
in Ogden City



## Conclusions

While this project's price tag of \$8.4 million is hefty, the impacts shown in this study point to a significant return on investment. In addition, the environmental benefits in the form of reduced cost for repair of flood damages, improved water quality, and increased recreational amenities further show the success of this project. While there is indication of green gentrification occurring, the economic gains combined with the social and environmental benefits show that this river restoration project was well worth the money spent and will continue to positively influence the direction of the community.